

PRICELESS

Vol 26 No 3

TM

the WholeNote



Alanis Obomsawin

2020 Glenn Gould Prize Laureate

NOVEMBER 2020

Concerts, live & livestreamed
Record reviews & Listening Room
Stories and interviews

thewholenote.com

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH

- CIRC - keep up with reopenings, welcome new partners
- SUBS CAMPAIGN
 - give (someone/yourself) the gift!
- BACK ISSUES (ESP. LAST 4)
 - ask and ye shall receive
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 - pass the word, PLEASE.
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- WEEKLY LISTINGS UPDATES
 - so keep sending them in!!
- WE'RE WholeNote media



the WholeNote

Volume 26 No 3 | November 2020

ON OUR COVER



PHOTO: STÉPHAN BALLARD

This picture of Alanis Obomsawin was taken in her office, at the National Film Board's Montreal headquarters on Le Chemin de la Côte-de Liesse, just before they moved to Îlot Balmoral last summer. Having had the opportunity of working on a three-year project at the National Film Board of Canada, I had the chance to witness Alanis Obomsawin's presence on an almost daily basis. If you would be passing by her office door you would witness a monumental intellect tirelessly rewriting our history for a better future for all. Unwavering from sunrise till sunset, she humbled us all. She is a true architect of change, winning her battles through the mind and heart, with more than fifty films in fifty years.

— Stéphan Ballard

"My office holds 50 years of archives, images, and text. I'm now finishing my 53rd film, so you can just imagine the number of documents. I've grown attached to this place. So much has happened here, and I've seen so many changes. There's a lot of history." — Alanis Obomsawin (blog.nfb.ca in July 2019)

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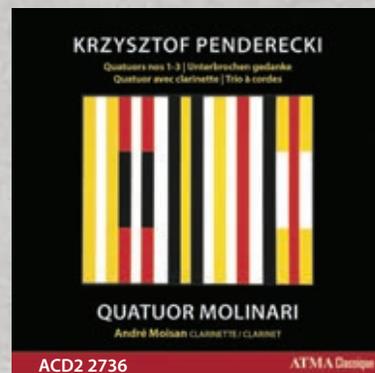
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Centre for Social Innovation
720 Bathurst St., Suite 503, Toronto ON M5S 2R4
PHONE 416-323-2232 | FAX 416-603-4791

Publisher/Editor in Chief | David Perlman
publisher@thewholenote.com

Chairman of the Board | Allan Pulker
directors@thewholenote.com

EDITORIAL

Managing Editor | Paul Ennis
editorial@thewholenote.com

Recordings Editor | David Olds
discoveries@thewholenote.com

Digital Media Editor | Sara Constant
editorial@thewholenote.com

Social Media Editor | Danial Jazaeri
dan@thewholenote.com

Listings Editor | John Sharpe
listings@thewholenote.com
jazz@thewholenote.com

SALES, MARKETING & MEMBERSHIP

Concert & Event Advertising / Membership | Karen Ages
members@thewholenote.com

Production & Operations / Advertising Art | Jack Buell
jack@thewholenote.com, adart@thewholenote.com

Classified Ads | classad@thewholenote.com

Website/Systems Support | Kevin King
systems@thewholenote.com

Circulation/Subscriptions | Chris Malcolm & Sheila McCoy
circulation@thewholenote.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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THANKS TO THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

Paul Ennis, Robert Harris, Jack MacQuarrie, Jennifer Parr, David Perlman, Cathy Riches, Colin Story, Andrew Timar, Steve Wallace, Matthew Whitfield

CD Reviewers

Sophie Bisson, Stuart Broomer, Max Christie, Sam Dickenson, Daniel Foley, Raul da Gama, Janos Gardonyi, Richard Haskell, Tiina Kiik, Kati Kiilaspea, Roger Knox, Pamela Margles, Lesley Mitchell-Clarke, Cheryl Ockrant, David Olds, Ted Parkinson, Ivana Popovic, Terry Robbins, Michael Schulman, Michael Schwartz, Adam Scime, Andrew Scott, Adam Sherkin, Bruce Surtees, Andrew Timar, Yoshi Wall, Ken Waxman, Mathew Whitfield

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Karen Ages, Paul Ennis, Danial Jazaeri, David Perlman, John Sharpe

Listings Team

Ruth Atwood, Tilly Kooyman, John Sharpe, Gary Heard, Colin Story

Design Team

Kevin King, Susan Sinclair

Circulation Team

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DECEMBER 2020
BLUE PAGES Profiles: Part 3

theWholeNote PRESENTER PROFILES 2020/21

21st ANNUAL **BLUE PAGES**

BLUE PAGES LIST, OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2020

Age Khan Museum	Oriana Women's Choir
Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto	Orpheus Choir of Toronto
Americ Singers	Pak Christi Chorale
Aurifit Foundation	Peterborough Singers
Baie's Concert Association	Planet Landale, The
Canadian Children's Opera Company	Royal Canadian College of Organists,
Canadian Madrigals	Toronto Centre
Chorus Niagara	Royal Conservatory of Music
Church of St. Mary Magdalene	Southborough Philharmonic Orchestra
Church of St. Peter and St. Simon the Apostle	Steele Ensemble for Medieval Music
Confidence Concerts	Standards
Da Capo Chamber Choir	St. Thomas's Anglican Church
Dan Wright Faculty of Music,	Talhamini
Western University	Talkin' Choir
Edison Singers	Tarantula Opera
Elmer Iseler Singers	Toronto Chamber Choir
Elsa Festival & Singers	Toronto Children's Chorus
Ensemble Viant	Toronto Choral Society
Egypti Orchestra	Toronto Classical Singers
Ethiopia Community Choir	Toronto Concert
Evolution Community Concert Band	Toronto Mendelssohn Choir
Evolution Philharmonic Orchestra	Toronto Musical Project
Evolution Chamber Singers	Toronto Symphony Orchestra
Flute Street	Tito Arige
Hamilton Street Silver Band	University of Toronto Faculty of Music
Harold Baker Centre for the Performing Arts	Village Voices
Milliken Singers	VCCA Chorus of Toronto
Kanand Spinto Orchestra	Wychwood Classical Choir
King School Choir	
Music at St. Andrew's	Big Picture Communications
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Music in the Afternoon	Concerts In Care
Music Toronto	International Resource Centre for
New Music Concerts	Performing Artists
Off Centre Music Salon	Linda L'Esperance Publishing
Opera Alliance	Reflexion Daily Public Relations
Orchestra Toronto	SPEAK Music PR

21st ANNUAL DIRECTORY OF MUSICIANS REBUILDING LIVE MUSIC BRICK BY BRICK

Welcome to Part 2 of The WholeNote's 21st annual Blue Pages directory of our region's music community. Profiles which were printed in the October issue are in black type in the alphabetical list of directory members throughout this introduction. The list that can be found in this November issue are listed in red. The final and final print installment of the 2020-21 Blue Pages directory will be continually updated online at thewholenote.com under the "What's What" tab, as new profiles arrive. Additionally, all members of the directory will be given the opportunity to update their online profiles as and when they please for spring and summer 2021 content from us.

As mentioned in the October issue, so many musical organizations it has been a bumpy ride in this post-pandemic world, so much so that many of our paper products on supermarket shelves everywhere we hope you will find the profiles that follow to be of interest, and the links they refer to be useful as one of the community-based list by COVID-19-related brick by brick.

Thanks to community members who have volunteered to write their profiles with WholeNote member ships and profiles. We are grateful to all those who kept the lights on during the winter ahead. Similarly, we hope your presence here shows a signal to our readers who care about what's going on in our region. We're looking for ways to do the same. And thanks also to our staff members, whether print or online at ask.thewholenote.com. Where you can find a complete digital archive of our past editions since 2003, including the first issues we have printed since March 2020 in our renewed era of those four print issues and would like to see. Please contact us at circulation@thewholenote.com.

For information on the benefits of a WholeNote membership of which this Blue Pages is a part, please contact Karen Ages at karen@thewholenote.com or 416-323-2232 X34.

BLUE PAGES TEAM 2020/21
MANAGING EDITOR: Paul Ennis
EDITORIAL: David Olds
DESIGN: Kevin King
PROOFREADING: Jennifer Parr
CIRCULATION: Karen Ages

For What It's Worth

A couple of issues back (Vol 26, No 1) in this slot, I drew readers' attention to the cheeky tagline "Priceless" on the top right hand corner of our front cover (where one would usually expect to find a newsstand price, or, failing that, the word "Free"). "But for how long? And what comes next?" was the question I asked. For what it's worth, if you'll be sad to see the Priceless tagline go, turn back to the cover and bid it a fond farewell.

What will replace it? Perhaps nothing, immediately. The title of this Opener is maybe a good candidate. It captures the essence of what will need to change in our relationships with all the different constituencies within the music community who benefit in one way or another from the fact that we are around – in other words, you, our readership. We *know* how much you like us. But "what are we worth to you?" is a different question to grapple with – now that most of us, having slammed into an economic and social brick wall, find ourselves having to re-examine the fundamentals of how we used to play our various trades.

"You Can't Fake the Classifieds"

Reading Jenny Parr's interview with Musical Stage Company's Mitchell Marcus in this issue – especially the bit about Porchside Songs – brought to mind what I wrote here last month, after her recent death in Italy, about Kensington Market arts pioneer Ida Carnevali and her visceral understanding of how art is rooted in community. Which in turn got me thinking about another Kensington character from those days (thankfully still alive if not geographically among us), Buzz Burza.

Buzz, as we all called him, had the same neighbourhood-rooted understanding of community publishing as Ida did of community theatre, finding his way into our lives in the 1980s (by way of such landmark controlled-circulation publications as the *Toronto Clarion*, *The Skills Exchange*, and *Now* magazine) when we were in the early stages of founding the *Kensington Market Drum*. While Perlman was ranting about how the Market needed our own voice to withstand the tides of cynical change, and the onslaughts of city hall, Burza was quietly signing up dozens of businesses or agencies in and around the Market who would agree to carry the newspaper if we ever got it off the ground. "You can fake-build everything else in a community newspaper but you can't fake the classifieds" was a favourite *bon mot* of his, and we took it to heart – the DRUM's classified (DRUM HUM community ads, we called them, took the form of a brick wall across the bottom of as many pages as required, with "DRUM Bricks, only \$10 a throw" as our rallying cry.



Brick by Brick

It was the same brick-by-brick approach to controlled circulation and community listings with which we built *The WholeNote*, from modest beginnings as a column in the *Kensington Market Drum* into what it was as recently as half a year ago. And, in principle, it's the same approach – one brick at a time – that will see us (and I suspect many of you) through this next while. But we will only be as real as you help us be.

There are four brick walls (five if you count the one on this page) in this issue, each representing an aspect of what we do that can't be faked. Check them out. They are as fundamental to what makes *The WholeNote* hum as unfakeable classifieds were to the *Kensington Market Drum*. "I'll buy that!" is the response we'd love to hear. And they are not all monetary asks either. But they are all crucial as we rebuild our usefulness (see page 2).

Mind you, come to think of it, if you have thought about taking a subscription, for yourself or someone else, this might just be the time to consider doing so! And if you have immediate paid work to offer for musicians and other arts workers, see page 28. Till February those "bricks" are free!

publisher@thewholenote.com

Upcoming Dates & Deadlines for our combined December & January edition

Free Event Listings, deadline
Midnight, Monday November 16
Display Advertising, reservation deadline
6pm Friday November 20
Display Advertising, artwork due
6pm Monday, November 23
Classifieds deadline
6pm Saturday November 28
Publication Dates
Tuesday, December 1 (online)
Friday, December 4 (print)

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Celebrating Alanis Obomsawin

2020 Glenn Gould Prize Laureate

BY PAUL ENNIS

ANNABELLE MOREAU



Alanis Obomsawin

“No matter how difficult times are, try to remember that everywhere in the world there are a lot of good people and somehow, in the worst times, you meet someone who will help take you away from the danger.

Do not forget that, because if you only think of the bad part, you do not have much hope for the future. But I think it is the contrary. All these years, many times I was in danger and there was always someone who would appear and help me and get me out of that danger. I want to thank all the people who helped me in my lifetime when it was difficult.”

— Alanis Obomsawin

Every two years, the Glenn Gould Foundation convenes an international jury to award the Glenn Gould Prize to a living individual for a unique lifetime contribution that has enriched the human condition through the arts. Alanis Obomsawin, prolific documentary filmmaker, singer-songwriter, visual artist, activist and member of the Abenaki Nation, was chosen as the 13th Glenn Gould Prize Laureate on October 15, by a distinguished international jury chaired by groundbreaking performance artist, musician and filmmaker, Laurie Anderson.

Announced in an emotionally compelling virtual press conference that stretched across the planet, from Chennai, India, to Hollywood, the Glenn Gould Foundation shone a light on the greatest Canadian filmmaker you may never have heard of. Alanis Obomsawin has directed more than 50 films for the National Film Board of Canada, where she has worked since 1967. Her body of work includes the landmark documentary, the internationally acclaimed *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993), the first of four films she made about the 1990 Oka Crisis.

Now 88, she continues to make films. With *Jordan River Anderson, the Messenger* (2019), she recently completed a film cycle devoted to the rights of Indigenous children. She received the news of winning the Glenn Gould Prize while on set making a new film about a dream she had as a young woman. The main character is a green horse.

“I never expected to win such an honour,” Obomsawin said via video during the press conference. “I am in my village of Odanak in the province of Quebec. This is where I was raised. And this morning I watched the sun rise. It was like a prayer – it is the beginning of life. Our people’s name [Abenaki] means ‘people from where the sun rises, people of the East.’”

At the press conference, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Beverly McLachlin, a board member of the Glenn Gould Foundation

At Le Guess Who? Festival in Utrecht, Netherlands, in November 2017: Obomsawin's first concert in 30 years, where she sang *Bush Lady* in its entirety.



and member of the jury of the 12th Prize Laureate in 2018, acted as master of ceremonies, describing how Glenn Gould had passionately believed in the power of music and the arts to transform lives," and how, in that spirit, the aim of the foundation today is to celebrate "artistic heroes."

Laurie Anderson introduced the jury by saying what a pleasure it had been for her, listening to the jurors' passionate speeches and insights into the work of the 24 nominees they had to choose from. "I'd like to hear about your thought process," she said, inviting each of them in turn to speak. Hilary Hahn – Anderson called her "the best violinist in the world, in my opinion, a very sharp juror looking at

Jordan River Anderson, the Messenger (2019)



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The Glenn Gould Prize jury, with members of the foundation, in a virtual press conference, October 15. **Left to right, top to bottom:** Olivia Parsons (GGF), Teju Cole, Brian Levine (GGF), Peter O'Brien (GGF); Tatiana Maslany, Surojeet Chatterji, Philippe Starck, Harry Gregson-Williams; Chilly Gonzales, Adam Greig, Richard Reed Parry, Cecile McLorin Salvant; Hilary Hahn, Laurie Anderson (Chair), Neil Gaiman, AR Rahman

bigger issues” – had an interesting take on things: “I found this to be [like] an old-fashioned salon in which people share their ideas on art,” Hahn said. “The jurors’ conversations were passionate, informed. I felt honoured to be a part of the discussion ... [In Obomsawin] I see an icon of bravery and resilience; I see her work as an act of love for her community.”

Hahn was one of eight musicians on the 12-person jury, two of whom were Canadians: Richard Reed Parry, core member of Arcade Fire – Anderson talked about his “insight into how culture works in our moment” – and composer Chilly Gonzales, described by Anderson as “an amazing steady, cool presence, a tiebreaker, very skillful.” Gonzales said it felt like chaos at the beginning, seeing the list of nominees. “There was no guidance,” he said. “We had to find our own way.” He credits “our sherpa Laurie Anderson,” the spirit of Glenn Gould and “our spirits. It was inevitable.”

Nigerian-American writer, photographer and art historian Teju Cole: “It’s such an honour to be able to echo what others have said and for people watching this, I want them to understand that this is what it was like to be on this jury, just listening to very thoughtful, very soulful, people... The jury was full of incredibly accomplished people who somehow prioritized the idea of honouring somebody... for the kind of things we would wish to be honoured for ourselves,

At the Mariposa Folk Festival, where Obomsawin was coordinator of Aboriginal Peoples’ Programming from 1970 to 1976.



for the particular values that we would like to come to the surface in our own work ... I think the greatest joy and the deepest honour was to arrive at Alanis Obomsawin, who is a beacon for the Abenaki nation, and for the world. In 52 films, in the wonderful album *Bush Lady*, she exemplifies in a surprising way what we appreciate also in somebody like Glenn Gould, which is fearlessness and intensity combined.”

Not only has Obomsawin documented history – in the classic observational style of the National Film Board of Canada – in some cases, the Oka Crisis, for example, she has been a part of it. In the summer of 1990, Obomsawin spent 78 tense days filming the armed stand-off between the Mohawk people of Kanehsatà:ke, the Quebec police and the Canadian army to create a historical record that gave voice to an Indigenous community.

Jury member Surojeet Chatterji, a pianist and music educator based in Chennai, India, called Obomsawin “a virtuoso ... who plays on the fabric of life.”

Composer, singer-songwriter, music producer, philanthropist, jury member A. R. Rahman, also based in Chennai: “Alanis Obomsawin is a name that stands for resistance, persistence and resilience. Her life and her ardour as a creative icon are unique and inspiring over seven decades of chronicling the world through her art. Alanis has chartered a quiet revolution, passionate and powerful. Alanis’ art has always been a medium for social justice. In a world that belongs to all, but continues to sideline many, Alanis takes us beyond the norm, to reclaim history we once lost. At a time where there is more information than actual learning, Alanis guides us with wisdom from another realm, humble, going beyond just the surface.”

Only once, in 2013, when Robert Lepage was named Laureate, did the Foundation award the Prize to an artist not exclusively connected to the music community. You might think that this year’s Laureate would have been the second, but if you do, you don’t know the whole story of the remarkable woman whose artistic life has “enriched the human condition.” Seven years before beginning her work with the NFB, Obomsawin began her artistic life as a singer-songwriter in 1960. Since then, she has toured extensively, her songs – several based on traditional Indigenous melodies – serving as searing portraits of the lives of Indigenous women. A remastered version of her only album, *Bush Lady*, recorded in 1984, was released in June, 2018. The full effect of her performing skills can be seen in a powerful performance (when she was 85) of *Bush Lady (Part 1)*, on YouTube.

Richard Reed Parry: “It feels like a great privilege to shine a light

MSC's UnCovered Reinvented



JENNIFER PARR

The *UnCovered: Notes from the Heart* ensemble, recording the full cast finale in front of Koerner Hall, Royal Conservatory of Music.

DAHLIA KATZ



Mitchell Marcus

As Halloween approaches, I would normally be looking forward to going to Toronto's beautiful Koerner Hall for one of my favourite events in the fall music theatre calendar – The Musical Stage Company's annual *UnCovered*

concert. Clearly, this won't be taking place this year as it usually does, so I got in touch with company founder and artistic director Mitchell Marcus to find out about how the company is reinventing itself in response to the pandemic. What struck me most in our conversation was a sense of renewed emphasis on the importance of creating, maintaining and expanding community through the sharing of music and storytelling.

Community has always been at the heart of Musical Stage's mandate, he told me, but with the company's rebranding in 2017, and recent explosive expansion, "perhaps we have lost a little bit of that." But with the intense process of the last seven months it has come very much back into focus. Like other companies forced to pivot when theatres were shut down in the middle of March, MSC has leapt into the new world of experimentation: with small outdoor physically distanced live shows (Porchside Songs); with rehearsals and workshops conducted online via Zoom; and, most prominently, by reimagining their signature annual theatrical concert, *UnCovered*.

"I've never felt so lucky not to have a building," Marcus told me, "It meant it was easier to look at ourselves in the mirror in June and say the next year isn't going to happen in the way it was going to, and so now we are completely liberated. We can look at every program

and ask first of all 'should this be delivered, does it have value in the world now during COVID?' and if yes, 'How do we now create the same outcome we had hoped for, but with a completely different methodology?' And, in a way, that was fun. This year's *UnCovered* is something completely different but it does feel as if it honours what came before and that is such an exciting thing. Compared to the last 13 years, this year's version feels as if it has been built specifically for a different medium rather than just capturing what we did online."

The first *UnCovered* concert I attended was in 2017, when the songs of Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen were showcased. I remember being blown away by how the songbooks of these two iconic singer-songwriters were not covered so much as *uncovered* – the story at the heart of each song brought into the light through the insight of superb performers in new, often unexpected, arrangements created by Musical Stage's longtime music director Reza Jacobs. Anchoring that 2017 show were Sara Farb as an intensely focused, sardonic Bob Dylan, and Jake Epstein as a charismatic, rock and roll Springsteen; both superb singer/actors, they not only gave us thrilling interpretations of the songs but also spoke to the audience directly, letting us into both well- and lesser-known key points in Dylan's and Springsteen's lives and careers, particularly where they intersected and influenced each other. The result was a richly textured narrative context for interpretation by Farb and Epstein weaving a cast of some of Canada's top musical theatre artists, individually and in groups, into the narrative. And it is precisely this mix of music and storytelling which has made *UnCovered* a signature event for MSC, showcasing the belief in the power of musical storytelling that is at the heart of the company's mandate.

For the past 13 years, the songbooks of a wide range of pairs of singer-songwriters have been explored: from Queen and Bowie, to Stevie Wonder and Prince, to Joni Mitchell and Carol King. This year, it was going to be Elvis Presley and Dolly Parton. The songs had been chosen and the cast hired and they were "ready to jump in" in Marcus' words, when the shutdown happened. "We very quickly felt that this was one of the projects we had to deliver," Marcus says. "Not Elvis and Dolly per se, but when the pandemic hit, it felt as though songs, particularly those by the great poets in other eras of change, when songs needed to be songs of hope, or conflict, or transformation,

suddenly all had new meaning. That is *UnCovered* in a nutshell. If you take these songs that hold so much universal truth and put them in a new context, approaching them with an original arrangement and an original intent, people are going to respond to them in a new way. We'll be able to uncover just how much these songs hold. So, we opened ourselves up to a selection of songs that felt like they held something for the present moment – not that this would be a show about COVID – but it is about searching and hoping and looking at change.”

An unexpected brand-new hurdle then appeared. They had to get the rights of these songs for recording on film, which turned out to be much more complicated than the “very easy” and inexpensive process for getting rights to sing a pop song live. From a list of 60 possible songs, after a process of two months, they had 12 or 13 to choose from. “Thankfully” Marcus says, “they are excellent songs and allowed us to build our list for the show.” (The final list includes songs by Bob Dylan, Carole King, Bob Marley, Elton John and Billie Holiday, among others.) The next step was deciding who would sing what, followed by music director Jacobs “meeting with every artist on Zoom to talk about what their lives were like right now, what they saw in the song, and how it resonated with them. They had these beautiful conversations about life in the midst of everything that is going on, and then Reza took that away and created the new musical arrangements.”

Rather than creating a stage show that would then be filmed, the decision was made early on to make individual short films, ten in total, each a separate music video with a narrative storyline based on Jacob’s conversations with the artists. This also gave the opportunity of going outside to very specific locations in the city, even multiple locations within a single song. For example, Marcus said, “We were able to say, ‘What you built into this song about thinking about your family and how much goodness there is in that, we are going to translate into shooting a music video with you in a tree house in your backyard, going through photo albums, storyboarding out the journey to match what is happening musically.’”



Beau Dixon and Vanessa Sears, Porchside Songs, Summer 2020

DAPHNA KATZ

Normally, the next step would have been everyone rehearsing together. Instead, in order to keep everybody safe and follow all health and safety protocols, the show had to be built in stages. First the audio for each song was layered in, one voice at a time, in a recording studio with just one person there behind glass on one side, and the music director behind glass on the other side. Then a backup singer would come in and layer on top of that, then a drummer, then a bass player, etc. “Nobody was interacting but they were creating an ensemble.” The filming of each song then followed.

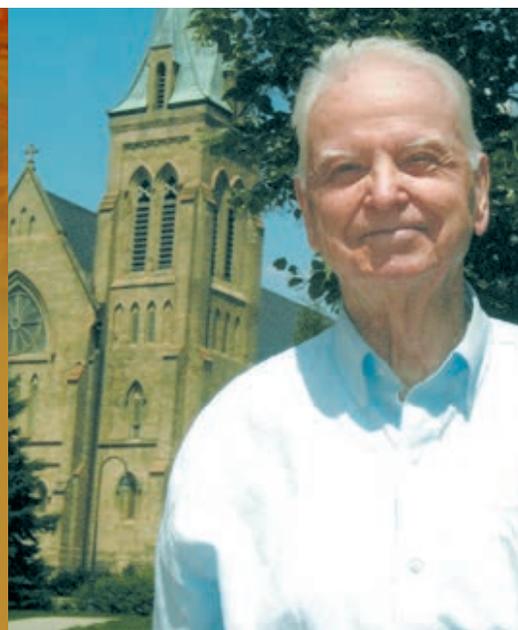
Most of the films have a single artist onscreen, though a few have more, including a finale with everyone, including Jacobs and the band, on location, all physically distanced. In every case the artists are singing along to very high quality audio tracks recorded in the studio so while the sound is excellent, they do appear to be singing live. The show is very intentionally built to give each song its own unique personality, feeling and style, but they are linked by short interviews with the artists preceding each film, emulating the process, talking about what it is that speaks to them personally in their song. Also, in a nod to the usual connecting narrative, between the interview and

Father OWEN LEE at www.opera-is.com

Admired by millions around the world for his brilliant intermission commentaries in radio broadcasts for the Metropolitan Opera in New York and for many decades of knowledgeable and witty appearances on the Texaco Opera Quiz broadcasts, Father Owen Lee passed away in 2019, just shy of his 90th birthday.

This memorial site, curated by Iain Scott, includes seven video interviews; a wide selection of Lee’s Met radio broadcasts; audio playlists exploring his musical and dramatic analyses and commentaries; a brief introduction to each of his 21 books; lists of his published articles and public lectures; biographies, his eulogy and several obituaries.

www.opera-is.com





DAHILIA KATZ

Jackie Richardson (left) and Divine Brown

the music video there will be a quote from the songwriter displayed onscreen that “connects the dots between the artist’s feeling about the song, and what we are about to see.” The entire show lasts approximately 65 minutes and Marcus’ hope is that “audiences will feel that they are watching something of high quality that speaks to this moment, and that will resonate as much as, or even more deeply, than people gathering at Koerner Hall.”

Tickets for *UnCovered: Notes From The Heart* will be timed for a specific day and hour in order to create a sense of “liveness” for everybody watching, something very important to the team. On top of that, there is a menu of Expanded Experiences available to add on from pre-show Zoom chats with artists to Deep Dive Dinners including a catered meal and a facilitated philosophical group discussion, to fully customizable group experiences, “all to help create that feeling of gathering together because we can’t do so in person.”

I asked Marcus if he felt this experiment was opening the door to something that could keep happening post pandemic. “I don’t know,” he said. “What is keeping me grounded at this time is to believe that there is a gift of experimentation right now. We are very privileged that we are not in crisis, that we are getting to play. I’m sure we’re not nailing it across the board. I think some experiments have worked out better than others, but whether it was Porchside Songs this summer, or moving programs nationally online, or *UnCovered*, these are interesting ... Maybe we’ll just return to the way we were, but maybe the silver lining of having to pivot and work in a different way is going to uncover something for us that helps to inform *the way* we want to return and the way we can actually do our work even better.”

Porchside Songs, for example, entailed pocket concerts played by two or three top-notch artists who could travel around the city with a makeshift audio kit, and provided what Marcus calls “a key example of illumination” – the balance at the heart of the company’s mandate, between artistic content and community building. “The artists were all great,” he said, “but what made these intimate concerts such a beautiful and powerful experience was seeing how communities, whether street neighbours or a group of friends, were being brought together by an event that had music and storytelling at its centre.”

UnCovered: Notes From The Heart streams online from November 11 to December 6.

For further information, to buy tickets, or arrange a group event, see the company’s website: musicalstagecompany.com. ●

Jennifer Parr is a Toronto-based director, dramaturge, fight director and acting coach, brought up from a young age on a rich mix of musicals, Shakespeare and new Canadian plays.

NEW MUSIC

Exquisite Departures in trying times

ANDREW TIMAR

Method for the Madness

Toronto weather the third week of October is still comfortably moist and mild. In the park across from my midtown street, mature deciduous trees are still tenuously holding to a blend of burgundy, flaming red, orange, yellow and green – a reminder of the kind of weather that used to signal the fall live music harvest in the times before. Sadly all live concert bets are off during this last quarter of the current year, but The Music Gallery (MG), proudly billing itself as “Toronto’s Centre for Creative Music,” is an example of an organization that continues its programming by all available means.

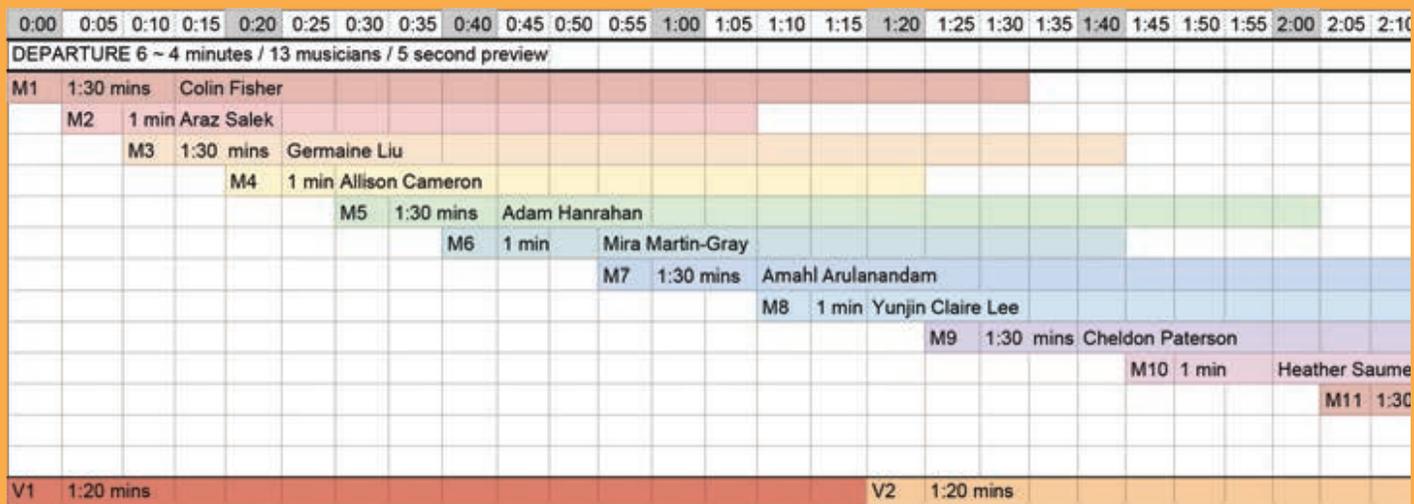


Tad Michalak

Going on 44 years, presenting and promoting “leading-edge contemporary music in all genres,” the MG has its current sights set on an ambitious project involving 15 musicians, six video artists, plus audio and video mixer technicians. Receiving its webcast premiere on November 20, *Exquisite Departures* is curated by Tad Michalak; the work is part of the MG’s Departures Series which Michalak has been running since 2014.

The *Exquisite Departures* title and structure derive from what began as a 1920s Surrealist game – and which is variously seeing new life these days as a way of bringing creative methods to distance madness. As described in “*Exquisite Corpse*” and *Other Coping Strategies* in the July/August 2020 *WholeNote*, the basis of the original Dadaist game was for players in turn to write something, folding the page to hide part of what they had written before passing it on to another player who would have to continue it without seeing all of it. The (sometimes) enriching fun came when the whole thing was presented, with the missing parts revealed.

And also recently in *The WholeNote*, in *Lessons Learned from the CEE’s COVID-Era Experiences*, David Jaeger reported on a Canadian Electronic Ensemble project titled “Pass the Track” – devised by the six-member CEE in response to not being able physically to meet to make music. Using a process similar to exquisite corpse, *Pass the Track* relied on a process of layering audio tracks digitally sent from one CEE member to another, each adding another audio layer. It was



The *Exquisite Departure 6* track map.

all mixed and edited by the CEE’s Paul Stillwell who also enhanced two of the pieces with captivating digital animation. (For more details please visit canadianelectronicensemble.com.)

Tad Michalak

All of which, taking the long way around the barn, brings us to the upcoming *MG Exquisite Departures*. Its curator, Tad Michalak, has been producing and promoting live music concerts in Toronto since 2005 under Burn Down the Capital and other monikers. I explored his new work with him mid-October on email and over the phone.

“I’ve definitely been feeling the loss of live music in a pretty big way ... obviously,” he began ruefully. “Everything I had planned for this year was postponed in stages, and as the months rolled on – cancelled. It’s very challenging to see everything you’d been working on dumped in the trash.”

With his live music productions eliminated, Michalak did what others have also done out of necessity: pivoted online. The result: a prime example of audience engagement during a pandemic, for experimental artists and organizations with the artistic resources to support them, in this case the MG. The 15 musicians chosen by Michalak reflect the vibrant improv music scene active around the MG, the instruments as varied as the backgrounds of the musicians themselves. They range,

in no particular order, from percussionist Germaine Liu, cellist Amahl Arulanandam and flutist Alia O’Brien, to Colin Fisher on electric guitar, tar player Araz Salek, Cheldon Paterson aka Slowpitchsound on turntables/electronics, and Allison Cameron on electronics/toys/ukulele. For the complete list please visit the musicgallery.org.

One of the project’s lesser-known and perhaps newest instruments, played by Mira Martin-Gray, is the no-input mixer. While most users try to avoid noise when mixing, no-input mixing takes a contrary approach, exploiting residual noise inherent in every mixer, and using it to generate and manipulate sound, thereby transforming a systemic weakness into a musical strength.

The Map

Michalak devised a template to be used by the musicians at the multiple *Exquisite Departures* recording sessions that took place at the MG in September. The scope of his creative decisions goes far beyond the purview of a typical curator, and thus is worth a closer look. He explained, “The musicians were given a written ‘track map’ I prepared that indicated which of 15 time slots they had to perform within. Where musicians have staggered entries relies on a formula dictating at what intervals musicians join the track, plus the overall duration of their segment.”

20/21

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Exquisite Corpses From the Bunker LP, 1988

In *Exquisite Departure 6* for example, Michalak has the first group of three musicians start five seconds apart, the next three ten seconds apart, the third three 15 seconds apart, etc. “The individual segment lengths alternate between one and one and a half minutes long, creating an interesting stacking and phasing in and out of instruments,” he says. “For the shorter *Departures* all musicians play for the full duration. My overall aim was to have *Departures* of variable length.”

For inspiration, Michalak looked to the 1988 LP *Exquisite Corpses from the Bunker*. Made by 22 New York avant-garde improv musicians who booked a local studio, they collectively laid down 15 intense tracks. Made via the technology of overdubbing, they eschewed the star system; all players contributed on an equal basis. As befitted the project’s collective nature, there was no composer credit.

It was a portrait of a specific scene in time – and so, 32 years later in Toronto, is the MG’s *Exquisite Departures*.

“As for the number of musicians on each track, four was the maximum on the shorter tracks,” added Michalak, “leaving the players plenty of sonic room to play in. On the other hand, some of the longer tracks were designed to include all 15 musicians. My goal was to build variety in the entry patterns and durations, thereby inspiring diverse musical interactions among the players.”

Even a given musician’s appearance was determined by Michalak, using a complex calculation balancing a number of variables. These include the number of times a musician plays next to another, the number of times they start a track and the amount of time they spend on it, all the while keeping the total number of segments each musician plays equal to the others.

Each musician, however, had the freedom within those constraints to craft their response to the other musicians on a given *Departures* in the spirit and received performance practice of collaborative improvisation.

The team

Michalak sent me finished mixes of several short audio tracks of the projected 15 *Departures* when I began this story. They were recorded at 918 Bathurst Street and mixed by the MG’s technical director and veteran audio engineer, Paul Hodge – his roots running deep, back to the early days of the MG. “It was reminiscent of Cage-like compositions where the elements are beyond your control and left to chance,” Hodge commented in an email.

While the audio final had been completed by Hodge by this point, the six video artists in the project are preparing their visual responses to the soundtrack as I write this. They form an eclectic group, linked by their emerging-career status and diverse aesthetic and stylistic approaches. Allow me to introduce the Toronto-based video team.

Pursuit Grooves (Vanese Smith) works both as a music producer – part of the experimental electronic, hip-hop and club-music scenes – and, as Mo:delic Arts, the creator of abstract video art and graphic designs. “When listening to the music samples provided, I wanted to

match the experimental mood and tone. I had no idea what to expect musically, but I thoroughly enjoyed the process of providing a visual accompaniment and letting my imagination run free!”

On the other hand, digital media artist Peter Rahul, who specializes in glitch methodologies, calls himself a “techno-archaeologist,” exploring the limits of vintage electronics. And self-taught animator and performer Jesi Jordan’s work is full of what she calls “chimeric landforms, melting bodies, radical womanhood, sentient objects and disarming ruptures of time and space.”

J.L. Whitecrow works in multiple media, primarily showcased through Toronto LGBTQ2S and BIPOC circles and film festivals. Influenced by a background in philosophy and advocacy work in decolonization and preservation of Indigenous knowledge and worldview, Whitecrow reflects in an email, “My approach [on this project] has been to interpret my feelings evoked by the music ... focusing on creating visual tonality, rather than on specific images. The abstractness of each musical segment is allowing for a distance from the ordinary world, and I’m getting lost in the texture of things. I’m also pondering the idea of essence, whether it be our humanness or how light affects us.”

Also on the video team are Kadrah Mensah, an interdisciplinary artist focused on technology and cyberculture, and Julie Reich, aka Bile Sister, enjoying a multifaceted career as video artist, music producer, musician and composer, with an impressive music back catalogue.

Jumping-Off Points

“I chose these video artists largely because I thought their diverse approaches will hopefully keep things interesting as they use each other’s ideas as jumping-off points,” Michalak says. I’ve worked with several and they’ve all been active in video art communities that intersect some aspect of the music scenes represented through the MG.” In yet another meaningful intersection, last spring J.L. Whitecrow launched *Exquisite Corpse-19*, a COVID-inspired video project adapting the Surrealist game.

As was the case for the musicians, the video artists were given carte blanche within their segments, though Michalak was careful to set up basic timing ground rules and expectations, “allowing for things to play out within the [exquisite corpse] game. For example, the artist who does the first third of a given *Departure* obviously sets the tone for it. Those following only see the last 5 to 15 seconds of the video segment that precedes theirs,” he concluded.

Kristel Jax, marketing coordinator at the MG, is the final member of the *Exquisite Departures* production team. She’s tasked with assembling the video contributions, synching them with the finished audio tracks and managing the November 20 premiere webcast on Music Gallery Live.

Which is where, after this dive into the creation of *Exquisite Departures*, I for one am getting ready to be, with my best monitor and speakers at hand.

If you miss the premiere webcast on November 20, 2020, at 7pm at musicgallery.org/live, the production’s permanent home on Bandcamp launches on December 4, 2020 at musicgallery.bandcamp.com. ●

Andrew Timar is a Toronto musician and music writer.

Jazz in the Kitchen The COVID-19 Sessions

STEVE WALLACE

From both a local jazz and personal perspective, I didn't think it could get any worse than 2019 where, as I wrote here previously, in rapid succession the deaths of Ed Bickert, Gary Williamson and John Sumner robbed the Toronto scene of three of its best musicians, and for many of us, of three long-standing and treasured friends. Norma Thompson and Rochelle Koskie, two great ladies who had adorned the Toronto scene for decades, also passed. In the middle of all of this I fell and tore up my shoulder pretty badly – very small potatoes compared to dying – but for a time the injury called into question my future as a bass player. And about a month later, my good friend Patti Loach had a bad cycling accident and tore up her clavicle. Pianist Norman Amadio made it through 2019, but just barely, dying on January 21, 2020 after a long decline. But his death, coming before the pandemic hit us, seems like last year, too. Several times back then I said out loud that on a close-to-home level, it was the worst year I could remember, ever. How wrong I was.

Cortege

2020 has seen more deaths of jazz musicians than any other year in memory. Not all of these were COVID-related, but many were. Here's a partial list – the ones I can remember off the top of my head – and it's not even Halloween yet: Lee Konitz, Ellis Marsalis, McCoy Tyner, Annie Ross, Holli Ross, (no relation but also a wonderful singer), Steve Grossman, Henry Grimes and Giuseppi Logan (days apart in April), Johnny Mandel, Jimmy Cobb, Lennie Niehaus, Eddie Gale, Helen Jones Woods, Robert Northern, Cleveland Eaton, Keith Tippett, Gary Peacock, Ira Sullivan, and two men who were not musicians but who each had a major impact on jazz for many years – Chicago-based promoter Joe Segal and writer/critic Stanley Crouch.

And this doesn't include musicians in other fields – Bill Withers, Peter Green (for my money the best British blues guitarist of them



John and Patti Loach

JOHN & PATTI LOACH

all), Charlie Daniels, John Prine (broke my heart), Eddie Van Halen and many others I've no doubt forgotten. Like the ballpark hawkker says, "Get yer program, folks, you can't tell the (dead) players without a program!" There have been more jazz obit notices in my email than nuisance promotions lately. The virus taketh away and then it taketh away more.

Back to the Drawing Board

The recent and ominous uptick in COVID numbers in Toronto has also taken away any attempts at presenting live jazz in clubs, which I touched upon, too optimistically, in my last column. We've now returned to a partial Phase 2 lockdown – I think it's Phase 2, but frankly I've lost track – limiting indoor drinking and eating in bars and restaurants. So much for going out to hear jazz in a club, and the worrying thing is that even when (and if) these measures are lifted, the delay in reopening live jazz represents another nail in the coffin, particularly with winter weather approaching. With so much of the jazz demographic being older, the fear that by the spring when things may have improved, the habit of not going to hear live jazz will have become entrenched, keeps me awake nights. What if after a year, people simply decide they can live without live jazz?

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Steve Wallace (left) and Mark Eisenman

Jazz in the Kitchen

So, increasingly, presenting live – or semi-live – jazz to an audience has turned to online, remote methods, which have flourished. For a backward-looking Luddite such as myself, though – a good friend once generously described me as a “techno-peasant” – the nuts and bolts of this are both confusing and daunting, so it helps to have friends who are gifted along these lines. And I’m happy to say I have one such friend in John Loach, who is a genius of technology and design, an outside-the-box thinker *par excellence*.

Some readers will know of John, but for those who don’t, here’s a brief rundown: he’s a mechanical and industrial engineer as well as a gifted recording engineer and trumpeter. He invented some heavy-duty industrial machinery which was very successful, allowing him to pursue his many musical interests, which include being a serious enabler and patron of jazz. He and his wife, the afore-mentioned Patti, a gifted pianist, have opened their lovely and spacious Beaches home to various jazz endeavours over the years.

These began with impromptu jams among friends and then John began offering certain musicians the opportunity to record free of charge in the house, which boasts a great Steinway, warm acoustics and a very relaxed atmosphere, with him acting as engineer, mixer and congenial host. Apart from the piano, one would never guess that the room opposite the kitchen was designed for musical purposes, but tucked out of sight in various large closets are a mixing board/computer, microphones, baffles, cables and music stands. Although not a professional, he’s one of the finest recording engineers I’ve encountered because, being a good musician himself, he understands the music – and the overall requirements of musicians – as well as the technology involved. The Loaches has become my favourite place to record – good results with the likes of Warren Vaché, John Alcorn, Arlene Smith, Chase Sanborn, the Mike Murley trio including Renee Rosnes as a guest – mainly because it’s so relaxed that it doesn’t feel like you’re recording there, but rather just making music, which is invaluable and the general idea.

The Loaches expanded all this when they started a series of monthly salon concerts at their house known as Jazz in the Kitchen, which became an instant success. This idea was largely John’s typically outside-the-box response to Mark Eisenman and me simply wanting to do more playing with John because we enjoyed it so much. The next thing we knew, John and Patti came up with the idea of creating an online site and selling tickets for these concerts to 35 or 40 people who came to love the close intimacy and unique informality of the setting. No noise, no waiters, no bar tabs, no yakking customers, just real jazz presented to people who want to listen to it. What a concept, and seven years and some 60 concerts later, JITK has become a treasured and integral part of the local scene.

The Sessions

Of course, the pandemic interrupted all of this. Mark Eisenman, drummer Mark Micklethwaite and I (the house trio at JITK) kicked



Mark Micklethwaite

around the idea of trying to do some future recording and possible other projects, but we decided the first order of business was to get together at Eisenman’s and just play, to see if we still had it. As soon as John and Patti got wind of this after our first get-together, they invited us to play at their place; so were “The COVID-19 Sessions” born.

Because the trio has played there so often, the Loaches’ house seemed like a natural place to record in the future, and John wanted to experiment with the challenge of recording drums in such a small space, which he has mastered. When we arrived for the first session on July 29, John had the “studio” all ready to go – mics and some minimal baffling in place, the house drum kit set up, the house bass on a stand. He’d also placed some small video cameras on boom stands to introduce a visual element. We just went about playing, doing seven takes altogether of six different tunes. According to John, that first day had spotty audio and minimal video, but things have improved a lot since then. In subsequent sessions on August 6, 17 and 26, September 3 and 11, and October 17, we’ve recorded a whopping 54 tunes in 59 takes, with the music and audio/visual recording getting better each time.

(There was also a solo piano session on October 6, which Mark Eisenman asked me to join, but I couldn’t due to a teaching commitment. You’ll notice some gaps in there – we took a break in mid-September for various cautionary reasons, including the uptick and the uncertainty of schools reopening – Mark Micklethwaite has two young daughters who might have been affected.)

John posted some of the earliest efforts on YouTube but as the technical aspects improved, he had something else in mind. We all agreed that we missed the JITK concerts, and the Loaches had heard from many attendees that were missing them too. So John decided to post our videos on the JITK site and invited people to subscribe for a one-time fee of \$20, a kind of JITK 2.0, online. The response has been very encouraging and many have not only subscribed but offered help in spreading the word. We’re not in it for the money – nobody in their right mind is – but we actually had our first “payday” from these efforts recently. It’s not the money in itself that’s important, but rather the indication that people are still willing to spend money to hear jazz, which warms the heart. I leave the sessions both uplifted and exhausted – it’s amazing how tiring playing jazz is when you’re out of shape – but the notion of an audience, even an unseen one – ups the musical ante, as always.

A heartfelt thanks from the musicians in the trio and from many jazz fans to John and Patti Loach for once again providing us with such a generous outlet. There will be more music from future sessions including some jazz Christmas offerings. Those who wish to subscribe may do so at jazzinthekitchen.ca 🎷

Toronto bassist Steve Wallace writes a blog called “Steve Wallace jazz, baseball, life and other ephemera” which can be accessed at wallacebass.com. Aside from the topics mentioned, he sometimes writes about movies and food.

Music for Life

JACK MACQUARRIE

As we sit in anticipation of small white crystals on our lawns, rather than those colourful bright leaves, we have to realize that our community music is going to be very different this year than the rehearsals and concerts we have been accustomed to. While the social aspects of community music have almost entirely disappeared, along with the leaves, with so many advances in digital technology we are seeing amazing adaptations across the musical spectrum.

Tech Talk

In last month's issue of this column I mentioned that New Horizons Band of Toronto, in collaboration with Resa's Pieces would be working with Long and McQuade Music for a "Tech Talk Workshop." Other than the fact that the venture was to consist of a few online Zoom sessions of advice from specialists at L & M, details were rather sketchy at the time. Since I was not able to participate in the first of these in order to find out more for myself, I asked Randy Kligerman from New Horizons what sparked the idea and how the first session worked out.

Here's his answer to my question on how it all started: "With the advent of many new music software programs and Zoom-type communication services available, the need to better understand the benefits of external computer components like mics and speakers has never been greater. After doing some research online, two things became apparent: 1) using a better mic, speaker and headphones makes a measurable difference in the quality and enjoyment of every computer program; 2) choosing from one of the many brands and determining which would work on a desktop, laptop, iPad or phone is a daunting task."

Over time, and having exhausted far too many research options, Randy spoke with Neil Guise from Long and McQuade's Danforth Avenue store in Toronto, and asked if he would be able to provide help in explaining the basic technology, how the many devices hook up to a computer and the cost/benefit ratios of each option. Armed with his own laptop, Randy visited Guise and hooked up his laptop so that he could hook everything up and take it for a musical test drive!

After that meeting, Randy, with the New Horizons Band of Toronto, got together with Resa's Pieces and asked Neil to do a one-hour Zoom tech talk for their members. So in early September, they held a zoom lecture, where for 40 minutes, Neil explained the differences between dynamic and condenser microphones, whether you needed an audio interface and how to choose one, and what cabling was needed to connect the external pieces to your devices. This was followed by a Q&A for the remaining 20 minutes.

The feedback from the band members was excellent. Many commented on how their new knowledge enabled them to have better access to their own computer needs. They also gained added confidence when they learned that they could buy and use the equipment for a limited amount of time and return it, or try something else if not satisfied. Due to demand, they ran a second Talk about Tech and included information on metronome/tuner options as well as on various types of headphones.



Vince Gassi

Music for Life Conversations

As if that was not enough, these folks came up with the idea of what they called Music for Life Conversations. "With COVID-19 restricting our ability to play in person," Kligerman explained, "never has the need to engage in conversation with fellow musicians been more important." So to help ensure that this happens, New Horizons Band of Toronto (NHBT), together with Resa's Pieces created Music for Life, a series of stimulating conversations about many aspects of a musician's life. To date they have featured Dr. Marshall Chasin, a researcher, musician and audiologist who specializes in the prevention of hearing loss for musicians, and Vince Gassi, a composer, musician and teacher, who talked about how he approaches the challenge of turning poems and stories into musical compositions. Coming up will be conversations with conductor Mélanie Léonard, who will share some of her experiences, challenges and rewards in her career, and TSO violinist Jim Wallenberg, who will speak about his experiences and challenges in music performances under several different conductors.

These Music for Life Conversations are presented through Zoom, and last approximately 50 minutes, with registration facilitated through the NHBT website. As of this writing, they are at full capacity, but I was fortunate enough to be able watch and listen to the first of these conversations with Vince Gassi.

Chase the Shouting Wind

Gassi is a composer, conductor and clinician, whose compositions grace the libraries of most Canadian bands. With a bachelor of music degree from Western University in London, he later studied composing and arranging at the Dick Grove School of Music in Los Angeles, California. More recently he completed his PhD at York University in Toronto. With over 100 published titles to his credit, his compositions have been published by Alfred Publishing since 2006. For 25 years he has taught instrumental music at the elementary and secondary school levels and is in frequent demand as a guest conductor, adjudicator and clinician throughout the United States and Canada.

Chase the Shouting Wind was the title of the Music for Life conversations I "attended" where Gassi explained the genesis of a composition from his first ideas to the writing of the complete score with all of the parts. His inspiration for the composition was a poem, *High Flight*, that I personally remember well since first reading it many years ago. This poem was written by Pilot Officer John Gillespie Magee, Jr. an American serving in the RCAF in Britain during W.W.II.



Neil Guise

High Flight

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds – and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of – wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up the long delirious, burning blue,
I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, or even eagle flew –
And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod
The high unsurpassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand and touched the face of God.

After a high altitude test flight one day, John wrote his parents a letter and enclosed a poem, *High Flight*, that his test flight had inspired. A few months later, in 1941, he was killed in an accidental mid-air collision over England.

As he read the poem (which I am including here), Gassi, sitting at his computer, explained how every image that he envisaged from the poem would then be translated into a unique musical phrase. As viewers, we were able to see the music manuscript with each phrase highlighted in red, hear the music and hear Gassi's explanations. It was excellent, and one of the most professional sessions that I have even seen on the Internet.

Remembrance Day

Along with many concerts on the theme, early in this month, on November 11, we would normally have many bands playing at outdoor ceremonies with all of the appropriate bugle calls. As my regular readers know, I have over the course of months made many comments in this column about my dislike for bugle calls being played on a trumpet. I even campaigned for the local Legion to acquire a proper bugle. I was successful, and the Legion now has an excellent custom-made silver bugle with an inscription dedicating it to a former Legion member who landed on Juno Beach on June 6, 1944. I had been hoping to attend a ceremony this year and hear that bugle, but as far as I know, there will be no such outdoor ceremonies at cenotaphs anywhere in Ontario this year.



Doug Hoyle, with the Legion's new bugle.

And speaking of remembrance, as a former Navy member, this is not the official Naval Prayer, but it is a short one that is used regularly at naval dinners, particularly worth noting at a time when "fields where poppies grow" are how most of us choose to remember.

On all the oceans whitecaps flow.

There are no crosses row on row

For those that sleep beneath the sea

They sleep in peace

Our country's free

Band Activities

Usually this would be the place to report on recent and future band activities. So far, we only have news from a couple of other bands. The Hannaford Street Silver Band is trying a different method of entertaining their audience. In a message to their subscribers, they said: "This fall, you can get your Hannaford fix from the comfort of your home!" Subscribers can sign up and then enjoy a different kind of

performance. On Sunday, October 25, in "You Can't Keep a Good Band Down" they featured a ten-piece virtuoso ensemble conducted by Daniel Warren. In the case of the Markham Concert band, they tell us that the Flato Markham Theatre has extended its closure until at least the end of 2020. This, of course, means that the previously announced Markham Concert Band's October 18 and November 29 concerts are cancelled.

Incidents at the Bandstand

As I mentioned last month, over the years I have observed many incidents at bandstands during concerts, and keep a note of incidents, some disruptive, some of no great consequence, and others that were humorous. This month's incident was one that the audience would never have noticed, but I sure did! Some years ago I was playing a concert in a local concert hall. We were in the middle of a large work when the French horn player sitting directly ahead of me put down her horn, picked up her cell phone and proceeded to send, and/or read, a text message. So much for diligent attention to the conductor. As the saying goes, the devil makes work for idle hands. 🐼

Jack MacQuarrie plays several brass instruments and has performed in many community ensembles. He can be contacted at bandstand@thewholenote.com.

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21st ANNUAL

BLUE PAGES

BLUE PAGES LIST, OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2020

- Aga Khan Museum
- Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto
- Annex Singers
- Azrieli Foundation
- Barrie Concert Association
- Canadian Children's Opera Company
- Canadian Sinfonietta
- Chorus Niagara
- Church of St. Mary Magdalene
- Church of St. Peter and St. Simon-the-Apostle
- Confluence Concerts
- DaCapo Chamber Choir
- Don Wright Faculty of Music,
Western University
- Edison Singers
- Elmer Iseler Singers
- Elora Festival & Singers
- Ensemble Vivant
- Esprit Orchestra
- Etobicoke Centennial Choir
- Etobicoke Community Concert Band
- Etobicoke Philharmonic Orchestra
- Exultate Chamber Singers
- Flute Street
- Hannaford Street Silver Band
- Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts
- Jubilate Singers
- Kindred Spirits Orchestra
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- Music in the Afternoon
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- New Music Concerts
- Off Centre Music Salon
- Opera Atelier
- Orchestra Toronto
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- Pax Christi Chorale
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- Piano Lunaire, The
- Royal Canadian College of Organists,
Toronto Centre
- Royal Conservatory of Music
- Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra
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- St. Thomas's Anglican Church
- Tafelmusik
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- Toronto Consort
- Toronto Mendelssohn Choir
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- Trio Arkel
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- Wychwood Clarinet Choir
- Big Picture Communications
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- Concerts in Care
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21st ANNUAL DIRECTORY
OF MUSIC MAKERS
REBUILDING LIVE MUSIC
BRICK BY BRICK

Welcome to Part 2 of *The WholeNote's* 21st annual Blue Pages directory of our region's music community. Profiles which were printed in the October issue are in black type in the alphabetical list of directory members alongside this introduction. The 18 that can be found in this November issue are listed in red. The third and final print installment of the 2020-21 Blue Pages will follow in the December/January issue.

Meanwhile, the cumulative Blue Pages directory will be continually updated online at thewholenote.com under the "Who's Who" tab, as new profiles arrive. Additionally, all members of the directory will be given the opportunity to update their online profiles as and when their plans for spring and summer 2021 continue to firm up.

As mentioned in the October issue, for many musical organizations it has been a bumpy ride to this point, with crystal balls as much in short supply as paper products on supermarket shelves! Nevertheless we hope you will find the profiles that follow to be of interest, and the links they offer to be useful as one of the communities hardest hit by COVID-19 rebuilds itself, brick by brick.

Thanks to community members who have unhesitatingly come forward with *WholeNote* memberships and profiles: you are helping us find ways to keep the lights on during the winter ahead. Similarly we hope your presence here also sends a signal to our readers who care about what you do, that you are finding ways to do the same. And thanks also to our faithful readers, whether in print or online at kiosk.thewholenote.com where you can find a complete digitized archive of our print editions since 1995, including the five issues we have printed since March 2020. If you missed any of those four print issues and would like copies, please contact us at circulation@thewholenote.com.

For information on the benefits of a *WholeNote* membership (of which a Blue Pages profile is a feature), please contact Karen Ages at karen@thewholenote.com or 416-323-2232 x26.

.....
BLUE PAGES TEAM 2020/21
 PROJECT MANAGER: Karen Ages
 PROJECT EDITOR: Danial Jazaeri
 LAYOUT AND DESIGN: Susan Sinclair
 WEBSITE: Kevin King



The Elora Singers and Festival, Elora, ON

● **Barrie Concert Association**

The Barrie Concert Association, a charitable non-profit organization, presents 12 live performances of mainly Classical music from September/October to May. One-hour piano/organ recitals are also held the first three Wednesdays of every month - presenting classical, baroque, blues and light jazz.

During the COVID-19 situation, we daily get phone calls from subscribers hoping concerts can resume. They miss the music - and in these times probably need the music more than ever. However we can only start the performances again when it is safe to do so - we must care for the health challenges of the audience. We will keep you posted with developments as they happen.

Bruce Owen
705-726-1181
info@barrieconcerts.org
www.barrieconcerts.org

● **Confluence Concerts**

Confluence - "an act or process of merging" - presents engaging concerts ranging from jazz to traditional South Asian music, opera to pop, across centuries and cultures. Artistic producer Larry Beckwith and artistic associates Andrew Downing, Marion Newman, Patricia O'Callaghan, and Suba Sankaran collaborate with a wide cross-section of Toronto's rich and diverse arts community to create intimate, thought-provoking programs, including cabarets, anniversary programs celebrating important figures in music, salons and lectures on a wide variety of musical topics, and commissions of new works by Canadian artists. Our 2020/21 online season features: "Something to Live For - A Billy Strayhorn Celebration"; "A Purcell Remembrance - The Exaltation of Poetry"; "Creativity and Aging - The Late

Works of Olivier Messiaen and Leonard Cohen"; "The Mandala - The Beauty of Impermanence"; "The Butterfly Project - The Ballade of Chō-Chō San"; "The John Beckwith Songbook - Over 70 Years of Originality"; and "Gracias a la Vida - Spanish Serenades". In September we launched The Fuse, a monthly podcast that supports the vibrant Canadian music scene with interviews and articles about musicians, artists, and administrators across the country.

"...this series has established itself as one of the most important and consistently interesting in the city." - John Gilks, Opera Ramblings.

Jennifer Collins
647-678-4923
manager@confluenceconcerts.ca
www.confluenceconcerts.ca
www.facebook.com/confluenceconcerts
www.twitter.com/confluconcerts

● **Elmer Iseler Singers**

Elmer Iseler Singers (EIS) is a 20-voice professional chamber choir based in Toronto and founded by the late Dr. Elmer Iseler in 1979. Directed by the acclaimed Lydia Adams, the Singers are known for tonal beauty and interpretive range, and valued for their contributions to masterclasses and workshops with schools and community choirs.

The Elmer Iseler Singers have 15 recorded CDs featuring Canadian music. EIS with Toronto Symphony Orchestra were 2019 Grammy-nominated and 2019 JUNO-awarded for the brilliant Ralph Vaughan Williams' Chandos CD recording, with Peter Oundjian conducting. EIS are 2014 National Choral Award recipients and JUNO nominees for "Classical Album of the Year: Vocal or Choral Performance" for *Dark Star Requiem* with Tapestry Opera and Gryphon Trio in 2017, and for David Braid's *Corona Divinae Misericordiae* with Patricia O'Callaghan in 2019.

We are pleased to announce that the Elmer Iseler Singers will join the Viva Youth Singers in

educational and collaborative sessions of mentorship with the EIS as vocal coaches in a study of Handel's *Messiah* choruses in a virtual situation. We are excited about this new Get Music Initiative. The program of six sessions will take place in late October and throughout November 2020.

Jessie Iseler
416-217-0537
info@elmeriseltersingers.com
www.elmeriseltersingers.com
www.facebook.com/elmeriseler
www.twitter.com/ElmerIseler

● **Elora Singers and Festival, The**

Over its 40-year history, the Elora Festival, under the direction of Mark Vuorinen, has been recognized as one of North America's signature choral festivals, though it also presents all forms of classical, jazz, folk and popular music. The Elora Singers is the Elora Festival's Ensemble-in-Residence. The choir performs during the three weeks of the Festival, both with solo concerts and in collaboration with guest artists and ensembles.

Through a regular concert series, recordings, and touring, The Elora Singers has established a reputation as one of the finest professional chamber choirs in Canada. With twelve releases on the NAXOS label, The Elora Singers is known for its rich, warm sound and clarity of texture. The choir is renowned for its diverse styles, for its commitment to Canadian repertoire, and for its diverse collaborations with other Canadian and international artists. Recent and upcoming collaborations include the State Choir LATVIJA, Gesualdo Six, Voces 8, Festival of the Sound, Swiss Piano Trio, Natalie MacMaster and Steven Page. A new recording featuring new works by Barbara Croall (*Giishkaapag*) and Reena Esmail (*This Love between Us*) was released in June 2020.

Laura Adlers, executive director
(519) 846-0331
info@elorasingers.ca
www.elorasingers.ca
www.facebook.com/elorafestival

● **Etobicoke Philharmonic Orchestra**

Celebrating 60 years of great orchestral music making in and around Etobicoke, the Etobicoke Philharmonic Orchestra features programming that has something to inspire all our musicians and audience members. We pride ourselves on being a welcoming community orchestra that offers amateur and professional musicians alike a challenging and friendly musical experience. Granted, this is not the 60th anniversary season the EPO had planned, but until it is safe to return to live performances at our usual Etobicoke venues, you can still celebrate music in your community with us! Join us on our online portal (eporchestra.ca) where you will find all things EPO presented with the same energy and enthusiasm you have come to expect from our live performances. You will enjoy mini performances,

interviews, and conversations from soloists and orchestra members talking about their role in the orchestra, how important music is in their lives, and how much they appreciate the opportunity to perform for the community of Etobicoke. Join the talented team of musicians at the Etobicoke Philharmonic Orchestra.

Toby Fletcher
416-239-5665
info@eporchestra.ca
www.eporchestra.ca

• King Edward Choir

Founded in 1952 by Jean Dobson, Barrie's King Edward Choir today is a group of 50 dedicated musicians encompassing all voices, striving to present a repertoire that is broad and engaging to both chorister and audience: recent years have seen performances of works by Britten, Mozart, Bernstein, Vivaldi, Mark Sirett, Stephanie Martin, Imant Raminsh and Ruth Watson Henderson, along with offerings of Renaissance motets, Spirituals, folk songs and show tunes. The choir frequently collaborates with other artists and groups, and enjoys community sing-outs. Rehearsals for our three annual performances normally take place Monday nights, and new members are welcome at any time! We are under the direction of interim conductor, Leanne Edwards, with Dan McCoy as accompanist. While our rehearsal and performance activities are now on hold until at least the New Year, KEC continues to plan for a new season and we hope to see you in 2021!

Peter Sullivan
705-739-7281
pesullivan71@gmail.com
www.kingedwardchoir.ca/
www.facebook.com/KingEdwardChoir

• Music At St. Andrew's

Music at St. Andrew's is a community outreach program of historic St. Andrew's Church in downtown Toronto. It was inspired by the church's 2011 purchase of a Bösendorfer Imperial grand piano, which we share with the greater community. The piano is featured extensively in our free "Friday Noontime Recitals." Our seventh season launches October 4 with performances by University of Toronto postgraduate music students and professionals. On Saturday, Nov 30 our candle-lit church will provide an atmospheric setting for dramatic readings from A Christmas Carol. Dickens' beloved tale will be brought to life by opera star mezzo-soprano Marion Newman, classical music expert Rick Phillips and other talented readers, and complemented by musical interludes and a gingerbread reception. Our annual "Mardi Gras" concert returns Friday, February 21 with an exuberant evening of parades and authentic New Orleans jazz, performed by Patrick Tevlin's Happy Pals, featuring pianist Jordan Klapman. COVID-19 has changed live music performances, but we'll find other ways to bring



Peterborough Singers, Peterborough, ON

music to our audiences. Stay tuned!

Music at St. Andrew's presents great music at affordable prices! Concerts take place at St. Andrew's Church, 73 Simcoe St., Toronto.

Diana Veenstra
416-593-560-0223
dveenstra@standrewstoronto.org
www.standrewstoronto.org

• Music in the Afternoon

Through its annual "Music in the Afternoon" series, the WMCT presents chamber music concerts, featuring musicians on the threshold of international recognition, as well as established artists and ensembles. The WMCT has a special interest in exceptional young Canadian talent and the commissioning of new work by Canadian composers. Concerts are held Thursday afternoons at 1:30pm at Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, 80 Queen's Park, Toronto.

The WMCT is committed to presenting a full season of five concerts for its 123rd (2020/21) season. Planned concerts include "Michael Bridge and Friends Livestream" for a limited audience (November 12, 2020); soprano Joyce El-Khoury with Serouj Kradjian, piano (March 4, 2021); Eric Lu, piano (April 1, 2021); Marmen Quartet and Viano Quartet - first prize co-winners Banff International String Quartet Competition (May 6, 2021); and Ramon Ortega Quero, oboe, with Annika Treutler, piano (June 24, 2021). Artists, programs and dates are subject to change. Please visit our website for updates.

Shannon Perreault
416-923-7052
wmct@wmct.on.ca
www.wmct.on.ca
www.facebook.com/
WomensMusicalClubofToronto
www.twitter.com/WMCT120

• Peterborough Singers

Originally formed as the Peterborough Symphony Singers in 1990, the Peterborough Singers (PS) became a stand-alone entity in 1993. This highly-regarded, auditioned, amateur choir boasts upwards of 110 members under the direction of Sydney Birrell. The PS encourages young singers to join the choir to enhance their musical skills as well as to be part of a local community. Each season, the choir presents four concerts, incorporating a blend of repertoire from gospel to sacred, pop to oratorio. Highlights have included Bach's *B Minor Mass* and *St. Matthew Passion*, *Elijah*, *Belshazzar's Feast*, *Canadian Legends* and the annual *Messiah*. The Singers hold weekly rehearsals and music classes enabling our musicians to gain the skills required for Choral music performance.

World-class, professional Canadian soloists enjoy performing with the choir time and again. The PS also make a point of incorporating young emerging artists into their season, giving them a chance to perform alongside some of the more seasoned performers. Specially commissioned music from Canadian composers is part of the repertoire. For information please visit our website.

Peg McCracken
705-745-1820
singers@peterboroughsingers.com
www.peterboroughsingers.com
www.facebook.com/
PeterboroughSingers
www.twitter.com/ptbosingers

• Royal Canadian College of Organists, Toronto Centre

The Royal Canadian College of Organists is the oldest organization of musicians in Canada, dedicated to supporting our country's organists and promoting the organ and its music to a broad audience. The College publishes the quarterly journal *Organ Canada*, offers examinations for organists from



Tapestry Opera, Toronto, ON

beginner to professional levels, and holds a major organ convention every second summer. The Toronto Centre has approximately 200 members in the city and GTA, and is led by a vibrant executive committee that meets monthly to coordinate and plan short- and long-term events. This fall, the College's offerings are primarily online, with a video series featuring Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* chorale preludes as well as other performances and workshops; please see our website or Facebook page for the most up-to-date information.

Aaron James
416-460-3489
hauptwerk@gmail.com
www.rcco.ca/toronto
www.facebook.com/RccoTO

• Tapestry Opera

Called "the leader of the opera pack" by the Globe and Mail, Tapestry Opera is a rare gem in Canada's cultural landscape. After four decades of boundary-breaking opera, the company enters its 41st year filled with hope and the drive to explore in its 2020/21 season.

Featuring digital comedy opera shorts about the current social and political climate, the first-ever opera writers' room and group-creation workshop, Tapestry's 2020/21 season showcases the best of the creativity that comes with adversity. Faced with a year in which indoor live performances are no guarantee, the company instead curated a season full of cancellation-proof digital works. Monthly livestreams from the beautiful Ernest Balmer Studio each embody the spirit of innovation that defines Tapestry; slow-release digital gems pop up on your timelines without warning; and the world premiere of a gorgeous new work, *Dragon's Tale* by Ka Nin Chan and Mark Brownell, satisfies the desire for human connection in a free, outdoor performance in June 2021, co-produced with Soundstreams.

Jaime Martino
416-537-6066
www.tapestryopera.com
www.facebook.com/TapestryOpera/
www.twitter.com/tapestryopera

• Toronto Choral Society, The

The Toronto Choral Society (TCS) was founded in 1845, to foster a positive musical environment that enables members to learn and develop both musical ability and choral repertoire. The TCS aims to be an integral part of the community of Toronto, presenting important works from the traditional choral repertoire, exploring the music of the many cultures that make up our community, and making an active contribution to the life of the city by participating in community events. During this difficult time TCS hopes you are all safe. While we would love to provide you with more information about our upcoming concerts, unfortunately at this time due to the current lockdown restrictions we will not be performing live concerts until sometime in 2021.

We are currently pursuing the possibility of an online concert in November. There are a number of technical issues that still need to be resolved as well as engaging our choir members through online rehearsals. We have been very fortunate with the loyalty of our members and supporters and we will keep you informed as things develop.

Debby Blyth
416-499-3000
dblyth@sympatico.ca
www.torontochoralsociety.org

• Toronto Mozart Players

Operated by the Mozart Project, the Toronto Mozart Players are composed of professional solo, chamber and orchestral musicians dedicated to performance of the highest calibre. Specializing in the music of Mozart and his contemporaries, the Toronto Mozart Players perform a varied repertoire from the early eighteenth century to the twenty-first century under the direction of David Bowser. With commitment to Canadian repertoire and commissioned works by Canadian composers, the Toronto Mozart Players present world premieres along with classical repertoire.

Toronto Mozart Players perform both at Church of the Redeemer, in the Bloor Street

Cultural Corridor, and virtually. Concert programs offer variety and include chamber, orchestral, vocal and choral works - featuring the Toronto Mozart Choir.

For more information, including concert dates and information on the Toronto Mozart Choir, please visit mozartproject.ca.

Lawrence Peddie
416-996-5331
lawrence.peddie@mozartproject.ca
www.mozartproject.ca
www.facebook.com/mozartproj
www.twitter.com/mozart_project

• Village Voices

Village Voices is a non-auditioned community choir with our home base in Markham, Ontario. We perform major concerts in December and in May. We provide opportunities for members to sing together in fellowship, and encourage and promote each individual's musical growth. We also provide choral music presentations to community-based groups, such as seniors' homes, local fairs, festivals and churches.

Gloria Fung
905-294-7373
fungg@rogers.com
www.villagevoices.ca
www.facebook.com/VillageVoices

• Wychwood Clarinet Choir

Established in 2009, the Wychwood Clarinet Choir is directed by clarinetist and conductor Michele Jacot. Members of the choir include skilled clarinetists who share a love of music-making, friendship and fun. The group rehearses weekly and performs on a regular basis in Toronto's St. Clair and Wychwood area. The instrumentation of the WCC extends from the contrabass clarinet to the E-flat soprano. The choir's repertoire includes many compositions and arrangements written by the group's own Composers' Collective, and by the choir's late composer and conductor laureate, Howard Cable.

The Wychwood Clarinet Choir embraces the ideal of "music for life" and is committed to sharing the musical experience in educational settings and in the wider community. Choir members are admitted by audition and pay a modest annual membership fee.

Due to COVID-19, we do not know when rehearsals and performances will resume, but the Composers Collective has been very busy, so a large selection of new arrangements will be ready when rehearsals finally begin. Please visit the choir's website for updates.

Richard Moore
416-964-8668
moorerb@sympatico.ca
www.wychwoodclarinetchoir.com
www.facebook.com/Wychwood-Clarinet-Choir-198466956860238

BLUE PAGES SECTION II: ARTS SERVICES

• Big Picture Communications



Luisa Trisi's lifelong love of arts and culture led her to launch Big Picture Communications in 1999. Passionate about city-building, community, and creativity, Luisa thrives on connecting

people and ideas. She has worked with many of North America's leading figures in classical music, dance, and theatre, and has produced publicity campaigns and panel discussions for major arts hubs, cultural initiatives, national festivals, and conferences.

Luisa provides an array of strategic communications services including writing, media relations, content creation, and editorial planning for a broad range of individual clients and cultural organizations. Throughout her twenty-plus years of experience, she has established an extensive network of industry and media contacts.

Prior to launching Big Picture Communications, Luisa held positions with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Dance Umbrella of Ontario, and Theatre Columbus. As Director of Communications and an instructor at Ryerson Theatre School

for almost a decade, Luisa designed and taught courses on entrepreneurship to students pursuing Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees.

Luisa Trisi
416-456-0499
luisa@luisatrisi.com
www.luisatrisi.com

• Bobolink Agency, The

Robert Missen, the Burlington-based proprietor



of The Bobolink Agency, celebrates 35 years representing some of Canada's most distinguished classical and jazz performing artists, ensembles and attractions. His two artist

management companies, Robert Missen Artists (1990 to 2005) and The Bobolink Agency (2010 to present), have arranged and promoted tours of such artists as Ben Heppner, Maureen Forrester, Veronica Tennant, Sylvia Tyson, Michael Burgess, Elmer Iseler Singers and The Men of the Deepes. In the upcoming seasons Bobolink will be undertaking tours with RH Thomson (*A Christmas Carol*), Heather Bambrick and The Canadian Jazz All Stars, and musical theatre star Chilina Kennedy among others. Black Artists Matter, a special new roster, will feature attractions celebrating such esteemed Black Canadian artists as Joe Sealy and Jackie Richardson ("Africville Stories"), Thom Allison in "Unforgettable - The Nat King Cole Story", Diana Braithwaite and Chris Whiteley in "Sugar and Gold - The Underground Railroad Story", and special programs from the Nathaniel Dett Chorale and Toronto Mass Choir. Stay tuned for a new Toronto venture entitled "Words and Music", which celebrates cabaret, Bach cantatas, and art song recitals.

Robert Missen
905-632-6047
rmissen@sympatico.ca
www.bobolinkagency.com

• International Resource Centre for Performing Artists (IRCPA)



The International Resource Centre for Performing Artists (IRCPA) is a service organization for musicians, providing resources needed to bridge the gap between training and employ-

ment. Encounters with nationally and internationally experienced artists keep skills sharpened and provide savvy information about the industry, how it currently functions, and who's who in the business. Resources are also offered for mid-career artists who may need to change direction.

Membership is without cost. Sign-up forms are on our website. Paid public performances are live-streamed and can be used as auditions. IRCPA proposes a new Centre for Music by converting an unused heritage building. If we are successful, there will be practice/rehearsal studios, meeting rooms, recording studio, two performance venues, and office space for arts organizations such as the IRCPA. There is also space for an affordable residential building for the music community in perpetuity. The main floor includes a Community Centre, box offices, instrument repair shops, cafe/restaurant. We welcome volunteers to help with this new Centre for Musicians to meet, exchange ideas, create and collaborate. A great opportunity for artists to live, work and perform in Toronto.

Ann Summers Dossena
416-362-1422
info@ircpa.net
www.ircpa.net

Updated online at
thewholenote.com/blue

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Ontario and Beyond

Inquiries to:
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the WholeNote LISTINGS

These event listings are free to all eligible artists, venues and presenters.



These listings are, for reasons we do not have to explain, a work in progress as we explore how best to present to our readers all the new ways our music community is discovering to reach their audiences, in a time where the old constants of fixed dates, times and places to gather and meet no longer apply. For readers wanting to filter listings by event type or geography, we are similarly working at how to rejig our online listings at thewholenote.com to make them usefully searchable, and we encourage you to explore that resource.

We look forward to your input as we move forward. Please address all concerns and queries to the attention of our listings editor, John Sharpe at listings@thewholenote.com.

TWO SECTIONS

There are only two sections to the listings in this issue instead of our previous five.

- **Section 1: Events by date**
- **Section 2: Continuing, ETCetera**

Section 1 includes any event that has a date and time you can circle on your calendar if you want to be there when it is presented for the first time: live and live-streamed performances; first broadcasts and screenings; concerts, workshops, symposia, and so on. If the event in question remains available after that first presentation (e.g. online or on demand), this is noted at the end of the listing in question.

Section 2 is for recurring musical activities that readers can access in their own time, where the nature of the event or the name of the presenter is a more useful identifier than a particular date and time.

HOW TO LIST:

1. Use the convenient online form at thewholenote.com/applylistings
2. Email listings to listings@thewholenote.com.
Please note, we do not take listings over the phone.

Deadlines

1. Weekly online updates: submission deadline is 6pm Tuesday for Friday posting.

2. Print: fifteen days before publication. Next print issue (one of three double issues in the year) covers December 2020 and January 2021 and the submission deadline is **6pm Monday November 16.**

Events by Date

NOTE: All times are Eastern Time unless otherwise noted.

Sunday November 1

- 4:00: **Burlington Performing Arts Centre.** Kevin Fox: *Songs for Cello & Voice*. 440 Locust St., Burlington. 905-681-6000. \$39. **LIVE.** Also 7 pm. **LIVE AND LIVESTREAM.**
- 7:00: **Canzona Chamber Players.** *Carina Canonica, David Gazille & Jonathan Krehm, Clarinet Duo / Trio.* See the concert at [youtube.com/CanzonaChamberPlayers](https://www.youtube.com/CanzonaChamberPlayers). In lieu of a concert ticket, donations to the St. Michael's Hospital Foundation COVID-19 Courage Fund, in Memory of Elizabeth Krehm, can be made at smh.convio.net/couragefund. **ON DEMAND**

Monday November 2

- 8:00: **Harbourfront Centre.** *Coro Acardenchado.* Traditional a capella chant from Northern Mexico with freestyle improvisation, body percussion and other contemporary arrangements. Part of the 17th season of Day of the Dead presented virtually in co-production with Mexico Now Festival, Museo Universitario del Chopo, and New York University Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. 235 Queens Quay W. 416-973-4000. Free. **LIVE.**
- **Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** *On Demand Series: Kings of Ragtime.* One of the building blocks of jazz, ragtime exploded in popularity at the turn of the 20th century in America and around the world. The undisputed King of Ragtime was composer Scott Joplin. Conducted by Regina Symphony Orchestra Music Director Gordon Gerrard and hosted by TSO Principal Pops Conductor Steven Reineke, this concert also features lively works by Jelly Roll Morton, George Gershwin, and others. Purchase all eight concerts as a package for \$120, pick three performances for \$51, or select single programs for \$20 (or \$40 for Give One, Get One). Discounts are available to TSO subscribers and TSOUNDCHECK members. Each program will be available for unlimited viewing after its release for seven days. Tickets go on sale on Oct 14 at 11:00am. Go to [TSO.CA/OnDemand](https://www.tso.ca/OnDemand) or call Patron Services at 416.598.3375. **ON DEMAND.**

Thursday November 5

- 12:10: **University of Toronto Faculty of Music.** *U of T Opera Presents Spotlight on Our Singers.* Join us for a video introduction to U of T Opera's Student Artists. Individual links to each concert will be posted closer to the event date. **ONLINE.**

Friday November 6

- 12:00 noon: **Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra.** *SPO Music Performance S41E03 - Beethoven: The Man and His Chamber Music - Part 1.* New music performances by members and friends of the SPO. Full performance details and links can be found at spo.ca.
- 12:30: **International Resource Centre for the Performing Arts.** *Tomson Highway on Zoom.* Playwright, author & musician Tomson Highway in conversation with Debra Chandler. More info at <https://ircpa.net>. Free, pre-registration required. RSVP to info@ircpa.net. **ZOOM CONVERSATION.**




HEAR TOMSON HIGHWAY ON ZOOM
Nov. 6 • 12:30pm
rsvp: info@ircpa.net **FREE**

- 8:00: **Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society.** *Complete Beethoven Quartets program IV: Quartets 10 (op. 74) 11 (op. 95 "Serioso") and 12 (first of the Late Quartets).* Penderecki String Quartet. First United Church (King & William, Waterloo). 519-886-1673. \$40; \$25(st). Also Nov 8 at 3:00pm. **LIVE.**
- 8:00: **Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony.** *KWS Goes Online: Royal Wood with the KWS.* Evan Mitchell, conductor; Royal Wood, vocals/piano/guitar; Steve Zsirai, electric bass; Mark Mariash, drum set; Royal Wood, one of Canada's best contemporary singer/songwriters, joins the KWS performing some of his greatest hits from across many of his albums. Purchase tickets at tickets.kwsymphony.ca/reimagined/2810. **ON LINE.**

Saturday November 7

- 9:00am: **Alliance Française de Toronto.** *Batuki: Blaise Labamba et Kotakoli.* Congolese rumba and soukou are dished up generously when Blaise La Bamba and Kotakoli take to the stage. Pre-purchase your tickets at bemusednetwork.com/events/detail/789. **LIVESTREAM.**

Sunday November 8

- 10:30am: **Lawrence Park Community Church.** *Durufle Requiem.* Michèle Bogdanowicz, mezzo; Paul Winkelmans, baritone; Mark Toews, conductor. 2180 Bayview Ave. 416-489-1551. Freewill offering. Religious service. **LIVE.** Postponed from April 10.
- 4:00: **Burlington Performing Arts Centre.** *A Poe Cabaret.* Louie: The Raven for narrator, harp and string quartet; Caplet: Conte Fantastique; Debussy: String Quartet. Tom Allen, narrator; Lori Gemmell, harp; Sheila Jaffé, Bethany Bergman, violin; Emily Eng, viola; and others. 440 Locust St., Burlington. 905-681-6000. \$39. Also 7 pm. **LIVE.**

Wednesday November 11

- 8:00: **Toronto Mendelssohn Choir.** *Notinikew [Going to War]: A Program of*

THE **Elora SINGERS**
MARK VUORINEN, CONDUCTOR

NOVEMBER 14
ONLINE | 8 PM

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W.A. Mozart
Horn Duos
featuring Diane Doig and Neil Spaulding

David Bowser
Canon for Five Voices in Self-Isolation & Sonata for Unaccompanied Trumpet
featuring Andrew McCandless

Arias by W.A. Mozart featuring
Amy Moodie, soprano
Rachel Miller, mezzo soprano
David Walsh, tenor

Presented virtually on
November 21, 2020 7:30pm

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Events by Date

Remembrance. A choral perspective of Canada's Indigenous Veterans. Balfour: Notinikew (excerpts); other works. Simon Rivard, conductor; Andrew Balfour, guest curator; Elder Dr. Duke Redbird; Cris Derkson, cello; Brian Solomon, dance; Camerata Nova; Toronto Mendelssohn Choir. Free, donations welcome. <https://livestream.com/TMChoir/Remembrance>. **LIVESTREAM.**

Friday November 13

● 12:00 noon: **Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra.** *SPOGreatMusic Podcast S41E05.* SPOGreatMusic Podcast featuring interviews with special guests. Host: Dr. Daniel Mehdizadeh. Find updated information and themes on our website spo.ca. Today's theme: Beethoven: The Man and His Chamber Music - Part 2. **PODCAST.**

Saturday November 14

● 8:00: **Elora Singers.** *Hope & Refuge.* Jake Runestad: The Hope of Loving (song cycle); works by Ola Gjeilo, Ēriks Ešenvalds, Jonathan Dove, Stephen Paulus, Dolly Parton, and Jeff Enns. Mark Vuorinen, conductor. Choose your price. For tickets, www.elorasingers.ca. **ONLINE.** Available to Dec 4.

● 8:00: **Royal Conservatory of Music.** *World Music & Recovered Concerts Series: Kuné - Canada's Global Orchestra and Moskitto Bar.* Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performance. **FREE LIVESTREAM.**

Thursday November 19

● 7:00: **Magisterra Soloists.** *Happy 250th Birthday, Herr Beethoven!* Works for violin, cello and piano. Museum London Theatre, 421 Ridout St. N., London. 519-615-0163 or magisterra.com. \$30; \$25(sr); \$15(student with id); \$10(child under 10); \$85(young adult pass-30 years and under); \$15(streamed tickets-adult). All tickets must be purchased in advance. **LIVE.**

Friday November 20

● 2:00: **Art Gallery of Ontario.** *AGO Live: Hello from the Other Side - Toronto Symphony Orchestra.* Recognizing the powerful

impact that music has in enriching and inspiring lives, especially during challenging times, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra has been resolute in finding ways to perform despite the circumstances. As an alternative to its previously scheduled performances at Roy Thomson Hall, TSO musicians will spend the coming year performing in smaller ensembles and connecting with audiences throughout the GTA. Art Gallery of Ontario, Walker Court, 317 Dundas St. W. Free with gallery admission. Also at 4pm. Please book a timed-entry ticket at tickets.ago.ca/events. **LIVE.**

● 7:30: **Royal Conservatory of Music.** *GGs Operas Series: Glenn Gould School Fall Opera: Kurt Weill's "The Seven Deadly Sins" and William Bolcom's "Lucrezia".* Mazzoleni Concert Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performance. Free. **ONLINE.**

● 12:00 noon: **Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra.** *Music Performance S41E04.* New music performances by members and friends of the SPO. Full performance details on spo.ca. Today's theme: Beethoven: The Man and His Chamber Music - Part 2. **ONLINE.**

Saturday November 21

● 7:00: **Guitar Society of Toronto.** *Johan Smith.* Registration is required in advance via Eventbrite. Suggested donation of \$20 per person can be made during Registration. Contact guitarsocietyoftoronto.com or call 416-964-8298. **ONLINE.**

● 8:00: **Alliance Française de Toronto.** *Stephane Wrembel et ses invités.* This prolific and virtuoso French guitarist has released a constant stream of music since 2006 and has established himself as one of the most original artists in contemporary music. Pre-purchase tickets at bemusednetwork.com/events/detail/786. **LIVESTREAM.**

Nov 21 7:30: **Toronto Mozart Players.** *TMP presents ... Leopold Mozart: Trumpet Concerto; W.A. Mozart: Horn Duos; Arias; David Bowser: Canon for Five Voices in Self-Isolation; Sonata for Unaccompanied Trumpet.* Diane Doig and Neil Spaulding, horns; Andrew McCandless, trumpet; Amy Moodie, soprano; Rachel Miller, mezzo soprano; David Walsh,

tenor. Visit mozartproject.ca for tickets and information. Free, donations welcome.

Sunday November 22

● **ORMTA Central Toronto Branch.** *Online Composition Master Class.* Submission deadline: Nov 13 @ 11:59pm. Information at 416-485-6562. \$40. In celebration of Canada Music Week (Nov 22-28), ORMTA Central Toronto Branch is holding a Composition Master Class with composer clinician Christopher Norton. In this online composition master class, Connections and MicroJazz composer Christopher Norton will help refine new works by first-time and seasoned composers. Participants will submit scores and recordings of their works for Mr. Norton to review. He will send feedback in some combination of written comments, video response, and score annotations, highlighting strengths, giving suggestions for next steps, and perhaps suggesting related works for score study and listening. Contact Avila.Lotoski@hotmail.com for submission information. **ONLINE MASTERCLASS.**

● 1:00: **Royal Conservatory of Music.** *Mazzoleni Masters Series: Elliot Madore - Let Beauty Awake.* Works by Fauré, Vaughn-Williams, and Samuel Barber. Elliot Madore, baritone; Rachel Andrist, piano. Mazzoleni Concert Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performance. From \$30. **LIVE.**

● 3:00: **Royal Conservatory of Music.** *Charles Richard Hamelin with Rolston String Quartet.* All-Beethoven program, with special guest Jeffrey Beecher. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performance. **LIVE AND LIVESTREAM.**

● 4:00: **Travel by Sound.** Paul DeLong's ONE WORD. Fusion classics from The Mahavishnu Orchestra, Weather Report, Jeff Beck and Return to Forever. Paul DeLong, drums; Marco Luciani, keyboards; Michael Murray, guitar; Victoria Yeh, electric violin; Steve Lucas, bass. Virtually from the Simcoe Street Theatre. Enjoy the concert at VictoriaYehLive.com or call 416-799-0737. \$40 single concert or \$100 for Full-Series Pass (6 concerts). Travel by Sound runs September

2020 - February 2021. Get Unlimited replays until the end of March 2021. **ON DEMAND.**

Friday November 27

● 12:00 noon: **Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra.** *SPOGreatMusic Podcast S41E06.* Podcast featuring special guests. Host: Dr. Daniel Mehdizadeh. Today's theme: Celebrating the SPO's 40th anniversary Online (Special Extended Episode). Full details at spo.ca. **PODCAST.**

● 7:30: **University of Toronto Faculty of Music.** *U of T Opera presents A Little Night Music.* Join us for an operatic concert with repertoire ranging from Mozart to Sondheim. Individual links to each concert will be posted closer to the event date. **ONLINE.** Also Nov 28. All programs are subject to change.

Saturday November 28

● 8:00: **New Music Concerts/Tapestry Opera.** *Love Songs - a chamber opera.* Wallace Halladay, saxophone; Xin Wang, soprano. Broadcast from Koerner Hall. Information: newmusicconcerts.com. Free. **LIVESTREAM.**

Sunday November 29

● 4:00: **Burlington Performing Arts Centre.** *Leslie Kinton Celebrates Beethoven.* 440 Locust St., Burlington. 905-681-6000. \$39. Also 7 pm. **LIVE.**

● 3:00: **Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society.** Vivaldi: concerto for violin/cello in Bb, RV 547 Reinhold Glière: 8 Pieces for violin and cello, op 39; Zoltán Kodály: Duo for violin and cello, op 7; Giovanni Bottesini: Gran Duo concertante for violin and bass. Jung Tsai, violin; Rebecca Morton, cello; Talia Hatcher, double-bass; Beth Ann de Sousa, piano (in the concerto). First United Church (King & William, Waterloo). 519-886-1673. \$30; \$20(st). **LIVE.**

Thursday December 3

● 8:00: **Royal Conservatory of Music.** *Beethoven 250 Festival & Power Corporation of Canada Vocal Concerts Series with the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra conducted by Johannes Debus.* Beethoven: Symphony No.2 in D Op.36, first movement; Weber: "Nein, länger trag' ich nicht die Qualen" from Der Freischütz;

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Friday December 4

● 7:30: **Upper Canada Choristers/Cantemos.** *Comfort and Joy: A Holiday Offering.* Livestreamed from Grace Church on the Hill, Toronto on YouTube and on Facebook. With Hye Won Cecilia Lee, piano. Works include Vivaldi's *Gloria* and the song "Comfort and Joy" with music by Laurie Evan Fraser and words by Jacqui Atkin, co-founders of the Choristers and Cantemos. The song is dedicated to the memory of beloved tenor chorister Bill Briggs, who passed away in September after a lengthy illness. Cantemos will sing three Villancicos de Navidad (Christmas Carols) from Spain written in 1556: *Dadme albricias hijos d'Eva, No la devemos dormir, and Riu, Riu, Chiu.* The audience will also be invited to sing along with some favourite carols. For information visit the Upper Canada Choristers Website at uppercanadachoristers.org or call 416-256-0510. **LIVESTREAM.**

● 8:00: **Royal Conservatory of Music.** *Music Mix Series: Ashley MacIsaac with Special Guests Jully Black & Madison Violet.* Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performance. \$40-\$105. **LIVE & LIVESTREAM.**

Saturday December 5

● 7:00: **Orchestra Toronto.** *An Indigo Christmas: Great Joy II with the Nathaniel Dett Chorale.* Michael Newnham, conductor. George Weston Recital Hall, Meridian Arts Centre (formerly Toronto Centre for the Arts), 5040 Yonge St. 416-733-0545. \$25-\$45; \$39(sr); \$19(OTOpus); \$15(child). **LIVE.**

● 8:00: **The Elora Singers.** *A Quiet Village.* Britten: *A Ceremony of Carols*; Tawnie Olson: *Scel Iem Duib*; and Marie-Claire Saindon: *Constellation.* Julia Seager-Scott, harp; Mark Vuorinen, conductor. For tickets, www.elorasingers.ca. Choose your price. **ONLINE.** Available to watch to Jan 3.

Sunday December 6

● 3:00: **Royal Conservatory of Music.** *Beethoven 250 Festival & Chamber Music Concerts Series: Gryphon Trio with Jen Kimura Parker.* Beethoven: Piano Trio in E-flat Op.1 No.1, Quintet for Piano, Oboe, Clarinet, Horn and Bassoon in E-flat Op.16, Piano Trio in B-flat Op.97 "Archduke". Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performance. \$45-\$90. **LIVE & LIVESTREAM.**

● 8:00: **New Music Concerts.** NMC 50th Anniversary Commissioning Series. *Commissions for Distanced Ensemble.* New works by Kotoka Suzuki, Eliot Britton, and James Callaghan. Broadcast from Koerner Hall. Information: newmusicconcerts.com. Free. **LIVESTREAM.**

Continuing ETCetera

● **Arts@Home.** A vibrant hub connecting Torontonians to arts and culture. Designed to strengthen personal and societal resilience through the arts. Visit artsathome.ca to learn more about this exciting collaborative initiative.

● **Kevin Barrett.** *Live from Lockdown.* Kevin Barrett does a live-streamed set of solo guitar tunes, coming directly from lockdown in his studio in Kensington Market, Toronto. Tune in to Kevin's Facebook page on Friday at facebook.com/kevin.barrett.165470. If you can't join live, the video will be available afterwards on Kevin's page with each week's episode archived on his YouTube channel at youtube.com/playlist?list=PLX5pxf-Eb_cgnAMKTNHgPiNATLYffrk30.

● **Classical Jukebox** Founded as a response to the days of COVID-19 social separation, this site is designed to provide you the ability to sing and perform your favorite classical pieces from the comfort of your own home, with accompaniments by organ and piano accompanist, Matthew Larkin. In addition, Classical Jukebox offers another service - assisting with the creation of Virtual Choirs and virtual choir videos for those missing that collaborative and artistic outlet in their lives. Further information can be found at classicaljukebox.ca.

● **New Music Concerts.** *Sonic Grace: An NMC Audio Diary.* Listen to David Hetherington perform Carter's *Figment* recorded live with New Music Concerts at the Music Gallery on Dec. 18, 2007, by visiting interlog.us20.list-manage.com/track/click?u=d3c186f0181e65b8a97d8f739&id=73d892b45a&e=ebb8b805ad.

● **Ottawa Chamberfest.** *Chamber Chats: At Home / Chez vous.* **Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2pm.** Hosted by celebrated broadcaster/writer Eric Friesen. Interactive episodes combine chat with pre-recorded and live performances and feature guest artists and lecturers from all over the world. For information: 613-234-8008. Visit the website at chamberfest.com/.

● **Recollectiv:** Currently holding on-line meetings. A unique musical group made up of people affected by memory challenges caused by illness (such as dementia) or brain injury (stroke, PTSD, etc.) and their care partners. Volunteers of all ages also form part of the band, making this a positive intergenerational experience for all. Participation is free with pre-registration. Contact info@recollectiv.ca for meeting times, information and registration. **Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts.** *a·P·art {of}* performance series, every Thursday at 7:30pm at facebook.com/RHCPA.

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A Quiet Village
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Handel's joyful Messiah with arias sung by members of The Elora Singers, accompanied by the Festival Orchestra.

A Festival of Carols
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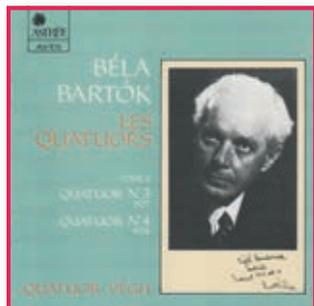
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Editor's Corner

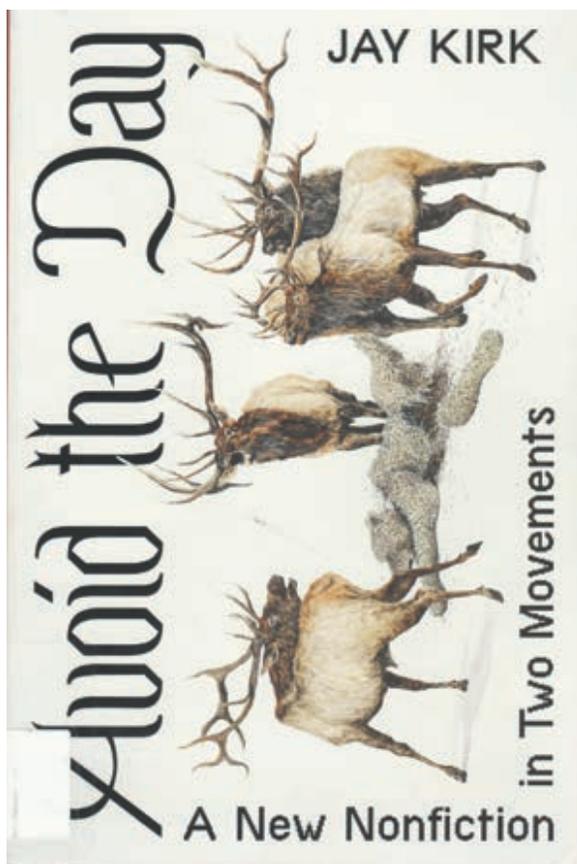
DAVID OLDS

This month, once again, a good book has brought me back to some of my favourite music and provided a few discoveries. **Avoid the Day: A New Nonfiction in Two Movements** by Jay Kirk (Harper Perennial harpercollins. ca/9780062356178/avoid-the-day) is an intriguing read on many levels. The two “movements” have completely different settings and contexts: the search for the autograph score of Bartók’s *String Quartet No. 3* which takes us to the University of Pennsylvania, the city of Budapest and ultimately to Transylvania; and a luxury eco-cruise to the land of the midnight sun. This latter is ostensibly for the purpose of producing a documentary for a travel magazine, but the author’s and director’s creative impulses kick in and the project turns into a horror film, referencing Frankenstein’s monster’s banishment to the Arctic and various Hollow Earth theories, with a nod to Thomas Pynchon’s *Against the Day*. Each adventure conveniently provides Kirk with an excuse to “avoid” spending time with his father, on his deathbed back in the United States. Somewhat reminiscent of Karl Ove Knausgaard’s autofiction *My Struggle*, although at 370 pages only about ten percent of its length, *Avoid the Day* is a no-holds-barred exposé of some of Kirk’s seedier sides – alcohol and barbiturate abuse being primary preoccupations. This would not normally be of interest to me, but the tales are so well written and cleverly layered that I found it compelling. And of course the musical references were like so many bread crumbs for me to follow.



Music is the major focus of the first movement and I found myself digging deep into my vinyl collection to find recordings of some of the works mentioned, including Bartók’s *Bluebeard’s Castle* and *Cantata Profana* – talk about dark nights of the soul! – and his final work, the *Third Piano Concerto*. It must be 30 years since I listened to any of these pieces, well, 28 for *Bluebeard*, because I did attend the COC’s original presenta-

tion of Robert LePage’s production in 1992. I found I had two recordings of the *Cantata*. The Romanian legend of *The Nine Enchanted Stags* tells the story of a widowed father’s shiftless sons, whose only skills are hunting and hanging out in the woods, who are transformed into magnificent animals with enormous racks of antlers, and of the subsequent confrontation with their father. I was surprised to realize that my Turnabout Vox recording is sung in English. It seems Bartók



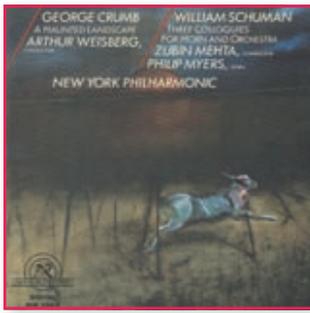
translated the Romanian story into Hungarian and added some texts of his own to provide the libretto and although it was completed in 1930, its premiere was in London in 1934, performed in an English translation. The *Cantata* was not presented in Hungary in Bartók’s original translation until 1936 and it is this version found on the Hungaroton *Bartók Béla Complete Edition*. In both performances the lead stag’s solos – tenors Murray Dickie in English and József Réti in Hungarian – are stunning. My 1973 Angel LP of the *Third Piano Concerto* features Daniel Barenboim as soloist, with Pierre Boulez conducting the New Philharmonia Orchestra. Need I say more?

My first exposure to Bartók’s six string quartets was the historic 1959 recording – the first American recording of the cycle, I believe – by the Fine Arts Quartet, which I found on the budget Concert-Disc label at Sam the Record Man around the time I began collecting in the early 70s. The music was an epiphany for me and provided one of my earliest entries into the world of “contemporary” music, notwithstanding the fact that Bartók had died almost three decades before. This was soon followed by the Juilliard String

Quartet’s 1963 Columbia cycle, on vinyl at the time but now available on Sony CD, and then, under the tutelage of Eddie Santolini, my mentor at Sam’s, the (perhaps) definitive 1972 recording by Quatuor Végh. The quartet’s leader Sandor Végh had completed his studies at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest in 1930 and worked with Bartók on the Hungarian premiere of the *String Quartet No. 5* as a member of the Hungarian String Quartet before the composer fled Europe for the United States in 1939. Végh founded his own quartet the following year. Since that time almost every string quartet of note has undertaken to climb these legendary peaks and you can find reviews of some of the most notable ascents in our archives at thewholenote.com, including those of the Vermeer, Penderecki, Hungarian, Guarneri, Alexander, Chiara, Arcadia and Takács Quartets.

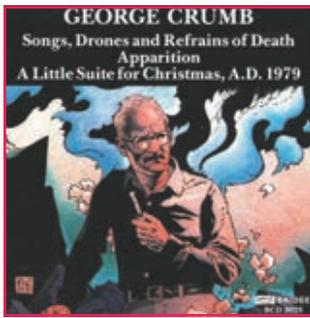
I have twice in my life had the pleasure and privilege of hearing all six Bartók quartets performed live over a two-day period, once by the Juilliard at the Guelph Spring Festival in my formative years and about 15 years ago by the Penderecki at the Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society. Both were incredible experiences and I recommend the recordings of these ensembles, but for me, the ultimate is still the Quatuor Végh which I am sorry to say I never had the opportunity to hear in person. They disbanded in 1980 and Végh died in 1997 in Salzburg where he had taught at the Mozarteum for the last two and a half decades of his life.

George Crumb makes an appearance in *Avoid the Day* as part of Kirk’s quest for the Bartók score, and the music that is mentioned is *Songs, Drones and Refrains of Death* and, one of my favourites, the



orchestral masterpiece *A Haunted Landscape*. I came to know the latter from a New World Records vinyl release featuring Arthur Weisberg and the New York Philharmonic – who commissioned it and gave the premiere performance. There is also a fine CD recording available from Bridge Records featuring the Warsaw Philharmonic under the direction of Thomas Conlin. It is an ethereal, mysterious and at

times bombastic work in which a low B-flat drone by two scordatura double basses, sustained throughout the work, adds to the eerie ambience. The composer tells us *A Haunted Landscape* “is not programmatic in any sense. The title reflects my feeling that certain places on the planet Earth are imbued with an aura of mystery...” He goes on to say “contemplation of a landscape can induce complex psychological states, and perhaps music is an ideal medium for delineating the subtle nuances [...] that hover between the subliminal and the conscious.”



Songs, Drones and Refrains of Death is the fourth in a cycle of eight chamber settings of poetry by Federico García Lorca which Crumb composed between 1963 and 1970. Although I do know the four books of *Madrigals* that make up half of the series, and the 1986 postscript, *Federico's Little Songs for Children*, I was not previously familiar with this work and I would like to thank Bridge Records for graciously providing

me with a recording to facilitate this article (bridgerecords.com/products/9028). *Songs, Drones and Refrains of Death* is scored for baritone (in this case Sanford Sylvan), electric guitar, electric contrabass, electric piano/harpsichord and two percussion, performed by members of *Speculum Musicae*. As with many of Crumb's works the dynamic range extends from barely audible to ferocious explosions of sound, and the vocal lines are often angst ridden, reflecting the nature of the texts. As William K. Bland tells us in his program note, “Throughout the entire range of Crumb's compositions symbology has been a central aspect of his communicative language. [Here] several musical and philosophical symbologies are present. These range from the overt musical ‘illustrations’ of the text [...] to the cycle-spanning metaphysical implications of the Death Drone. [...] Like many of Mahler's works, *Songs, Drones and Refrains of Death* has its beginning in the contemplation of Death, and its ending in the affirmation of the promise of a peace-filled transfiguration.” Incidentally, I had the pleasure of meeting and spending time with George Crumb and his family during the preparations for a New Music Concerts performance which included the Canadian premiere of *Federico's Little Songs for Children* with soprano Teri Dunn, Robert Aitken (flute) and Erica Goodman (harp) at Glenn Gould Studio in 2003.



That already seems like a lot of listening to come out of the reading of a single book, one not ostensibly about music, but I will add a couple of footnotes before I move on from this nearly month-long journey. The first involves Bartók's *44 Duos for Two Violins*, written in 1931 just after completion of the *Cantata Profana* and four years after

String Quartet No.3. When Kirk travels to Hungary in *Avoid the Day*

his translator is “Bob,” originally from Teaneck, New Jersey via the Bronx, but who has lived in Budapest for 30 years. Kirk tells us that Bob's “main thing is klezmer. Not the honky-wonky clarinet-heavy wedding band American klezmer. His specific niche: Carpathian klezmer. He spent years tracking down the sacred-original stuff in Transylvania.” After learning what he can at Béla Bartók Memorial House in Budapest, Kirk is dragged off into the wilds of Transylvania by Bob to experience some of the authentic music that Bartók spent several years collecting on wax cylinders a century ago, research that would profoundly affect his own music and ultimately the art music of the 20th century. Although he assimilated the influences of these hundreds-of-years-old folk songs seamlessly into his own concert works, many of the peasant melodies and rhythms can be found in a more unadulterated form in Bartók's pedagogical works, especially the *Mikrokosmos* collection for piano(s) and the violin duos. It was a real pleasure to discover on my shelf a recording that I had forgotten about of these duos. In 2008 violinists Yehonatan Berick and Jonathan Crow recorded the Bartók along with Luciano Berio's *Duetti per due violini* for the XXI label (yehonatanberick.com/recordings). I knew the Bartók on vinyl from the Hungaroton *Bartók Béla Complete Edition* but was unfamiliar with the Berio until this release came my way a decade ago. While Bartók organized his duets in order of difficulty as a primer for violin students, culminating in the challenging *Pizzicato, Allegretto*, reminiscent of the fourth movement of the *String Quartet No.4* and *Transylvanian Dance (Ardeliana)*, Berio's set (1979-1983) is arranged chronologically by date of composition. Each brief piece is named for a friend or colleague and the set begins appropriately with Béla (Bartók). Other names I recognize are *Vinko* (Globokar), *Pierre* (Boulez), *Mauricio* (Kagel), all of whom I had the pleasure of meeting during my years at New Music Concerts, *Henri* (Pousseur), *Bruno* (Maderna) and *Igor* (Stravinsky). As with the Bartók, the pieces are at various levels of difficulty, but rather than being performed progressively Berio envisioned a stage performance by at least a dozen pairs of violinists of varying degrees of skill. The rousing final piece, *Edoardo* (Sanguineti), is conceived for violin choir where all of the performers join in on the two lines of the duet. Currently concertmaster of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, at the time of this recording Crow was teaching at the Schulich School of Music at McGill University where he had previously obtained a Bachelor of Music in Honours Performance studying with Berick. In this performance of *Edoardo* the two are joined by a host of violinists who (I assume) are their colleagues and students from McGill.

The final note is about an anachronism that stuck out in *Avoid the Day*, when Kirk was musing while on the eco-cruise ship about the last minutes of the Titanic. Legend has it that the resident string quartet was playing *Nearer My God to Thee* as the ship sank, but he wonders if they wouldn't have played something “more important, like Berg's *Lyric Suite*.” I realize that this is just wishful speculation and he does not suggest that they actually could have played that piece, but it struck me as a strange choice since Alban Berg would not write his suite until more than a dozen years after that maritime disaster. Nevertheless, it sent me back to the library to dig out my Lasalle Quartet recording of the string quartets of the Second Viennese School to find another old friend in the *Lyric Suite*. Once again I have the Deutsche Grammophon set on vinyl, but for convenience sake I chose the CD reissue.

To put closure to all this, I also revisited my vinyl collection to find Gavin Bryars' chilling *The Sinking of the Titanic* with the Cockpit Ensemble on Brian Eno's *Obscure* label. That haunting performance can now be heard on YouTube ([youtube.com/watch?v=2oVMRADOq5s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oVMRADOq5s)). ●

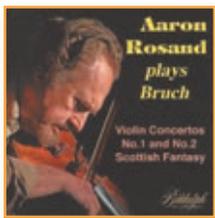
We invite submissions. CDs, DVDs and comments should be sent to: DIScoveries, WholeNote Media Inc., The Centre for Social Innovation, 503 – 720 Bathurst St. Toronto ON M5S 2R4.

*David Olds, DIScoveries Editor
discoveries@thewholenote.com*

STRINGS ATTACHED

TERRY ROBBINS

The English label **Biddulph Recordings** (altocd.com/biddulphrecords) was founded in 1989 by the violin dealer Peter Biddulph and the violinist and writer Eric Wen, the former editor of *The Musical Times* and *The Strad*. It specializes in new and historic recordings, especially of string instruments, and three recent issues are welcome reminders of three great 20th-century violin talents.



Aaron Rosand plays Bruch (LAB 1024) features the most recent recordings: the *Violin Concerto No.1 in G Minor Op.26* and the *Scottish Fantasy Op.46* in 2000 recordings with the **NDR Radio-Philharmonie Hannover** under **Christoph Wyneken** and the *Violin Concerto No.2 in D Minor Op.44* in a 1970 performance with the **Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks** under **Peter**

Richter Rangenier. They were originally licensed to Vox on two discs by the Rosand estate but since Vox was acquired by Naxos they were recompiled and licensed to Biddulph for their 10CD box set *Ten More Great Violinists of the Century* (LAB 8102) and for individual release.

Rosand, who died in 2019 at the age of 92, enjoyed an astonishing 77-year performing career. He had a simply lovely tone, with a fairly constant but always tasteful vibrato, and was particularly noted for his performances of the Romantic repertoire, a view clearly supported by his playing here. There's no hint of any decline in technique in the 30-year gap between recordings, which feature first-class orchestral support in really lovely performances.



The other two CDs also resulted from the creation of masters for the LAB 8102 set. **Bronislaw Huberman Columbia and Brunswick Masters (LAB 1025)** comprises tracks from two previous issues plus new material featuring the Polish virtuoso who died aged 64 in 1947. There's nowhere near the amount of portamento that you might expect from someone who was performing

in the 1890s, but there is real individuality in his phrasing and style.

Recording years aren't given, but the only Brunswick master is an American acoustic recording, with piano, of Sarasate's *Carmen Fantasy* on Bizet's music; the remaining works – a fiery *Kreutzer Sonata* and ten short pieces by Bach, Schubert, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Bruch, Elgar, Sarasate and Zarzkycki – are apparently electrical Columbia performances with piano, although Ignacy Friedman in the Beethoven sonata is the only pianist identified.

Huberman's mellow tone, described in the booklet notes as far darker in the Columbia recordings than on the Brunswicks, is quite distinctive, and his technical command outstanding, especially the double stops in Sarasate's *Romanza Andaluza* and the dazzling playing in Brahms' *Hungarian Dance No.1 in G Minor* and Zarzkycki's brilliant *Mazurka in G*.



The real revelation in these three CDs, though, is **Toscha Seidel the RCA Victor Recordings & Franck Sonata (LAB 138)**, a straight reissue after 20 years unavailability. The Russian Seidel, who died in California two days before his 63rd birthday in 1962, was in Leopold Auer's legendary violin class in St. Petersburg with the young Jascha Heifetz. He made his American debut

in April 1918, one year after Heifetz's sensational debut there, and consequently always seemed to be in the latter's shadow, moving to California in the 1930s and making a career in Hollywood and studio orchestras.

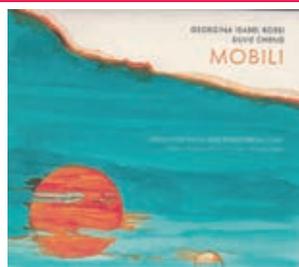
Seidel's tone is very bright, clear and warm, his vibrato fairly fast and consistent, and his technique absolutely brilliant and effortless. Add his sweeping phrasing and captivating musicality ("Heifetz with heart" say my notes – guaranteed to start an argument somewhere) and you end up wondering why Seidel isn't remembered as the violinist of the first half of the 20th century.

Six short pieces by Mozart, Wagner, Brahms (the *Hungarian Dance No.1 in G Minor* again in another terrific performance), Bakaleinikoff and Provoost are from December 1938 and February 1941. Korngold's previously unissued *Much Ado About Nothing Suite* from July 1941 sees Seidel joined by the composer at the piano in a memorable performance. Three songs from the movie, *The Great Waltz*, feature Seidel's obbligato (well, in two of them at least) for soprano Miliza Korjus ("rhymes with gorgeous" – unfortunately, unlike her vocal talents on this showing), and a private studio recording from the early 1950s of the *Franck Sonata in A Major*, in which Seidel and pianist Harry Kaufmann seem completely unable to agree on tempo or rhythm in the first movement, complete a revelatory disc.

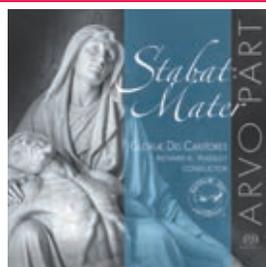
If you don't know Seidel's playing, you owe it to yourself to put that right.

What we're listening to this month:

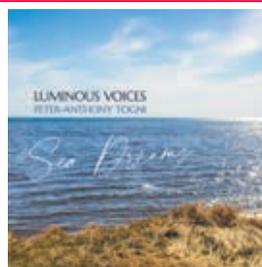
thewholenote.com/listening



Mobili: Music for Viola and Piano from Chile
Georgina Isabel Rossi and Silvie Cheng
Violist Georgina Rossi and Pianist Silvie Cheng release "MOBILI: Music for Viola and Piano from Chile" on New Focus Recordings



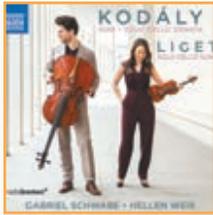
Stabat Mater: Choral Works by Arvo Pärt
Gloriae Dei Cantores
The expressive beauty of Arvo Pärt performed by Gloriæ Dei Cantores (Singers to the Glory of God), under the direction of Richard K. Pugsley.



Sea Dreams
Luminous Voices
A reflection of the relationship between ocean and sea as a life metaphor, with its implicit suggestion of journeying, inward emotions and uncertainties



Venom of Love
Alice Ping Yee Ho
A tale of serpent-demons and mortals entwined in forbidden romance based on the Chinese tale "Legend of the White and Green Snakes".



German cellist **Gabriel Schwabe** is in simply superb form on a new Naxos CD of solo sonatas by **Zoltán Kodály** and **György Ligeti**, with the equally fine violinist **Hellen Weiß** joining him in the Kodály *Duo for Violin and Cello* (8.574202 naxosdirect.com/search/747313420278).

Kodály's *Sonata for Solo Cello Op.8* dates from 1915, and has been recognised as the most significant work for solo cello since the Bach Suites. It's a monumental work, given a thrilling performance here that explores every inch of its depth.

Ligeti's *Sonata for Solo Cello* is a relatively brief piece of two short movements that were written in 1948 and 1953 respectively but not heard in public until 1979 thanks to the political restrictions of the Hungarian Composers' Union. The first movement shows a folk music influence, with the second movement inspired by the Paganini solo violin *Caprices*.

Kodály's *Duo for Violin and Cello Op.7* from 1914 opens the disc. It's a work that combines classical forms with the folk music in which Kodály was immersed at the time.

Weiß' violin is a Matteo Goffriller from 1698, Schwabe's cello a G. Guarneri, Cremona from 1695-97. The sound they produce is quite superb.

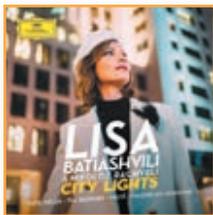


Restricted to his Berlin apartment by the cultural and social lockdowns earlier this year, violinist **Daniel Hope** wondered if he could find a way to perform from home but with top-quality sound. With the support of the TV broadcaster ARTE he turned his living room into a high-tech television studio and scheduled a six-week series of online chamber concerts with specially invited guests.

The result was the **Hope@Home** livestream project, a series of recitals that was broadcast live on ARTE and on the **Deutsche Grammophon** YouTube channel, and from which the label has now released highlights as an album (483 9482 deutschegrammophon.com/en/catalogue). The pianist and composer **Christoph Israel** was involved from the start; he accompanies Hope on most of the tracks and also contributed several of the terrific arrangements.

Every track is a live, single-take performance, with no editing. What strikes you first is the stunning sound quality. What strikes you second is Hope's sumptuous playing – I've never heard him sound better. The 21 tracks include classical favourites like Schubert's *An die Musik*, Fauré's *Après un rêve* and Rachmaninoff's *Vocalise* and popular standards like *Moon River*, *Summertime*, *Autumn Leaves*, *La vie en rose* and *Over the Rainbow*.

It's an absolute joy from start to finish.

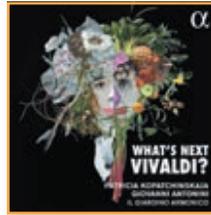


You may well have heard the opening track of **City Lights**, violinist **Lisa Batiashvili**'s new CD with conductor/pianist **Nikoloz Rachveli** on the classical radio channels, *City memories – Chaplin* offering sumptuous arrangements of two themes from Chaplin's *Limelight* together with two from *Modern Times*, plus José Padilla Sánchez's simply gorgeous *La Violetera* from *City Lights*. Batiashvili's ravishing tone makes a captivating start to the disc, followed by a series of 11 special arrangements that offer multi-layered musical portraits of cities that are important to Batiashvili (**Deutsche Grammophon 00289 483 8586** deutschegrammophon.com/en/catalogue).

Nothing else quite reaches the heights of that first track, but short pieces representing Munich, Paris (Michel Legrand's *Paris Violon*), Berlin, Helsinki, Vienna (the Strauss *Furioso Galopp*), Rome (Morricone's *Theme from Cinema Paradiso*), Buenos Aires, New York, London, Bucharest and Tbilisi offer plenty to enjoy. Guest artists include guitarist Miloš Karadaglić on the Buenos Aires track. Orchestral accompaniments are shared by the Rudolfk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin and the Georgian Philharmonic Orchestra.

Batiashvili says that "for more than two years we put all our energy, love and dedication into this project. It became my most personal

journey." Her commitment and involvement shine through on every track.



You can always count on violinist **Patricia Kopatchinskaja** to come up with something different and interesting, and so it proves with her latest release **What's Next Vivaldi?** with **Il Giardino Armonico** under **Giovanni Antonini** (**ALPHA624** naxosdirect.com/search/alpha624). The CD interweaves ultra-virtuosic concertos by Vivaldi with short pieces by current composers mostly commissioned specifically for this program.

The five Vivaldi concertos are the *Violin Concerto in E-flat Major "La tempesta di mare" Op.8 No.5 RV253* (complete with storm effects), the *Violin Concerto in C Major RV191*, the *Concerto in E Minor for Four Violins and Strings* from "*L'estro armonico*" *Op.3 No.4 RV550*, the extremely brief *Concerto in G Minor for Strings RV157* and the *Violin Concerto in D Major "Il Grosso Mogul" RV208*, featuring some Kopatchinskaja improvisation in the slow movement and one of the very few extant cadenzas by Vivaldi in the finale – a long, unabridged and dazzling episode.

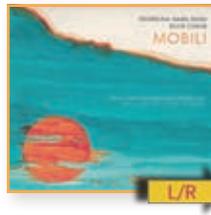
Kopatchinskaja describes this recording as inviting Vivaldi into a time laboratory and engaging him in a dialogue with today's creative voices from Italy, the five younger Italian composers having been asked to react to Vivaldi's music in miniatures. The short contemporary works are by Aureliano Cattaneo, Luca Francesconi, Simone Movio, Marco Stroppa and Giovanni Sollima. It's an intriguing disc full of top-drawer playing.



The Estonian violinist **Triin Ruubel** is the soloist on **Elgar Violin Concerto / Stenhammar Two Sentimental Romances** with **Neeme Järvi** conducting the **Estonian National Symphony Orchestra** (**Sorel Classics SCCDo16** naxosdirect.com/search/sccdo16).

There's a rather unsettling sound to the Elgar at times, with the orchestra tending to sound a bit too distant and with the soloist sometimes seeming to be buried in the general orchestral texture. Still, Ruubel is clearly a fine player and Järvi a hugely experienced and highly respected conductor, and there are many really lovely and finely crafted moments in an excellent performance of a notoriously long and difficult work.

Stenhammar's *Two Sentimental Romances Op.28 – No.1 in A Major* and *No.2 in F Minor* – are attractive and absolutely delightful pieces, with Ruubel clearly in her element with the Romantic nature of the music. It's really lovely playing.



Violist **Georgina Isabel Rossi**, who was born and raised in Chile, and pianist **Silvie Cheng** are the duo on **MOBILI: Music for Viola and Piano from Chile**, a CD featuring world-premiere recordings of works by the Chilean composers Rafael Diaz, Carlos Botto, Federico Heinlein and David Cortés (**New Focus Recordings FCR268** newfocusrecordings.com/catalogue). The

only work previously recorded is the four-movement title track, *Mobili Op.63* by Juan Orrego-Salas, who passed away at 100 just a few weeks before the CD was recorded, and to whose memory the album is dedicated.

The Diaz works are *Will There Be Someone Whose Hands Can Sustain This Falling* for amplified viola, and *In the Depths of My Distance Your House Emerges* for viola and piano. Botto's *Fantasia Op.15* from 1962 and Heinlein's *Duo "Do not go gentle"* from 1985 are followed by Cortés' *Tololo*, written in 2011 for viola and string orchestra and heard here in an arrangement for viola and piano by Miguel Farras. Carlos Guastavino's really lovely *El Sampedrino* from 1968 is an extra track, not included in the booklet notes.

Fine playing of introspective and quite atmospheric music that really exploits the viola's sonority to the full, results in an excellent CD. ●

VOCAL

JL Dussek – *Messe Solennelle* Academy of Ancient Music; Richard Egarr AAM Records AAM011 (aam.co.uk)



► Jan Ladislav Dussek (1760–1812) is one of Western music's most underrated yet influential personas, credited with

guiding the expansion of the pianoforte's range to six octaves and being the first performing pianist to sit with his profile to the audience, rather than facing them head-on. In addition to his work as a performer, Dussek was also a prolific and inspired composer, writing works which feature great lyricism and striking contrasts. Although once respected and highly regarded throughout Europe, Dussek fell out of popular favour after his death and performances of his works remain unjustly rare today.

Amidst this apparent neglect, the Academy of Ancient Music's new recording of Dussek's *Messe Solennelle* shines a much-deserved light on this magnificent work and its creator. Discovered in the Conservatory Library in Florence in 2015, the manuscript score was transcribed by AAM director Richard Egarr and musicologist Reinhard Siegart, leading to its first modern performance in 2019.

A late classical-era work, the mass is reminiscent of the works of Beethoven and Mozart, with Dussek's own unique voice at the forefront. Throughout the *Messe* one is struck by the beautiful melodiousness and expert craft in each movement; nothing feels extraneous or unnecessary, but rather that every note is exactly where it needs to be, resulting in a sound that is effortless and streamlined. As we expect with Dussek, the dynamic contrasts are extraordinarily

effective and contribute tremendous energy to the entire work, both within individual movements and between the larger sections of the mass itself.

One of the world's finest period instrument orchestras, the Academy of Ancient Music does not disappoint. From beginning to end, the care and attention they give to every musical subtlety and nuance breathes life into this newly discovered work, inviting listeners to embark on a journey of their own to discover Dussek and his *Messe Solennelle* for themselves.

Matthew Whitfield

Mahler – *Das Lied von der Erde* Lucile Richardot; Yves Saelens; Het Collectief; Reinbert de Leeuw Alpha ALPHA633 (naxosdirect.com/items/das-lied-von-der-erde-543432)



► The project to create a chamber version of Mahler's 1908 orchestral song cycle *Das Lied von der Erde* was an initiative of Arnold Schoenberg, who intended to

perform this reduction for 13 players for his Society for Private Musical Performances, an exclusive concert series devoted to new music which ran for three years from 1919 to 1921. Schoenberg indicated roughly how this might be achieved by annotating the full score, leaving the details to be worked out by an acolyte (likely Anton Webern). Ultimately, however, the project was abandoned as the Society went bankrupt due to the hyper-inflation that ravaged post-war Austria. In 1980 Universal Edition commissioned Rainer Riehn to make a performing edition of the score, which has proved compelling enough to have received over a dozen recordings to date.

In 2019, the Belgian Het Collectief ensemble

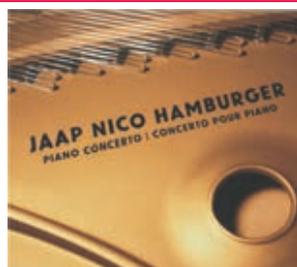
invited the esteemed Dutch maestro Reinbert de Leeuw, well known for his passionate advocacy for the music of Messiaen, Ligeti, Kagel, Kurtág, Vivier, Gubaidulina and Ustvolskaya, to create and perform his own interpretation of this autumnal masterpiece at the Saintes Festival in France in July of that year; sadly, this would prove to be his last public performance. Subsequently, an ailing de Leeuw implored Thomas Dieltjens, the artistic director of the ensemble, to record his arrangement as soon as possible. In February 2020, following the completion of the recording sessions in Amsterdam, de Leeuw died at the age of 81.

De Leeuw's version of the work for the most part follows the broad outlines of the Riehn version but amplifies it with the addition of a second clarinet, assigns the bassoon to double on the contrabassoon (its cavernous low C is an indispensable element in the finale) and, most tellingly, adds a harp part to the ensemble while curtailing the incongruous piano part to the bare essentials. Add to this the outstanding sonic alchemy of the recording team and de Leeuw's finely balanced direction and the result is a performance that for the first time didn't leave me feeling short-changed by the reduced ensemble. The stunning interpretation by the French mezzo-soprano Lucile Richardot is notable for its intimacy and finely nuanced word painting while the Belgian tenor Yves Saelens lends an appropriate swagger to his alternating extroverted numbers. In the closing movement of the finale, *Der Abschied* (The Farewell) de Leeuw provides a touching detail: while the voice gradually recedes into darkness on the word "ewig" (forever) the ensemble maintains an inexorable clockwork indifference, ignoring the indicated *diminuendo*. The earth alone survives, "the horizon is ever blue." Farewell, Reinbert! You will be greatly missed.

Daniel Foley

What we're listening to this month:

thewholenote.com/listening



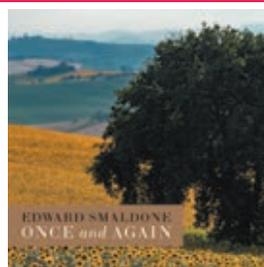
Jaap Nico Hamburger: Piano Concerto Jaap Nico Hamburger

This dramatic concerto is full of drive, explosive energy and pathos, reminiscent of the great works of Prokofiev and Shostakovich.



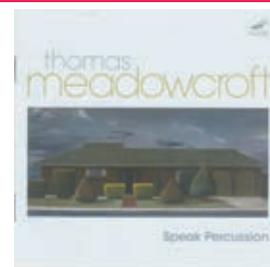
Désordre Eric Huebner

This virtuosic release of Ligeti's études alongside his Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano underscores his attraction to various sources of inspiration.



Once and Again Edward Smaldone

A collection that balances "classical" values of formal cohesion with "modernist" values of capturing an improvisatory sensibility, asymmetry, and irregularity.



Percussion Works Thomas Meadowcroft and Speak Percussion

Speak Percussion is thrilled to announce the release of Percussion Works, a portrait of composer Thomas Meadowcroft's works for percussion, released through Mode Records.

Bruckner – Mass in E Minor; Motets
Choir of King’s College, Cambridge;
Academy of St Martin in the Fields; Sir
Stephen Cleobury
King’s College Cambridge KGS0035
(kingscollegerecordings.com)



▶ Described as “half simpleton, half god” by Gustav Mahler, Anton Bruckner remains a divisive figure in musical history. As a composer of immense

symphonic structures at a time of fissure between followers of Brahms and Wagner, Bruckner was subject to severe criticism from both friend and foe, and these symphonies continue to divide listeners into pro- and anti-Bruckner factions, though less antagonistically than in the late 19th century.

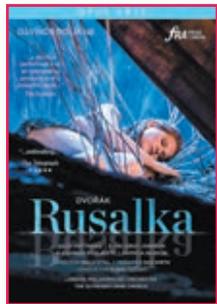
In addition to his love of art, Bruckner was a devout Catholic, and it is in his smaller-scale religious works that we find a level of universally praised beauty and genius unlike any other of his contemporaries, a point reinforced by this recording of the *Mass in E Minor* and motets by the Choir of King’s College, Cambridge. Recorded shortly before the death of conductor Stephen Cleobury, this striking survey of Bruckner’s religiosity and skill is also a testament to the devotion and dedication of the man who led the King’s College choir for so many years.

While Bruckner’s music is often grouped with the massed-choir works of Brahms, Mahler and Schoenberg, this disc demonstrates that Bruckner, particularly in his smaller-scale material, can be ably taken on by chamber-sized groups, including choirs of men and boys. The timbral compromises suggested by this vocal disposition are, in fact, not compromises at all, for the purity of sound that is produced is essential to the transparent and acoustic-driven nature of these pieces. In a building with such reverberance as the St. Florian monastery, where Bruckner composed and worked for many years, or King’s College Chapel, it is the attack, decay and intonation that are of paramount importance, rather than the characteristically late-Romantic power and vibrato, a point reinforced by this stellar recording.

The music of Bruckner no longer needs apologists – it is breathtaking in its entirety and deserving of its place in music history. This recording once again demonstrates why this is so, revelling in the genius of that man who was once described as “half simpleton, half god.” This is music to soothe the soul in troubled times such as our own.

Matthew Whitfield

Dvořák – Rusalka
Soloists; Glyndebourne Chorus; London
Philharmonic Orchestra; Robin Ticciati
Opus Arte OA13020
(naxosdirect.com/search/809478013020)



▶ Although Antonín Dvořák wrote ten operas, the fairy-tale *Rusalka*, written at the end of his life, was the only lasting triumph for the internationally renowned Czech composer. The reason was that most of Dvořák’s operas were felt to be dramatically weak,

as a result of which he failed in his lifelong ambition to be recognized as Smetana’s heir.

Rusalka is a dreamily melodic opera set to Jaroslav Kvapil’s libretto, (which also included some Slavonic features), which was based on the tale *Undine* by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué; also used by Hans Christian Andersen as well as by Pushkin. Dvořák’s beautiful score occasionally evokes both Wagner and Debussy, but it also has earthier passages which underline its Czech identity. As a love story, it remains unusual. Since *Rusalka* is rendered mute by a charmed spell and potion given to her by the witch Ježibaba she cannot speak to her beloved prince and so there is no conventional love duet. Yet, magically, the opera’s finest arias – including the famous *Song of the Moon* – belong to *Rusalka*.

Sally Matthews plays the heroine with tragic majesty. Patricia Bardon’s Ježibaba is dark and beguiling while Evan Leroy Johnson plays the Prince with great eloquence. Rae Smith’s set design is breathtaking and Melly Still’s direction has an epic quality to it. All of this is superbly assisted by the Glyndebourne Chorus and the London Symphony Orchestra which are expertly conducted by Robin Ticciati.

Raul da Gama

Stanford and Howells Remembered
The Cambridge Singers; John Rutter;
Wayne Marshall
Collegium Records CSCD 524
(johnrutter.com/music)



▶ This 2-CD set of choral music honours composers Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) and his student and colleague Herbert Howells (1892–1983), each

with a full disc of highly accomplished music wonderfully sung. It is a version remastered in 2020 from tracks originally recorded in 1992, with three added tracks of which Stanford’s exquisite *Latin Magnificat* is especially

welcome. John Rutter’s Cambridge Singers excel in this music, and are complemented by the fine acoustics of Ely Cathedral. The above-mentioned *Magnificat* for double choir really surprised me with its unusual harmonies and variety of textures, while the more straightforward *English Magnificats in G and B-flat*, also on the disc, offer interesting comparisons. In the G-major work, soprano Caroline Ashton shines with her clear vibrato-less tone. Of other Stanford works I was especially taken with *O for a closer walk*, an intimate and moving setting of William Cowper’s poem.

Turning to Howells, the Cambridge Singers handle his works’ Eastern scales, impressionistic harmonies and complex textures effortlessly. On this disc, the Howells *Requiem* (1938) seems both expressive and mystical; perhaps Rutter’s own association with the composer gave him insights into the extraordinary moods of each section. The compelling, late anthem, *The fear of the Lord* (1976), which Howells composed for Rutter’s choir at Cambridge, is here. So is another favourite anthem, *Like as the hart* (1941), which actually strikes me as bluesy! And there is much more to be discovered.

Roger Knox

Britten – Peter Grimes
Stuart Skelton; Erin Wall; Bergen
Philharmonic Orchestra and Choirs;
Edward Gardner
Chandos CHSA 5250(2) (naxosdirect.com/
search/095115525029)



▶ What an extraordinary thing Benjamin Britten’s *Peter Grimes* is. After 75 years in existence, this work has become a centrepiece of the English operatic canon.

Did Britten ever imagine it would become so celebrated when he first conceived of it? In an infamous flash of prophetic purpose, upon reading George Crabbe’s *The Borough* in a book shop in California ca. 1942, Britten “realized two things: that [he] must write an opera, and where [he] belonged.”

The newest recording of this seminal opus features star singers such as tenor Stuart Skelton, (in the lead role) and soprano Erin Wall (as Ellen Orford). Edward Gardner helms the Bergen Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra, amongst other choruses. From the outset of this record, we perceive laser-precise execution, resulting in a thoroughly energetic and inspired interpretation of this opera. Every last note of the score has been carefully considered by every musician involved.

Three-quarters of a century on, performance practice now exist for *Grimes*. Gardner is aware of such traditions and works admirably within them, reimagining aspects of the opera while adhering to the performative lineage. Orchestral solos rival those of the

singers themselves, with brilliant colours and edgy textures erupting from both choral and orchestral ensembles. Gardner still manages to surprise and provoke us, prompted by the nature of the libretto itself.

Skelton is the consummate Grimes, a role that has shaped his career in many ways. Canadian soprano Erin Wall is characteristically stunning in her performance of Ellen Orford, poignant and wistful. The music world has been deeply saddened by Wall's recent death from cancer this October; she was but 44 years old. A shining light and a rare national treasure, Wall has departed from us far too soon, long before any of her last songs should have been sung.

Adam Sherkin

Hans Werner Henze – Das Prinz von Homburg

Adams; Boecker; Margita; Schneiderman; Kallenberg; Ebbecke; Orchestra of the Staatsoper Stuttgart; Cornelius Meister Naxos 2.110668 (naxosdirect.com/search/747313566853)



► Towards the end of Hans Werner Henze's great opera, *Der Prinz von Homburg*, soldiers from the Prince of Homburg's regiment sing "Remember: feeling alone can save us." They are pleading for mercy for their leader, a highly

distractible, irrepressibly romantic dreamer, governed more by feeling than by rules. He is about to be executed for disregarding his orders – even though by not following them he led his troops to a crucial victory.

This production from Stuttgart Opera in 2019, set in a run-down gymnasium, is no treat for the eyes. But director Stephan Kimmig charges it with urgency, theatricality

and a deep commitment to the humanitarian concerns of Henze and the brilliant Austrian writer Ingeborg Bachmann, whose libretto is based on a much-loved play from 1811 by Heinrich von Kleist.

Kimmig is especially persuasive in highlighting the contrast between the Prince's poetic world of imagination and the military's regimented world of discipline in a way that forcefully resonates today, over 60 years after Henze wrote it – that is until the heavy-handed, awkward finale, where the cast pulls out scarves and T-shirts messaging sensitivity, empathy and freedom.

Musically, the pleasures are innumerable. The singers are without exception convincing, especially Robin Adams as an endearing Prince. The orchestra of the Staatsoper Stuttgart under the direction of Cornelius Meister is incisive in the gorgeous orchestral interludes, and responsive in arias like Homburg's moving ode to immortality, *Nun, o Unsterblichkeit*.

Pamela Margles

Eric Whitacre – The Sacred Veil

Los Angeles Master Chorale Signum Classics SIGCD630 (naxosdirect.com/search/635212063026)



► *The Sacred Veil* is a collaboration between longtime friends, composer Eric Whitacre and poet Charles Anthony Silvestri. In 2005, Silvestri lost his wife Julie to

cancer, leaving him to raise their two young children. A decade later, Silvestri began to reflect on his loss and wrote poetry about his relationship with Julie, their courtship, love, hopes and dreams, and his loss and grief. The CD contains an interview with Whitacre and Silvestri where they discuss this; the booklet is generous, with each poem contextualized by Silvestri.

The Sacred Veil refers to moments of births and deaths when a thin curtain, an almost imperceptible shield, lies between those who are living and those who have passed. The 12 movements each explore particular slivers of Silvestri's reflections. The settings are intimate with poetry that offers powerful imagery throughout, the music is profound and heart wrenching, the chorus sounds exquisite, and pianist Lisa Edwards and cellist Jeffrey Zeigler's emotional artistry is matched by their superb musical abilities.

The Sacred Veil is a deeply personal piece for Silvestri, yet the personal journey speaks to each of us individually. It is a memorable musical experience that transports us from one gripping moment to another and reaches its peak in the second-to-last movement with *You Rise, I Fall*; in the moment of death, when the loved one lets go and rises, those left behind descend into their darkest moments of grief.

Premiered in February 2019, *The Sacred Veil* was recorded by the Los Angeles Master Chorale.

Sophie Bisson

Tõnu Kõrvits – You Are Light and Morning Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir; Tallinn Chamber Orchestra; Risto Joost Ondine ODE 1363-2 (naxosdirect.com/search/0761195136324)



► Estonian composer Tõnu Kõrvits contributes a moving 60-minute work to the immense Estonian choral/orchestral repertoire with his colourful

and detailed composition, *You are Light and Morning* (2019), performed here with compassion by the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir and Tallinn Chamber Orchestra conducted by Risto Joost.

Based on the poetry of 20th-century Italian

What we're listening to this month:

thewholenote.com/listening



Whisky Kisses Alex Bird

Debut album from up-and-coming Toronto Jazz singer/songwriter. 11 original songs that fit into the next chapter in the Great American Songbook



How To Say Sorry and Other Lessons Fawn Fritzen

Exposing the valour and flaws of human character can yield life-altering freedom. Fawn Fritzen's "How to Say Sorry and Other Lessons" describes her path to self-actualization.



Long Time Ago Rumble Matty Stecks

With his first double album effort, Matt Steckler has created something eclectic along the following streams: modern jazz, film score, musique concrète and popular song.



Espiral OKAN

Juno-Nominated OKAN delivers a heady fusion of Afro-Cuban jazz and world roots featuring exquisite harmonies by co-leaders Elizabeth Rodriguez and Magdelys Savigne.

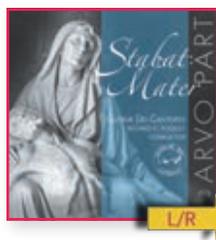
writer, Cesare Pavese (1908–1950), the cycle abounds with emotional feelings of loss, grief, love, life and nature in Kõrvits' Romantic- and Mahler-influenced tonal/atonal music. Six parts are sung in Italian and two in English. Highlights include the opening *Fade In* with its mysterious orchestral quiet minor chord that later reappears before the final song, enveloping the work in contemplative haunting soundscapes. The first part, *Tu sei come una terra (You Are Like a Land)*, is accessible and modern simultaneously, as its introductory vocal motive (which recurs throughout the entire work), traditional choral colours and high string held notes with atonal touches, prepare the listener for what's coming. Pavese's poetic declaration to his love Constance is musically symbolized in *To C. From C* featuring full choir singing above softer walking/tiptoeed pizzicato in the strings. The lush sound changes (like love sometimes) to suspenseful minor tonalities until the final vocal hum with more string plucks.

As an Estonian-Canadian, I grew up and still listen to Estonian choral music. Kõrvits' work here is so clearly his own, with the performers outdoing themselves in their interpretations. Thank you/aitäh for this memorable music!

Tiina Kiik

Arvo Pärt – Stabat Mater

**Gloriae Dei Cantores; Richard K. Pugsley
Gloriae Dei Cantores Recordings GDCD065
(naxos.lnk.to/StabatMaterEL)**



► If any composer could, single-handedly, have created a public receptive to the holy minimalism of John Tavener and Górecki's third symphony, it would be the monkish

Estonian, Arvo Pärt whose 85th birthday (September 11) was the occasion of this release. Pärt's music has evolved through serialism – using the dissonances of atonal music – and Franco-Flemish choral music until, after years of meditation, religious consultation and even a break from composing, Pärt settled into using his singular voice to initiate his enduring tintinnabuli period, featuring such masterpieces as *Tabula Rasa*, *Fratres* and *Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten*.

This disc takes its name from *Stabat Mater* but also consists of other masterfully performed still and contemplative choral works. As with Pärt's orchestral pieces, the uniqueness of this choral music is achieved largely through a build-up of dynamics and contrasting sonorities used in an almost circular manner. The *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* are particularly eloquent examples.

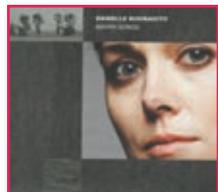
The longest work is *Stabat Mater*. While this music is intense, Pärt eschews the pain of the crucifixion; rather he imbues the

event's sadness with a ritualistic element by way of the gently rocking motion that forms the basis of the work. You couldn't ask for a better end to this disc. Yet the build-up to it is extraordinary because *Gloriae Dei Cantores*, directed by Richard K. Pugsley, has interiorized Pärt's spirit – indeed his very soul – as they traverse his music to an unprecedented degree of poignancy, with beautifully moulded choral textures and colours.

Raul da Gama

Marfa Songs

**Danielle Buonaiuto
Starkland ST-234 (starkland.com)**



► For her debut album, *Marfa Songs*, Danielle Buonaiuto enlisted four emerging composers to write song cycles for her. *Marfa Songs* features 19 premiere

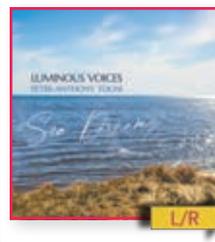
recordings by Douglas Buchanan, Natalie Draper, James Young and Canadian composer, Cecilia Livingston. Each composer provides a unique vocal terrain for Buonaiuto to explore: Buchanan's *Scots and Waters* is influenced by Scottish music; Draper's *O sea-starved, hungry sea* is ritualistic and portrays the sea's powers; Young's miniature *Marfa Songs* pay homage to the Texas high plains; and Livingston's *Penelope* and *Kalypto* voyage through Homer's *Odyssey*.

Marfa Songs is marked by stylistic differences that make it challenging to find musical cohesiveness and is best considered as a soundscape journey. Together with pianist John Wilson, Buonaiuto creates atmospheres that include a minimalistic panorama of a desert city, water odysseys, themes of mortality and eternity as well as Scottish folk songs and a Scots rendition of *Psalm 23*. Buonaiuto's vocal agility is most notable in the Young song cycle, which is brazen and fun, although the purposeful minimalistic instrumentation and jumpy nature of the songs do not always serve her voice. Buonaiuto's diction is flawless, especially in the highest registers and her emotional capacity as well as her full and warm voice is especially displayed in the Buchanan cycle.

Marfa Songs comes with a booklet that includes composer notes, lyrics and an introduction by American soprano Phyllis Bryn-Julson, one of the great interpreters of 20th century vocal music.

Sophie Bisson

Peter-Anthony Togni – Sea Dreams Luminous Voices Chamber Choir Leaf Music LM236 (leaf-music.ca)



► *Sea Dreams* showcases eight works by Dartmouth-based composer, Peter-Anthony Togni, performed by the Calgary professional chamber choir, Luminous Voices,

under artistic director Timothy Shantz, with special guest instrumentalists.

The three-movement title track, *Sea Dreams* (2018), for choir and two flutes (Sara Hahn-Scinocco and Sarah MacDonald) reflects on Togni's relationship with the ocean/sea/water and journey of faith. The first movement, *Pray for those who are in Ships*, draws on texts from T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. The choir is cast as the sailing ship, singing diverse dynamics, held notes and harmonies, highlighted by soprano Katie Partridge's warm high-pitched solo. The flutes are the water, playing atonal lines, puffs and breaths. *Alma Redemptoris* uses a Marian hymn text in its calmer mood and floating vocal swells. More Eliot texts, choir held notes, whispers, a tenor solo by Oliver Munar and flute wavelike runs adorn *Perpetual Angelus*.

Sparse instrumentation in *Earth Voices* (2014) as hand drummer Tova Olson and percussionist Victor Cheng play contrasting builds to a more atonal vocal section, and bell rings with choral whispers. Bass clarinetist Jeff Reilly plays with nuance, low pitches and extended technique touches, especially during tenor Timothy Shantz's colourful solo in *Responsio introit*, and the dramatic clarinet/choir duets in *Silentio*. The five a cappella compositions include the earlier work *Psaume 98* (1997) with its more traditional counterpoint and repeated bass/tenor rhythms.

Togni's choral composition evolution is perfectly recorded by Luminous Voices. An amazing artistic accomplishment by all!

Tiina Kiik

CLASSICAL AND BEYOND

**The Filippo Dalla Casa Collection
Pablo Zapico; Daniel Zapico (archlute/
theorbo duet)
Winter and Winter 910 258-2
(winterandwinter.com)**



► Convention tells us that the theorbo and archlute were rivals of the newly emerging harpsichord before conceding defeat and disappearing.

Enter Filippo Dalla Casa to dispel this illusion, for he compiled a two-volume collection of music for these two instruments dated 1759 and 1760 – several years after their supposed demise. (Even then it was not until 1811 that Dalla Casa donated his manuscript to a musical conservatory in Bologna.)

Full credit to Pablo and Daniel Zapico for playing 17 pieces from Dalla Casa’s manuscript plus an anonymous sinfonia. Their enthusiasm and skill show themselves in the very first *Sonata*, which has come down to us anonymously. This is a lively composition of the quality associated with the archlute’s earlier (and supposedly greater) days; it is followed by similarly demanding movements scored *Allegro*.

The anonymous composer of track 13 who composed the *Largo*, with its dignified cascading entrance, certainly deserves to be known to us. Contrast it with the spritely quality of Giuseppe Vaccari’s two *Allegro* movements. Dalla Casa only lists an author for seven of the tracks on this CD; even then they are almost unknown writers – but surely one more reason why this recording is important.

This CD breaks down misconceptions. First, that the theorbo and archlute died out earlier than they did with the rise of the harpsichord. Secondly, that they were doomed to monotonous continuo parts. This CD proves otherwise.

Michael Schwartz

**Monsieur de Sainte-Colombe et ses filles
Lucile Boulanger; Rolf Lislevand; Myriam Rignol; Philippe Pierlot
Mirare MIR336 (mirare.fr/album)**



▶ Other than being slightly aware that there had been a brief renaissance of the music of Monsieur de Sainte-Colombe (Jean de Sainte-Colombe 1640–

1700) during the 1990s, I knew little about the French composer and celebrated violist, prior to picking up this fine recording. I am glad that I did, however. Recorded beautifully in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception in Nantes, the church’s gorgeous acoustics become a welcome fifth member of the consort of Philippe Pierlot, Lucile Boulanger and Myriam Rignol, all on viola de gamba, along with theorbist Rolf Lislevand, to faithfully recreate and capture the nuance and intimacy of this still-popular musical form.

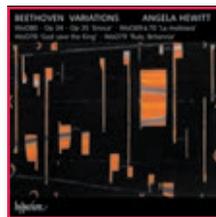
Listening to the 17th-century music of Sainte-Colombe, along with complementary pieces by Louis Couperin, Jacques Champion de Chambonnières and Robert de Visée during Lockdown 2020 can, I suppose, feel somewhat anachronistic, if not downright discordant from the realities that we are all dealing with on a daily basis. But if

it is possible for you to do so, the opportunity to disconnect and to immerse yourself in the listening pleasure of this straight-forward, well-played and conversational music is there for you here. Perhaps most meaningfully, the realities of COVID-19 have forced many of us to potentially re-evaluate friendships, reconnect (or make amends), realizing that life is valuable and, sadly, short. Always, perhaps, but seeming to be particularly so during this time of widespread illness and loss.

Accordingly, Sainte-Colombe’s *Tombeau Les Regrets*, performed beautifully here, offers an opportunity for listeners to contemplate and “meditate upon death,” allowing the Stoic edict *Memento Mori* (“remember that you will die”), to be not a morbid reality check, but rather to remind us all to love, live and listen, fully and completely. A valuable lesson to be sure, and one, perhaps, that the beauty of early music can teach us today.

Andrew Scott

**Beethoven – Variations
Angela Hewitt
Hyperion CDA68346
(hyperion-records.co.uk)**



▶ 2020 has certainly been a year like no other. And while social media informs me that many of us, while hibernating in lockdown, have turned

to amateur immunology, sourdough baking and mask creation as a way of passing the time, the Canadian-born, beloved and highly feted pianist, Angela Hewitt, turned her keen musical gaze during lockdown towards Beethoven’s colossal “*Hammerklavier*” *Sonata, Op. 106*, which she learned, thus completing her cycle of the composer’s 32 sonatas. Hewitt, renowned for her interpretations of the major keyboard music of Johann Sebastian Bach, for which she was, earlier this year, awarded the City of Leipzig Bach Medal – the first time in its history the award was bestowed upon a woman – continues her focus on LvB here, on this great new Hyperion recording, *Beethoven Variations*.

Approaching the repertoire with the creative insight, scholarly rigour and wholly unique interpretative lens for which she is known, Hewitt once again reveals her singular ability to not only bridge, but illuminate Beethoven’s challenging musical passages (which she seems to traverse with effortless virtuosic ease) with the baked-in humour and sense of fun that perhaps few see, but which Hewitt neatly brings to the fore. As she writes about the album’s penultimate track, “God save the King” in her own terrifically penned liner notes that offer invaluable informative pedagogical insight into her artistic and pianistic process, “if ever

you needed proof of humour in his music, here it is,” before launching into its deft contrapuntal workout.

Andrew Scott

**Schubert – Octet
Quatuor Modigliani; Bruno Schneider;
Sabine Meyer; Dag Jensen; Knut Erik Sundquist
Mirare MIR4438 (mirare.fr)**



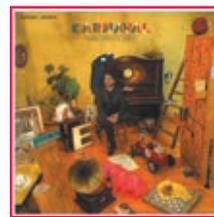
▶ When Schubert took on a commission request in 1824 to compose a piece similar to Beethoven’s *Septet*, he was in a vulnerable place in his life – his physical

health was poor, he was experiencing bouts of depression and his music was not getting the recognition he was hoping for. Yet he wrote the largest-scale chamber music work of his opus and it did not reflect the intensity of his life at the time. The *Octet* is pure Schubert magic – full of abundant solo lines for each of the eight instruments, beautiful, elegant and uplifting. Although this piece has a similar instrumentation and basic structure to Beethoven’s *Septet*, perhaps Schubert’s biggest nod to Beethoven comes through the achievement of great creativity and layers of expression in the midst of suffering.

The Modigliani Quartet and their respective colleagues, Sabine Meyer (clarinet), Bruno Schneider (horn), Dag Jensen (bassoon) and Knut Erik Sundquist (double bass), take on this magical piece with an understated gusto. Almost an hour long and consisting of six movements, Schubert’s *Octet* requires unrelenting drive and imagination, both of which came through in the fabulous artistry of the ensemble. Their performance has a wonderful combination of intensity and lightness that kept me both relaxed and at the edge of my seat. This ensemble has enjoyable synergy that is most obvious in a unity and refinement of their interpretative ideas and sound.

Ivana Popovic

**Carnaval – A recital around Schumann’s
Carnaval Op.9
Matan Porat
Mirare MIR502D (matanporat.com)**



▶ These are challenging times and what better way to help lift the pervading dark mood than a musical carnival – specifically Schumann’s

Carnaval Op.9? The piece, completed in 1835, remains among the most beloved from the Romantic repertoire and, seemingly, would

never warrant any degree of modification. Yet the Israeli-born pianist Matan Porat had other ideas, and the result is this splendid recording on the Mirare label, his third disc to date.

Porat acknowledged that while *Carnaval* is a quintessential document of Romanticism, he wanted to take a closer look at Schumann's musical mind and expand upon the original score through the insertion of 23 additional short pieces by 18 composers as diverse as Heitor Villa-Lobos, François Couperin and György Kurtág. In so doing, Porat hoped it would not only shed light on music by other composers, but also inspire a greater appreciation for the original score.

And it works! Delivering a polished and elegant performance, Porat has clearly taken considerable care with the placement of the musical selections. As an example, Schumann's *Pierrot* is followed by Villa-Lobos' *A manha da Pierrette*, written in the same coquettish mood. On the other hand, Kurtág's *Ostinato in A-flat*, with its repeated bass notes, forms a fine introduction to Schumann's *Reconnaissance* in the same key, which is followed by the *Prelude in C Minor* from Bach's first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, and in turn, *Pantolon and Columbine*, all demonstrating the same frenetic energy.

Finally, after 43 tracks, what could be a better ending than the rousing *Davidsbündler March*, bringing the set to a most satisfying conclusion? Kudos to Porat, not only for an exemplary performance, but for his skillful reconfiguration of a much-loved piece – recommended.

Richard Haskell

Reawakened – Clarinet Concertos
Robert Plane; BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra; Martyn Brabbins
Champs Hill Records CHRCD160
(champsillrecords.co.uk/691/Robert-Plane-Reawakened)



▶ Three long-overlooked British clarinet concertos here receive their first-ever recordings, “reawakened” by Robert Plane, principal clarinet of the BBC National

Orchestra of Wales.

For unspecified reasons, Richard H. Walthew (1872–1951) left his *Concerto for Clarinet* (1902) in manuscript, unorchestrated until recently completed by Alfie Pugh. Its opening movement resembles Richard Strauss’ “Mozartian” style; the *Andante* and *Vivace* partake, respectively, of Edwardian nobility and jollity. It’s a charming, cheerful work, well worth a listen.

Ruth Gipps (1921–1999) composed her *Clarinet Concerto in G Minor, Op. 9* in 1940, the year she began studying with Ralph Vaughan Williams. His influence pervades

throughout: in the first movement, the clarinet seemingly extemporizes over an outdoorsy walking bass; the bucolic mood is sustained in the pastoral slow movement and the folk-dancy finale. It’s another attractive audience-pleaser.

What should have been recognized by now as a major contribution to the clarinet repertoire is the CD’s longest, most colourfully scored, most modern-sounding work – the 28-minute *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, Op. 7* (1950) by Iain Hamilton (1922–2000). Propulsive, irregular, even jazzy rhythms contrast with long-lined, darkly melancholic lyricism, all calling for extreme virtuosity from the soloist, amply provided by Plane.

Another first recording ends the CD – Graham Parlett’s arrangement for clarinet and string orchestra of the warmly lyrical *Fantasy Sonata* (1943), originally for clarinet and piano, by John Ireland (1879–1962), a minor master deserving much greater exposure in North America.

Four fine works, exuberantly performed, making one truly pleasurable CD.

Michael Schulman

Brahms – Symphony No. 1
Gewandhausorchester Leipzig; Herbert Blomstedt
PentaTone PTC5186850
(naxosdirect.com/search/827949085062)



▶ At the risk of stranding ourselves in a past we’ll never relive, we continue to revisit masterpieces from over a century ago. This provides work for my fellow

performers and me, and possibly keeps the public in touch with sonic masterpieces. We might ask ourselves, what is new and different in this latest iteration? Otherwise, is there any point?

I take enormous pleasure in hearing the fine Gewandhaus Orchestra, under Herbert Blomstedt, recraft Brahms’ titanic *First Symphony in C Minor Op. 68* into audible form. The performance has so much clarity and poise, nothing I write in response can mean much at all.

I’m no collector of things, nor of recordings, but I am a repository of memories, and this piece remains on a prominent shelf in the room where professional reminiscence is housed. As a student, the experience of hearing the wonderful energy and intelligence of Brahms’ First fuelled my desire to be among the lucky few who might perform it in a professional setting. Knowing how long he took to knuckle down and live up to his billing as the next great symphonist after Beethoven inspires me to carry on at my advanced age.

It is a fantastic rendition, as good as any out

there I’m sure, and worth owning whether it is one among many, or your first (even only) version. The playing is pure, both delicate and yet powerful. Blomstedt asks for and receives fine and subtle performances from the entire band.

The *Andante sostenuto* second movement is languid and deliciously melancholy. Add in the uplifting finale, with its *wunderhorn* call and its hymn answering Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy*, and perhaps the troubles of today might be more bearable.

Max Christie

Brahms; Bartók; Liszt
Alexandre Kantorow
Bis BIS-2380
(naxosdirect.com/search/bis-2380)



▶ Young French pianist Alexandre Kantorow has already had a distinguished recording career with three award-winning releases. This recital is

his first since winning the Tchaikovsky Competition in 2019 and it too is a real winner. As a thought-provoking musician he now focuses on the Rhapsody, a thoroughly Romantic genre, invented by Liszt followed by Brahms, Rachmaninoff, Ravel, Sibelius etc. and into the modern era with Bartók and even Gershwin.

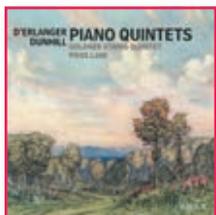
Kantorow is not looking for popular show pieces, although his program offers plenty of hair raising virtuosity. He starts off with a very effective rendition of the tempestuous Brahms *Rhapsody No. 1* demonstrating a virtuoso Romantic abandon, full of fire, but also a gentle lyricism in the middle part. Kantorow is a truly mature artist who belies his age as evidenced in the most ambitious work on the program, Brahms’ *Piano Sonata No. 2*. This was the youthful composer’s first major piano work and it is full of rich musical ideas, opulent harmonies, yet under strict compositional rigour. It starts off with virtuosos double fortissimo octaves as its opening salvo. I love the *Trio* part of the *Scherzo, Poco piu moderato* – a wonderful melody that enchants the ear.

The second half is devoted to Hungarians. Young Bartók’s *Rhapsody Op. 1*, which harks back to the Romantic era, and in tribute to Liszt, seems to revel in beautiful harmonies and evokes Gypsy music. Very much unlike the later avant-garde Bartók. The fiery second part is a wild Hungarian dance of amazing bravura.

The disc ends spectacularly with Liszt’s *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 11* played with such amazing gusto that it will lift you up from your seat. A gorgeous recording.

Janos Gardonyi

Dunhill & Erlanger – Piano Quintets
Piers Lane; Goldner String Quartet
Hyperion CDA68296
(hyperion-records.co.uk)



▶ British composers Thomas Dunhill (1877-1946) and Baron Frédéric d'Erlanger (1868-1943) each wrote a piano quintet, both in four substantial movements. Until

Australia's pre-eminent Goldner Quartet and pianist Piers Lane recorded them for Hyperion, however, these late Romantic works were largely overlooked by the musical mainstream.

Born in Paris, d'Erlanger lived for most of his life in London where he worked in the family business as a banker. His biography further notes that he was "by inclination a patron of the arts, and through creativity a composer." His opera, ballet, orchestra and chamber music scores were widely performed during his lifetime. D'Erlanger's 1901 *Quintet* reflects Brahmsian and Dvořákian influences, as well as a distinctive tunefulness paired with lively rhythms, playful thematic flow and a sure feel for drama. The substantial piano part certainly adds heft to the string quartet writing imbued with an audio palm court aura, on the lighter side of the classical music spectrum.

Londoner Thomas Dunhill on the other hand, d'Erlanger's contemporary, was a prolific career composer and professor of music. His *C-Minor Quintet* evokes earlier 19th-century musical idioms drawing on Robert Schumann's scores, but it also echoes Elgar's chamber music.

Part of this album's interest is in the dual thrill of discovery and (musical) time travel: I had heard of neither composer before, nor of their century-old music. Early Edwardian chamber music seldom sounded as good, particularly when played this well.

Andrew Timar

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY

reTHiNK
junctQin keyboard collective
Redshift Records TK479
(redshiftrecords.org)



▶ Pianist Thomas Larcher once lamented that he was unable to "get away from the piano's natural sound... with all the intensity that marks a musician's relationship to his instrument." He went on to equate "this sound" to "something worn out,

obsolete..."

Meanwhile, Elaine Lau, Joseph Ferretti and Stephanie Chua, collectively junctQin, have been toying with the instrument, with radical and experimental joy, since 2009. Their magical adventure takes place both on all the 88 keys as well as inside their respective pianos as they continue to bend and shape the 311-year-old (and counting) instrument to their will. *reTHiNK* is not only an appropriate title for their new selection of works, it might easily be seen as an ongoing one. The performances of junctQin, after all, are always evolving. This recording is sure to be remembered as being unique in their repertoire.

On *reTHiNK* the trio dazzle the senses with an arresting performance. The captivating music fuses contemplative harmonies with innovative performance techniques. As a result, music as radically eloquent as Alfred Schnittke's 1979 *Hommage à Stravinsky*, Prokofiev, & Shostakovich is not only re-imagined, but redefined in 21st-century terms. This is also true – perhaps more remarkably so – of Maurice Ravel's 1918 work, *Frontispice*. The wonders never cease as junctQin teases out the mysteries of works by Finnish composer Tomi Räisänen and Canadians Monica Pearce, Emily Doolittle, Chris Thornborrow, Alex Eddington and Elisha Denburg in an embarrassment of riches.

Raul da Gama

Alice Ping Yee Ho – Venom of Love
Alice Ping Yee Ho; Vania Chan; Patty Chan; Lulu
Leaf Music Digital (leaf-music.ca)



▶ One of Canada's most acclaimed composers, two-time JUNO nominee and Dora Mavor Moore Award winner for Outstanding Original Opera, Alice Ping Yee

Ho, has gifted us with a gorgeous work that almost defies characterization. This 60-minute composition deals with elements of fantasy and eroticism from a primeval, magical world; a musical composition for ballet based on the *Legend of the White Snake*, one of China's Four Great Folktales.

The work is compiled as 20 tracks inside four acts, which serve to guide the listener along the extraordinary journey as we turn the pages of an epic-sized book of fantasy and desire, love and rivalry between mortals and spirits, and finally the ultimate sacrifice for eternal love.

Fusing synthesized and acoustic instrumental sounds with soprano voice and percussion, this work is a dramatic dance/opera/musical theatre composition telling an ancient myth in contemporary form. The

music sweeps us up so deftly we are captive travellers inside dripping caves; clusters of tonalities are richly layered with electronics and we imagine shimmering dragons, writhing snakes, and hear spectacular sounds of animals, bats and water, evoking the hues of brilliant blues, greens and greys. Of special mention is lyric coloratura soprano Vania Lizbeth Chan's voice that somehow manages to hold warmth and charm while soaring at stratospheric heights.

Commissioned by Toronto's Little Pear Garden Dance Company in 2014, the music is so evocative I almost feel like I've already seen the ballet, but I'll be sure to be in line for that production when it comes back to a live stage in the future.

Cheryl Ockrant

Jaap Nico Hamburger – Piano Concerto
Assaff Weisman; Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal; Vincent de Kort
Leaf Music LM238 (leaf-music.ca)



▶ Composer Jaap Nico Hamburger's first CD release is a Leaf Music recording of his *Piano Concerto* performed by Orchestra Métropolitain de

Montréal under the direction of Vincent de Kort, with soloist Assaff Weisman. Set in the traditional three-movement concerto form, the piece opens with a mysterious orchestral introduction where the piano is welcomed into the texture through a Mahlerian sensibility. The second movement unmistakably recalls Prokofiev in its playfulness and tricky rhythmic attitudes. This almost schizophrenic hyperactivity is interrupted by a serene landscape evoking tragedy or loss. The boisterous activity quickly returns to provide somewhat of a rollercoaster for the listener. Throughout the third movement, sparse bells and undulating strings paint a menacing atmosphere for the final moments of the piece.

Weisman handles the virtuosic writing with extreme touch and sensitivity. With the concerto being only 22 minutes, one is perhaps left wanting more of a featured moment for the pianist, such as a cadenza – especially considering the fact that the piece is in the traditional three-movement form. The orchestra and soloist deliver a top-notch performance of a work that will please those who enjoy new sounds created in a Late-Romantic style.

Adam Scime

Cheryl Frances-Hoad – The Whole Earth Dances

Various Artists

Champs Hill Records CHRCD152
(champsillrecords.co.uk)



▶ This, the second Champs Hill CD of chamber music by Cheryl Frances-Hoad (b.1980), a much-performed British composer in all genres, features nine works dating

from 1998 to 2017, none longer than 14 minutes. Short – but not sweet!

This music, although seemingly easy to follow, is anything but easy listening. Eschewing prettiness and warmth, these pieces' beauties are austere and angst-ridden. Within predominantly slow tempi, strong accents mark the ways forward, but the clearly defined instrumental lines wander uncertainly amid unclear, undefined tonal centres.

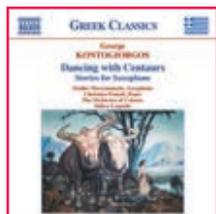
The disquiet thus produced reflects Frances-Hoad's imagery in describing her compositions: "so much of the Earth is being polluted, fracked and deforested" (the CD's title piece, *The Whole Earth Dances*, for piano quintet including a double bass, as in Schubert's *Trout*); "a dystopian future in which the technology we have come to rely upon kills us" (*Game On* for piano and electronics); "I incorporated the *Dies Irae* plainchant – Day of Wrath – as a reminder of the inevitable" (*The Prophecy* for cello and piano); "a woman who kills her two children to spite her husband" (*Medea* for solo flute); "[Dante's] description of sinners submerged neck-deep in rivers of boiling blood" (*My Day in Hell* for string quartet).

Disturbing, uncomfortable, but always holding my attention, these works often reminded me of the sparse, haunted atmosphere of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*. If you're in the mood for feeling moody, you'll enjoy this CD, as I did.

Michael Schulman

George Kontogiorgos – Dancing with Centaurs

Stathis Mavrommatis; Orchestra of Colours; Milto Logiadis
Naxos 8.579047 (naxosdirect.com/
search/747313904778)



▶ Composer George Kontogiorgos' illustrious tonal melodies highlight this Global Music Award-winning release with four works inspired by

Greek traditional songs/mythologies, juxtaposing tonal and atonal sounds, pentatonic

scales, Romanticism, minimalism, jazz and pop soundscapes. Saxophonist Stathis Mavrommatis and pianist Christina Panteli rise to the occasion to master and perform these dense, challenging, stylistically diverse works with technical and musical aplomb!

The ten-movement *Dancing with Centaurs* (2014), for soprano saxophone and piano, superimposes ancient Hellenic traditional music ideas with Romantic tonality to musically describe these Greek mythical creatures. The second movement *Idyllic* starts with fast descending piano lines and then smooth sax notes lead to more tonal song-like melodies. The third movement, *Dancing with Centaurs*, is folk-flavoured with subtle tango undertones and high-pitched squeaky sax. There is a breathtaking change in mood by a slower, reflective sax solo and piano chords in *Meditation*. Jazz undertones, repeated single sax tones and marching piano groove add to the atmosphere in *Battle of the Centaurs*.

Ringtone (2016) for alto saxophone and piano is an amusing take, with simple cyclical melodic sax and piano lines mimicking different phones ringing simultaneously. *Concertino "Testosterone"* (2015) adds a string section to the duo. Solo alto sax *Night Walk* (2017) has a free improv jazz feel and slight tonal pitch changes at ends of phrases.

Kontogiorgos' understanding of his personal musical influences and the infrequently heard saxophone/piano instrumentation along with great playing makes for illuminating listening.

Tiina Kiik

Désordre: György Ligeti – Etudes; Trio Eric Huebner; Yuki Numata Resnick; Adam Unsworth
New Focus Recordings FCR269
(newfocusrecordings.com)



▶ For American piano marvel Eric Huebner, myriad talents have ignited a multi-faceted career of unwavering performance prowess, equal in measure as soloist,

chamber player and orchestral pianist. Huebner remains one of the most active keyboardists of his generation and if you don't already know his work, you really should.

A latest release featuring music by György Ligeti offers a homecoming of a kind. Fiendishly demanding contemporary repertoire has always been Huebner's specialty but at the heart of his musical muse is a long-standing association with Ligeti. Huebner believes the *Études* to represent "an entirely new musical language... fusing together disparate elements." Ligeti came to challenge himself – his own compositional craft – later in life when he penned these works.

Remarkably at home in these scores,

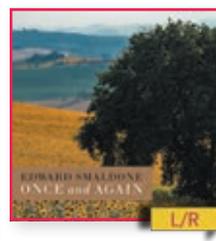
Huebner puts his dazzling arsenal of abilities on full display, sculpting timescales and wielding rhythmic idiosyncrasies all with a veteran expertise and panache. His is a deft touch, keenly born of an exceptional musical ear and fine sense for textural expression (arguably a prerequisite in the successful interpretation of any piece by Ligeti). Rising to the challenges, Huebner writes of "laying bare the music's intricacies and keeping pace with its extreme technical demands while expressing its joy, poignancy and, at times, melancholy."

Ligeti's horn trio reveals even more of the composer's unusual universe. It is a cosmos that glimmers benevolently in the care of dedicated artists like Huebner, Yuki Numata Resnick and Adam Unsworth.

Adam Sherkin

Edward Smaldone – Once and Again
Various Artists
New Focus Recordings FCR 258
(newfocusrecordings.com)

Knehans; Smaldone – Double Portrait
All of the Above; HU Jianbing; William R. Langley
Ablaze Records ar-00053
(ablazerecords.net)



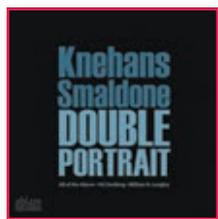
▶ The music of composer Edward Smaldone (b.1956) is firmly rooted in the modernist tradition of what for decades in the 20th century formed the mainstream of American academic

"classical" music. It was a lineage severely disrupted, though not wholly extinguished, by numerous new approaches to concert musical experiment including indeterminacy, acousmatic and electronic sound, transtethnicism, minimalism and free improvisation, among many others. Smaldone's own output has nevertheless steadfastly retained close ties with the compositional modernism of his teachers, George Perle and Ralph Shapey, though this mid-century American aesthetic was also modified by admixtures of jazz. With the release of two new albums, we can listen in to the music Smaldone has been composing over several decades.

Edward Smaldone: Once and Again presents five well-crafted compositions written between 1986 and 2014: a collection of chamber music, two song cycles and a string orchestra work. They collectively showcase Smaldone's diverse sources of inspiration ranging from the Renaissance/Baroque composer Claudio Monteverdi and American modernist Perle, to jazz giants Ellington and Monk. The liner notes highlight the implications of these influences, contrasting the "'classical' values of motivic and formal cohesion and development,"

with “‘modernist’ values of capturing an improvisatory sensibility, asymmetry, and irregularity.”

The two multi-movement song cycles on the album provide keys to Smaldone’s work. The dramatic *Cantare di Amore* (2009) – with links to Monteverdi – provides soprano Tony Arnold plenty of room for declamatory drama, supported by sprightly supporting harp and flute writing. *Letters from Home* (2000/2007/2014), sung by soprano Susan Narucki, uses a five-part narrative of period letters providing a snapshot of mid-century American women’s lives, effectively framed by flute, clarinet and piano. *Duke/Monk* (2011) for clarinet and piano on the other hand is a contrasting two-part tribute to Ellington and Monk, the American jazz masters’ voices eloquently filtered through Smaldone’s idiosyncratic aesthetic.



Smaldone shares space with his composer colleague Douglas Knehan on the 2-CD album *Knehan's Smaldone: Double Portrait*. He is well represented by four chamber music works

performed by the virtuoso young ensemble All of the Above. Smaldone’s *Suite* (1992, 2001) played by violinist Scott Jackson and pianist Matthew Umphreys is a standout. The astringent score makes considerable technical and emotional demands of the violin soloist right from its opening cadenza to *Stephane’s Dance*, its Grappelli-like, jazz-imbued third movement.

Three Scenes from The Heartland (1994) for solo piano is a sensitive work for the instrument drawing particularly on its jazz legacy. Receiving a definitive performance by Umphreys, *Scenes* is marked by a wide range of responses to the vast American landscape, both geographic and human, the Heartland of the title. Smaldone writes about “unbridled optimism, freedom of spirit, ingenuity, grit and determination” that lies within the American spirit, “yearning for the new, the unknown,” in the final movement reflecting on “the exultation of reflection in its quiet, motionless close.”

Whether you share his personal view of the American journey, the call for renewal embedded in this emotional, and perhaps nostalgic, music may well resonate with your own search for meaning and connection during this challenging time.

Andrew Timar

Five Thoughts on Everything Jobina Tinnemans Bright Shiny Things BSTC-9134 (brightshiny.ninja/jobina)



the most extraordinarily eloquent music you may have heard in a long time. *Five Thoughts on Everything* is a unique perspective on the ecosystem of planet Earth in which humanity plays a pivotal role. The title suggests that the *raison d’être* for our existence is quite simple. Tinnemans’ performance on *Five Thoughts on Everything* brings that existential simplicity to life by weaving the piano into a series of other field recordings so exquisitely made that the mechanical aspects of the recording melt seamlessly into a whole world of ephemeral sound.

The extraterrestrial white noise of *Midtone in G* forms a kind of warp into which the chorale of *Djúpalónsdóttir & Hellnarsón* is woven (by the South Iceland Chamber Choir). An interminable dance of marine life burbles in the intertwining of piano and jabbering grey seals from Pwll Deri, Wales in *The Shape of Things Aquatic*. Meanwhile the rhythmic arrival of roosting starlings is subsumed by deep aquatic life including the call of whales – all this in *Microbioism*. The sound palette of *Varèsotto, Hinterland of Varèse*, Tinnemans’ 2018 take on Edgard Varèse’s installation at the 1958 Brussels World Fair, returns us to a macro-view of the ecosystem that is planet Earth. It’s a disc to die for, in which Tinnemans’ universe – and ours – is described with ethereal beauty from end to end.

Raul da Gama

Jeff Morris – Close Reeding, A digital view from the inside out Various Artists Ravello Records RR8041 (ravellorecords.com/catalog/rr8041)



their trade: mouthpiece, reed, tongue, lips, actuated by saliva and breath. As an exploration it is horrifying yet familiar. I stood the test of it by writing these thoughts while hearing it, but it was still a challenge.

Compared to some of the other tracks, *Slurp* is at least comfotringly acoustic; others,

▶ Her self-confessed “analog obsession” has enabled the Dutch-born, Wales-based composer and performer Jobina Tinnemans to produce some of

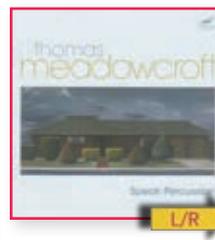
like the title track, are laboratory products, where the hint of a recreated physical space is buried under synthetic effects occurring in the void of Cyberia. I visualize a blank sound-stage, black or neutral white, no corners, no floor walls or ceiling. Within this space Morris explores the quasi-human voices of reed instruments, pairing them with, or pitting against, sounds from his own digital sound production mechanisms.

Melody and harmony sit much of this disc out, back in the “real” world. Instead: dialogues of nattering, whining, dyspeptic, or louche voices, disembodied and reminiscent of the acoustic instruments where they were born. So, rhythm, timbre, certainly pitch, but pitch that is nearly arbitrary, the servant of an attempt to express through something very like speech, something very like meaning. In *Voclarise*, a brief melodic utterance by the bass clarinet turns into a gorgeous chorale that is soon usurped by a croaking (contra?) bass clarinet. *What’s in a Whisper* is a four-movement (*Hush, Howl, Growl, Grit*) trio for drum kit, alto sax and synthesizer. Here is almost conventional chamber music, at least compared with the other more singular and solitary expressions.

The lineup of contributors is impressive, their commitment to this extravagance is total. Not for everybody, but verifiably music.

Max Christie

Thomas Meadowcroft – Percussion Works Speak Percussion Mode Records mode 319 (speakpercussion.com)



▶ The Australian composer, Thomas Meadowcroft (b.1972), delivers a CD featuring four of his works written for percussion and electronics performed by his compatriots,

the renowned Speak Percussion ensemble. In the first piece, titled *The Great Knot*, piercing electronic drones and chirpings create a delightfully barren expanse. This piece is a meditation in an open field with rusty swings and passing melodies in the wind. *Cradles* is a psychedelic lullaby warping lounge music into a hallucinogenic dreamscape. In *Plain Moving Landfill*, the listener travels through industrial ambiances and synthetic punctures. For a piece that is inspired by the layers of rubbish found in a landfill, this piece is decidedly calm – albeit in a Tim Hecker sense of the word. Lastly, *Home Organs* takes its inspiration from the attempt at memory retrieval at the onset of Alzheimer’s illness. Our memories can create a sense of “home” or belonging for the individual. This piece certainly delivers a sense of frustration that undoubtedly accompanies a loss of this sense of home through the failure of one’s

own organs.

Meadowcroft has a particular knack for quirky electronic tinkering and applies these sonorities to obfuscate the difference between acoustic and electronic sources for the listener. When thinking about a CD of contemporary percussion music, the mind immediately expects to hear bombast and raucousness. This release is an extremely successful shift from the norm in its novel use of electronic auras that blend with acoustic instruments – a must listen for those seeking something unfamiliar in the world of percussion music.

Adam Scime

JAZZ AND IMPROVISED

This Dream of You

Diana Krall

Verve B0032519 (dianakrall.com)



▶ Four years ago, Diana Krall was working in the studio with her longtime, legendary producer Tommy LiPuma. LiPuma was ill and Krall knew it, so the pair

recorded over 30 tracks during those sessions. The initial result was *Turn Up the Quiet*, released in 2017 shortly after LiPuma died. That album was a return to Krall's classic, stripped-down jazz sound and *This Dream of You* is a continuation of that exploration. An homage to the Great American Songbook, and her friend and mentor, Krall delivers the exquisite sound and technique we've come to expect from her, both on piano and vocals.

Working with three different small ensembles, the majority of the songs are with her bandmates, John Clayton (bass), Jeff Hamilton (drums) and Anthony Wilson (guitar). The opening track with that crew, *But Beautiful*, sets the minimalist tone as the album moves from breathy ballads to gently swinging mid-tempo standards. It diverges into somewhat trad/rootsty territory on three tracks featuring the ensemble of Marc Ribot (guitar), Tony Garnier (bass) Karriem Riggins (drums) and Stuart Duncan (fiddle), including the title track, a country-tinged Bob Dylan tune. In-demand players, Christian McBride (bass) and Russell Malone (guitar), appear on two tracks, including a gorgeous, slower-than-slow rendition of *Autumn in New York*.

The top-notch production has Krall's vocals front and centre in the mix so it sounds as if she's right in the room with you, giving you a big old aural hug. It's just what the doctor ordered in these pandemic times.

Cathy Riches

Whiskey Kisses Alex Bird & the Jazz Mavericks Independent (alexbird.net)



▶ It's not often that an individual can hit it big in both the acting and music worlds, but locally based vocalist Alex Bird clearly demonstrates his stellar talents and ability to transition smoothly

into the realm of jazz with the release of his debut album. Bird will captivate any listener with his sultry and mellow voice that has just that touch of smokiness which both manages to serve as a hark back to the era of golden jazz crooners like Sinatra and Bennett but also brings us into the present with a freshness that breathes new life into the traditional aspects of the genre. The vocalist has had a hand in composing each piece and the disc features the fabulous Jazz Mavericks, a group of emerging musicians, namely Ewen Farncombe on keys, Eric West on drums and Scott Hunter on bass.

The record opens up with the edgy *Fire Not Warmth*, a toe-tapping piece that sets the mood for the time-travelling journey to the period of greats that the listener is embarking on. The influence of jazz bigwigs such as Bennett, Baker and Fitzgerald on the golden-throated vocalist is apparent; Bird adds a distinct charm to his stylings while bringing that timeless classiness along into his new take on the past. Title track *Whiskey Kisses* is a beautiful ballad that closes the album on a melancholic yet positive note, a sign that there's much more to come from this astounding new talent.

Kati Kiilaspea

Walk in the Park Jerry Cook Quartet + Cellar Music CM091919 (cellarlive.com/collections)



▶ Vancouver is known for parks – this disc could aptly accompany a real or imagined walk in the park, romantic possibilities included! Quartet leader/tenor saxo-

phonist Jerry Cook hopes to “help relax, reflect, and recharge.” In a melodic, restrained style, there is nevertheless plenty of expressive, imaginative playing in both standards and Cook's original numbers. Other quartet players include Chris Gestrin, piano, John Lee, bass, and Jesse Cahill, drums; with added musician Dave Sikula, guitar, they coalesce in a blues-inflected jazz sound, achieving the recording's purposes well. Cook's well-controlled slightly edgy tone distinguishes his title track, while pianist Gestrin is confident

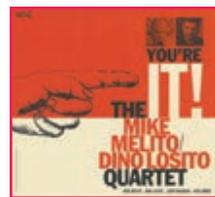
in accentuation and chord substitution. In *Soul Eyes* I especially enjoyed Cook's lyrical, tastefully-ornamented melodic delivery. Soul is more obvious in *Scarlett Ribbons*, which builds impressively from opening gospel harmonies to greater complexity while maintaining style and mood.

Contrasting is *Cook's Blues*, a medium-tempo swing number with agile sax, guitar and bass solos where Sikula's style is smooth and assured. As for the rhythm section, there is a playful touch in *Hello My Lovely* where bass and drums are left all alone, just to trade fours for a while. Bassist Lee nails a hard-driving figure in *Summertime*, suggesting the oppression underlying this well-known number. And overt seriousness is established in *Nature's Lament's* solemn, modal opening, followed by the insistent, urgent Latin drum beat supporting a plea for environmental change.

Roger Knox

You're It!

Mike Melito/Dino Losito Quartet
Cellar Music CM041620
(cellarlive.com/collections)



▶ This album gives off the perfect jazz vibe, from its packaging to the swinging music inside. The title, *You're It!*, and the cover artwork, have an excellent

retro feel and deserve to be issued on vinyl because they are so reminiscent of an earlier era. The group is named after the drummer (Mike Melito) and pianist (Dino Losito) but it is really a superb partnership amongst all four players. In addition to having written the title track, Larry McKenna possesses a marvellous tenor sax tone that is so smooth and elegant you almost miss his inventive and flowing improvisations. Losito's piano tone is warm, yet articulate, and he's one of those players whose thought processes you can almost follow as they develop a solo. A great example is *For Heaven's Sake* where he starts out sparse and playful and then works into some excellent bop lines. The pair of Neal Miner (bass) and Melito are always comfortably in sync, as evidenced by an up-tempo tune like *What A Difference A Day Makes*, where the walking bass and solid swing drums propel the music forward with just the odd tasteful flourish to contribute to the action. On this tune Melito gives us a melodic drum solo that gradually complicates the rhythm until we are not sure what happened to the downbeat, but then McKenna effortlessly jumps in with the melody and it's off to the end. This is another superb release from the Canadian Cellar Live label which has been producing exciting recordings since 2001.

Ted Parkinson

How to Say Sorry and Other Lessons
Fawn Fritzen; David Restivo
Chronograph Records CR-081
(chronographrecords.com/releases)



▶ Canada bristles with artistry from coast to coast. Still, you cannot but be awed by this one from Yukon's own. The inimitable Fawn Fritzen is a wonderfully seductive

vocalist and a superb lyricist who writes not with a pencil but rather with the raw nerve endings of her very fingers.

We experience her emotional musicality throughout the repertoire on *How to Say Sorry and Other Lessons*. This is wonderful songwriting, and singing, of course. Fritzen tells us: "My life was in chaos" but that she found "the right tools... Compassion, Letting Go, Grief, Healing." She wears her heart on her proverbial sleeve through this recording. While we are struck by her candidness, we must also admire the fact that Fritzen navigates her emotions without an ounce of gratuitous sentimentality – through music that balances deep song and unfettered swing. As a result, this emotional musical journey is also buoyed throughout by a sense of recovery.

I would be remiss not to recognize her co-producer and pianist, David Restivo, whose contributions cannot be overstated. This astute partnership is particularly evident on *Kintsugi*, a song with diaphanous, yet delicate, Japanese inflections. Bassists Doug Stephenson and John Lee; drummers Tony Ferraro and Kelby MacNayr are superb throughout. Meanwhile, when called upon to lend a helping hand to Fritzen, vocalists Melody Daichun and Laura Landsberg add superb colour and texture to *Show Me Your Heart* and *Dragonfly* to close out the recording.

Raul da Gama

Long Time Ago Rumble
Matty Stecks & Musical Tramps
Matty Stecks Music RAC-530/digital available (mattystecks.com)



▶ One of the main difficulties artists face is that of fully realizing their ideas. In the case of Matthew Steckler however, the Manitoban seems blessed with

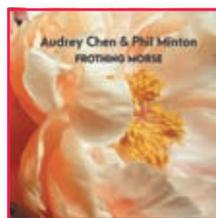
both the burden of an abnormally creative mind and the gift of being able to make the most of his artistic impulses. His latest experiment began life as a debut concert with a virtuosic band he meticulously assembled and later blossomed into what he describes as

a conceptual research project in the stylistic marriage of jazz, pop, film score and musique concrète. Taking after his hero Charlie Chaplin, Steckler (aka Matty Stecks) goes the auteur route with his involvement in this album. He is one of two producers, writes all the material, does all the arrangements, contributes field recordings, acts as bandleader and expertly plays several instruments. Steckler particularly shines on saxophones, his Dolphy-esque phrasing as unpredictable as the music.

This may be the most eclectic jazz release you hear this year. Each track could be labelled as a different genre, and one could make comparisons to artists ranging from Chaka Khan to Frank Zappa. The track list alternates between traditional structure and collective improvisations structured around field recordings provided by various band members. While at first glance this album may not appear to work as a uniform statement, what connects these pieces is the sense of adventure Steckler maintains throughout the runtime. Highly recommended.

Yoshi Wall

Frothing Morse
Audrey Chen; Phil Minton
Tour de Bras TDB904 (tourdebras.bandcamp.com/album/frothing-morse)



▶ Phil Minton, just turning 80, may be the world's most creative vocalist. Elsewhere his repertoire can include *The Cutty Wren*, a Peasants' Revolt

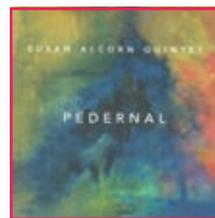
song about eating policemen, and Lieber & Stoller's *Jailhouse Rock* lyrics applied to a serial melody (both to be heard on the recent *Ways for an Orchestra* with Veryan Weston and a Bologna chamber orchestra [i disci di angelica]). If you want, however, to hear a human approximation of a tone arm bouncing across the surface of a vinyl LP of a cat screeching, Minton, the free improviser, is also your man; his duet partner, Audrey Chen, similarly in possession of titanium vocal apparatus, might very well be your woman, and *Frothing Morse* is the place to hear it. The two have been singing together for a decade, previously releasing both duet and quintet CDs (on Sub Rosa) and there's a recent COVID-lockdown performance on YouTube.

Recorded at an Italian festival in 2015, the single 37-minute *Frothing Morse* covers extraordinary ground, from madness to code, the two singers following or diverging from one another's inspirations, whether they're Chen's whistling highs, abrasive choking and ringing throat-singing tones or Minton's machine and animal impressions, yodeling, babbling and multiphonics. Their work is usually surprising, often visceral, strangely moving, but most significantly, liberating,

a crash course in the sounds that can come out of humans' mouths with barely a trace of speech, a panoply of emotion in a moment.

Stuart Broomer

Pederal
Susan Alcorn Quintet
Relative Pitch RPR1111
(relativepitchrecords.com)



▶ Over the past 20 years, Susan Alcorn has emerged as one of the most creative figures in jazz and improvised music, brilliantly exploring the sonic resources of

the pedal steel guitar, especially the pitch bending and shifting possibilities little explored in its country and western home. In Alcorn's hands, the instrument is a self-contained orchestra, able to suggest the elegance of Astor Piazzolla, the wandering mysteries of Harry Partch, the cosmic majesty of Olivier Messiaen or the raw energy of Ornette Coleman.

Here Alcorn introduces her compositions for a mostly string quintet with violinist Mark Feldman, bassist Michael Formanek, guitarist Mary Halvorson and drummer Ryan Sawyer. Named for the Pederal Mesa in New Mexico, the CD's compositions abound in geographical references. Along with the personnel and general musical quality, it suggests another recording: Nate Wooley's 2019 masterpiece, *Columbia Icefield*, on which the trumpeter debuted a quartet with Alcorn, Halvorson and Sawyer.

Alcorn's melodic and textural visions come to the fore on the title track, the extended *Circular Ruins* and *A Night in Gdansk*. There's an affinity with Morton Feldman in the rich sustained tones, and a near twinship with Halvorson, whose pitch-bending guitar hardware can ambiguate the source of some burbling, microtonal washes of notes. The concluding *Northeast Rising Sun* may allude to Maryland highway signage, but the music is a playful romp, beginning with clapping accompaniment then combining a Sufi refrain with elements of an Irish community dance. It's delightful stuff.

Stuart Broomer

Gebilde
Yannick Chayer
Small Scale Music SSM 023
(smallscalemusic.bandcamp.com)



▶ A dialogue from a single musician, Montreal's Yannick Chayer has designed this CD's ten tracks so that his soprano saxophone is constantly

reacting to or against programmed samples of reed improvisations and other intonations propelled by his synthesizer. Rife with static crackles, noises and pauses, the results are as changeable as if he were duetting with another player.

With advances in programming, timbres from the synthesizer take on multiple identities from bagpipe-like tremors to plastic kazoo-like screeches; yet most frequently, organ-like motifs serve as several tracks' continuum. Meanwhile Chayer's parallel acoustic tone is snarly and metallic, dedicated to high velocity fluttering or calm multiphonics.

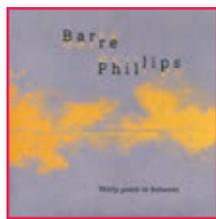
Extended tracks such as *Organisation Off* and *Master Forgery* play with the implicit plasticity of the program. For instance, the former positions a biting reed solo atop massed saxophone timbres and climaxes as the soloist squeals past altissimo with key percussion echoes below. The latter track balances calliope-like patterning that remains unchanged as vibrating reed split tones expand to twitters and trills, sometimes vamping roughly against one another.

Like a Pimp may be the defining track however, as newer samples keep being added to the stop-time exposition so that a simple melody is present from a singular reed line along with electronic flanging and reverberating tongue pumps.

Chayer's stated aim is creating reed programs that move between analog noise and *musique concrète*. Adding a hearty dose of improvisation, *Gebilde* proves that he has attained this goal.

Ken Waxman

Thirty years in between Barre Phillips VICTO cd 132/08 (victo.qc.ca)



▶ Proving that an old double bass soloist can still learn new tricks isn't the point of *Thirty years in between*. Instead, coupling a genre-defining 1989 solo disc from

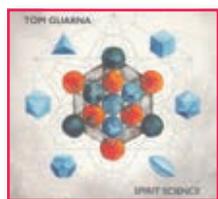
the now 85-year-old American bassist Barre Phillips with a new set of live solos from FIMAV 2019 makes clear how mature savvy has replaced adroit swagger. Not that the 1989 tracks aren't dazzling, as Phillips was pioneering a novel approach to soloing. With fluid variation at both ends of the timbral spectrum, he maintained a warm expansive tone, whether he was pummeling pumping variables from the bottom tones or using hard-edged spiccato to extract narrowed multi-string squeaks.

By 2019 however his strategy has been distilled to its essence. Pared away from sometimes baroque-like formalism and showy staccato runs, he concentrates on moody narratives. Mellow in his echoing

tones, Phillips still makes use of col legno slaps and spiccato reverberations, with some passages taken prestissimo. But by keeping most interpretations at a low simmer he isolates rubs and pops then plays up the suppleness of variously angled string sets and the instrument's woody reverb. Animated with harsh stropping when needed, as on *Abate? Arise?*, silences are also prominent. The concluding *A new take* strings together old and new techniques. Alternating between cultured sweeps and gaunt shrills, a display of triple stopping is followed by thin moderated slides to the finale. Obviously Phillips was a master solo bass player three decades ago – and he retains that skill.

Ken Waxman

Spirit Science Tom Guarna Destiny Records DR-0030 (destinyrecordsmusic.com)



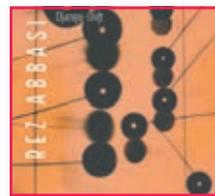
▶ Renowned jazz guitarist Tom Guarna, often named alongside greats such as John Scofield and Bill Frisell, has released a delightful record, taking the

listener on a pleasing and progressive journey through a spacious jazz world; each track like a different chapter of the trek with its own distinct moods and soundscape. All tracks are penned by the guitarist himself and feature an all-star group of musicians including Ben Wendel on tenor saxophone and bassoon, Aaron Parks on keyboards, Joe Martin on bass and Justin Faulkner on drums. Such a unique instrumentation only serves to further highlight Guarna's compositions and breathe an additional energy into them.

The album has been mentioned as having a cohesive theme that is inspired by "the science of sacred geometry" which is reflected in each piece; while singular instruments meander on their own set melodic paths within the songs, they come together as a satisfying and coherent whole that calls to mind a geometric shape. Specifically, in *Metatron's Cube*, this organized progressiveness is noticeable, with the rhythmic groove and distinct bass melody lending structure to the piece while soaring sax, guitar and piano solos create the sense of spaciousness and freedom. Crossing over seamlessly between progressive rock and traditional jazz, the album is a must for fans of either genre that are looking for a fresh perspective on how Metheny-esque synth and electric guitar use can be taken a step further into a new and unique dimension.

Kati Kiilaspea

Django-shift Rez Abbasi Whirlwind Recordings WR4762 (whirlwindrecordings.com)



▶ In 2019, commissioned by California's Freight and Salvage's Django Reinhardt-centric recording project, skilled Pakistan-

born and NYC-based guitarist/composer Rez Abbasi was challenged by his desire to present Reinhardt not only as a unique, mesmerizing and beloved guitarist, but also as a composer. He plumbed the depths of Reinhardt's considerable catalogue and came upon seven stunning Reinhardt tunes, as well as two more that were strongly associated with the magical, Roma-Hungarian guitarist. In order to bring his present-tense, genre-blending vision to life, Abbasi called upon the uber-talented Neil Alexander (organ, synthesizers and electronica) and Michael Sarin on drums.

Abbasi's rhythmic, 6/8 arrangement of Django's *Diminishing* feels like a tip of the hat to the great Thelonious Monk – and Abbasi freely admits that Monk's odd, juxtapositional style influenced several tracks. Abbasi's organic understanding of complex rhythmic patterns and his exquisite guitar technique defines this standout project, and long-time collaborators Alexander and Sarin have jumped down the proverbial rabbit hole right along with him – never missing a nuance.

Of particular innovation is the invigorating use of organ and synthesizers (including guitar effects), coupled with the contiguous, pulsing drum work by Sarin. Reinhardt's classic *Swing 42* is barely recognizable here, but this new perspective on the tune brings an unbridled urgency and the gorgeous ballad, *Django's Castle*, displays the fine trio at their lyrical best. A favourite of Django's, *Anniversary Song* (Ivanovici), is arranged here as an odd-metered funky trip and one of the most compelling tracks is certainly Abbasi's take on Kurt Weill's melancholy *September Song*. Abbasi's sumptuous tone and emotive interpretation of this classic are beyond compare.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

You Me & Cole Noa Levy; Shimpei Ogawa Belle Records BEL-002 (noalevylive.com)



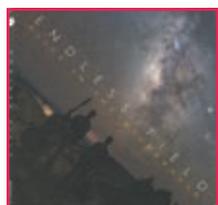
▶ Over the years, there have probably been as many Cole Porter jazz renditions as there have been people on the planet. However, against the odds, vocalist Noa Levy

and bassist Shimpei Ogawa manage to deliver a truly fresh set of Porter classics on their new release. Firstly, to set the obvious aside, a bass/vocal duo coming out with a songbook album is a rare sight indeed. Trying to play and improvise over standard changes without anything resembling chordal accompaniment is no simple task. This particularly rings true when dealing with contrabass and voice, as those may be the two instruments in the jazz idiom where tuning is of the biggest concern. In spite of the challenge, Ogawa's intonation is spotless to the point of being superhuman and Levy's ability to adapt to these circumstances is nothing short of incredible.

The biggest draw of this album is how beautifully the arranging talents, diverse musical backgrounds and novel ideas of the duo converge. Levy and Ogawa season the proceedings with pinches of everything from klezmer to Bach, and the brightest moments come with their shared fluency in tango. Their chemistry is something to marvel at, as they constantly take unexpected risks and play in seamless dialogue together without so much as a misstep. Renditions are also sprinkled with charming gifts to the listener, including overt Mingus and James Bond references. Refreshingly fun.

Yoshi Wall

Alive in the Wilderness
Endless Field
Biophilia Records BREP0019
(endlessfieldband.com)



▶ Two well-known NY players, Ike Sturm, bass, and Jesse Lewis, guitar, have teamed up together to become the duo Endless Field.

Their album *Alive*

In The Wilderness is a thoughtful road trip descriptive of our connection to the natural elements; songs which carry titles such as *Life on Earth*, *Wind*, *Fire*, *Water...* The album is beautifully played, with great energy and dynamic interaction between the players. Resonant bass and gorgeous lush melodies evoke a film score. With both of their backgrounds being in jazz, the album is a surprisingly laid-back, free-play wander around streams and underneath stars (literally); spontaneous feeling with lots of breath, some folk elements and some just genuinely beautiful storytelling.

The selections are diverse but manage to hang together with the earthly theme, helped by the continuous backdrop of running water or birds in many of the tracks. A road trip between friends, I especially enjoyed the rhythmic play in *Zim* and loved the looseness and the sweetness of the journey of *Old Man*.

The album comes as a download only, which is intended to save on plastic as well as the toxins used to create CDs, and

all proceeds are donated to conservation. There is however a gorgeous hand-folded origami album sleeve available from the NY label Biophilia; their artists are united by a common interest in having a positive impact on the environment and communities, and collaborate with organizations that specialize in conservation, sustainability and outreach initiatives. Check them out, they do good stuff and represent some really top NY players.

Cheryl Ockrant

Axioms // 75 AB
Tropos
Biophilia Records BREP0017
(troposensemble.bandcamp.com)



▶ The enigma of *Axioms // 75 AB* begins with the CD jacket which unfolds like an elaborate origami to ten panels: on one side is a mural which includes

a quote from George Lewis, the other side contains track information, instrumentation, abstract diagrams and liner notes hand-printed in a small font. If you prefer clearly typed text, you can head to the Tropos Bandcamp site. In fact, you must head there anyway, because the CD jacket contains no CD, just a download code! *Axioms // 75 AB* is a tribute to Anthony Braxton on his 75th birthday (June of 2020). Of the 11 compositions, the first five are by members of Tropos while the rest are by Braxton and all contain both composed and collectively improvised elements. Vocalist Laila Smith, saxophonist Raef Sengupta, pianist Phillip Golub, bassist Zachary Lavine and drummer Mario Layne Fabrizio met at the New England Conservatory and created this album as a token of their love for Braxton's music. Many of Braxton's works have always presented an alternative and highly original reality for jazz: they certainly swing, yet are in a very different tonal realm to *Stardust* or *Ornithology*.

Tropos delivers exciting and intense playing and it is clear they are steeped in the tradition of Braxton, Ornette Coleman, Lewis and others. One quibble is that on some pieces, like Braxton's 23c, Smith's vocals add nuance while balancing with the rest of the group, but in other cases it is mixed too prominently and overshadows the collective.

Ted Parkinson

POT POURRI

Monochrome
Dan Pitt
Dan Pitt Music (dan-pitt.com)



▶ Call this a cynical outlook, but I generally see likening one artist to another, particularly in music, a cheap trick employed by unimaginative

writers. A saxophonist with avant-garde tendencies quickly "calls to mind Ornette Coleman." Likewise, any legato-leaning guitarist post-1990 becomes "Metheny-esque" when described in banal jazz prose. During my second listen to Dan Pitt's *Monochrome*, I ate my above words as I subconsciously likened many of his tones and textures to modern guitar greats like Bill Frisell and Ben Monder. On this 2020 release of contemporary solo guitar music, I would argue these influences merely show that Pitt has done his homework. The music presented is far from ever sounding derivative, but its uniqueness as an album also largely stems from diversity throughout its ten tracks. Pitt's use of electric and acoustic guitars, as well as effects and samples, creates tasteful contrasts to the pieces presented, without taking away from the album's cohesiveness as a whole.

As the COVID-19 pandemic places many aspects of our lives in limbo, I am not envious of those releasing albums this year, forcedly adapting to the new normal of limited capacity and online album releases. To offer a silver lining for *Monochrome*, I hope that this album can benefit from the quarantined or working-from-home audience, who now have time to give it the uninterrupted 38 minutes of listening it deserves.

Sam Dickinson

Espiral
OKAN
Lulaworld Records LWR011
(lulaworldrecords.ca)



▶ Afro-Cuban music fused with jazz elements and rhythms from around the world, this album is impossible to listen to without moving one's feet and occasionally breaking

into dance. These talented women have heart, they have a groove, and they are backed up by an impressive list of talented musicians. Elizabeth Rodriguez (vocals, violin) and Magdelys Savigne (vocals, percussion), classically trained Cuban-Canadian musicians

and JUNO nominees, are the *force de jour* behind this lively album. Their music is colourful, sassy and engaging. Both use their respective instruments in a way that draws the listener right into the centre of creation, resulting in divine violin solos and driving crossover rhythms.

Nested among seven original songs are three beloved standards: *Cumba, Cumba; Besame Mucho* (a much livelier version than expected); and the closing *Pie de Foto*. OKAN's original tunes stay within the

boundaries of the respective genres but make good use of the crossover elements.

Espiral is based on Cuban musical heritage and around the themes of immigration and love. The title song opens the album in a bright manner, using a traditional blend of instruments and chants. *Trocada* is more jazzy, with bewitching violin solos, colourful percussion and an impressive piano solo (Miguel de Armas). *Aguila's* Latin groove is filtered through sultry violin lines and beautiful vocals.

With *Espiral*, OKAN continues doing what they do the best – creating music that transcends borders and brings in the joy.

Ivana Popovic

Concert note: OKAN will release *Espiral* in a live concert performance on November 14 at the Kitchener Waterloo Jazz Room. COVID 19 restrictions in effect. Check kwjazzroom.com/calendar/upcoming-events-list for full details.

Something in the Air

Flexible fiddles can feature much more than fundamentals

KEN WAXMAN

Freed from the tyranny of section accompaniment, solo string concertos have long been a feature of notated music. A similar liberation for violins and violas happened years ago in improvised music. However it's only during the past few years that use of these four-string instruments have been treated as more than a novelty. Sessions such as these, which feature a violin or viola as part of different ensembles, show how the prototypical instrument of so-called classical music is forging an equally impressive role creating freer sounds.



Probably the answer to the question, "when is a string quartet not a string quartet?" is illustrated on **SETT's First and Second (New Wave of Jazz nwoj033 newwaveofjazz.com)** during two extended improvisations. Consisting of one linchpin of the traditional string ensemble, the viola, played by the UK's Benedict Taylor, the disc stretches the chamber music staple's

role by including a double bass, played by Briton John Edwards, and breaks the mould by adding the two acoustic guitars of England's Daniel Thompson and Belgium's Dirk Serries. Mercurial and harsh without being coarse, and fluid without depending on an expected groove, both polyphonic tracks contain numerous sequences of both calm and agitation. As viola and bass move through spiccato sweeps and ratcheting pressure, it's often dual guitar strums which steady the pace and shepherd squeaks, slaps and shakes from all the players into crescendos of jagged glissandi and, later on, speedy intersection. *Second* *SETT* is more assured than the *First* as the collective guitar licks, plus swelling plucks from the bass, set up a clanking backdrop upon which Taylor's stridently pitched strokes ascend to spectacular flanges. By midpoint, buzzing arco pushes and taut guitar finger picking define a communicative theme. With Edwards' plucks creating an ambulating ostinato, the narrative stays constant to the end, while allowing for a series of stressed variations from the violist and some below-the-bridge plinks from the guitarists that almost strip strings of their coating. As spiccato sweeps rub against muted glissandi, *SETT* defines a form that is both exploratory and connected.



Berlin-based pianist/synthesizer player **Elias Stemeseder** and drummer **Max Andrzejewski** create a more standard

ensemble to show off their original compositions on **light/tied (WhyPlayJazz WP J 054 whyplayjazz.de)**. During the program nine pieces are interpreted by the two leaders' sometimes intensely percussive playing;

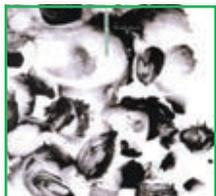
clarion or deeper-pitched smears from Joris Rühl's clarinets; creamy Paul Desmond-like lines from alto saxophonist Christian Weidner; mostly decorative, but at times bordering on dissonant, shimmers by violinist Biliiana Voutchkova and cellist Lucy Railton; plus additional programmed electronic whizzes. Furthermore, Stemeseder and Andrzejewski provide the rhythmic undercurrent; and churning wave form electronics undermine the string players' more formalist impulses. The result is discordant at points, but without being off-putting. Paced by brief interludes of expansive string plucks and bass clarinet lowing, the compositions are gentle and melodic, as well as atmospheric. The best instances of how the admixture works are illustrated on Stemeseder's *Tied Light 1* and Andrzejewski's *Héritage*. The first works its way from a tinkling piano and trilling clarinet duet to turn harsher, as thinner clarinet runs meet percussive slaps from the piano and drum beats contrast with alto saxophone calm. Until the end, the timbres vibrate between irregular and expressive without losing the thematic thread or slackening the pace. Sunnier, *Héritage* finds proper string swells intersecting with crackling electronics, as Rühl's moderated clarinet defines the slightly off-centre exposition while string plucks vibrate sympathetically. Finally, a dramatic finale is constructed out of swift piano chording, sprightly vibrations from both reeds and stabbing string motions.



Adapting the textures of a violin – or viola – so that it plays with equal prominence as other instruments in a small group is the preoccupation of other improvisers. Instances of this are expressed by Swiss violinist **Laura Schuler's** quartet; French guitarist **Pierrick Hardy's** quartet, featuring violinist Regis Huby; and the trio of

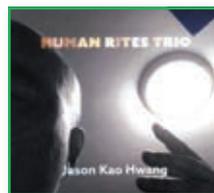
American **Jason Kao Hwang**, who plays both viola and violin. Proclaimed an **Acoustic Quartet** perhaps because no electric instruments or drums are present, Hardy's **L'Ogre Intact (Émouvance emv 1041 tchamitchian.fr)** includes bassist Claude Tchamitchian and clarinetist/basset horn player Catherine Delaunay. A hint of the fusion that informs Hardy's compositions comes from clarinetist Delaunay's other instrument. Throughout the disc the quartet aims for relaxed, pastoral interpretations that flow rather than upset. Yet between double bass thumps and acoustic guitar strums, a rhythmic groove is maintained. *Flottements* is the most realized instance of this traditional/innovative approach. Blending the basset horn's muted tone with violin mid-pitches and a buzzing double bass continuum, an antique-styled introduction is attained, but it's soon replaced with a contrapuntal melody from the fiddle that's lively and dance-like. As the theme swells with spiccato squeaks from Huby, coupled with thin fraills from Hardy, Tchamitchian confirms its contemporary relevance

with a repeated rhythmic motif. Playing clarinet on the other tracks, Delaunay adds to the warm elaboration of the mostly largo narratives. Concerned with synthesis not confrontation, supple solos are worked into the warm-blooded adaptations. With his violin output usually caressing romantic themes, only rarely, as on *Avant dire/Tamasaburo*, does Huby demonstrate his command of multi-string coordination and swift triple stopping. Hardy's skills are more prominent, with an approximation of folk-blues picking on *La Violence du terrain*; he moves past positioned strums to propel relaxed swing on the final *La Fresque* with tougher mettle via spectacularly chunky, rhythm guitar licks.



If Huby's violin and the Acoustic Quartet include echoes of the 18th century, then Schuller's quartet music is strictly 21st. The other members of the group are German tenor saxophonist Philipp Gropper, and fellow Swiss, drummer Lionel Friedli and Hanspeter Pfammatter playing synthesizers. Besides Schuller's ability to move swiftly from formalist to semi-hoedown to pure

improv and on to near fusion in her playing, the contemporary resonance on *Metamorphosis* (Veto-Records 020 veto-records.ch) centres on Pfammatter's instrument, whose sonic permutations allow it to replicate the sounds of an acoustic piano, an organ, an electric guitar and even an accordion. Especially on more groove-oriented tracks such as *Dancing in the Stratosphere*, Friedli projects a popping back-beat which glues together various sound shards from the others; although elsewhere, his nerve beats and patterning help confirm other tunes' jittery but relaxed melodies. Capable of romantic interludes or strident squeaks if needed, Gropper's usual role is to serve as a foil for Schuller's string elaborations. With ghostly synthesizer washes behind, they meld ribald squeaks on his part and banjo-like pizzicato clanks from her on the title tune; or with Pfammatter's church organ-like chording on *Broken Lines*, harmonize barbed reed tremolos and rugged string strokes. *Z*, the CD's wrap-up, projects variations of these tone permutations, with the outpouring compassing instances of sound unity and severance from all four. As drum ruffs and synthesizer pushes make the narrative more intense and heavier, positioned col legno stabs from the violinist lead to a measured and ambulatory last section and finale.



Confirming his allegiance to intense improvising Hwang uses his violin and viola as doubling lead voices in the role soprano and tenor saxophones or trumpet and flugelhorn would take elsewhere. Luckily he and his associates on **Human Rites Trio (True Sound Recordings TSO3 jasonkaohwang.com)**, bassist Ken Filiano and drummer Andrew Drury, are perfectly matched, having worked

in this configuration for years. Taking a far different approach to the viola than SETT's Benedict Taylor, Hwang plays it almost exclusively pizzicato, treating it like a four-string mandolin. Most spectacularly, on the foot-tapping *Conscious Concave Concrete* he manipulates the instrument so at various junctures it takes on sitar and guitar-like affiliations as well as mandolin twangs. Without disrupting his low tones, Filiano also achieves guitar-like facility with fluid solos. Incorporating Drury's cymbal clashes and steel drum-like suggestions, the trio achieves a singular sound which touches on the blues, as well as international inflections. Playing violin, as on *Battle for the Indelible Truth*, Hwang's stretches and multiple stops are as pressurized and extended as the other two's intense rhythm. Moving into an andante swing section, he backs Filiano's Slam Stewart-like simultaneous bowing and vocal humming with high pitched trills; but later he creates a pseudo-violin concerto adding a romantic tinge to the tune's dynamic unrolling. Still, the most dramatic display of the trio's in-the-moment affiliation is heard on the two-part *Words Asleep Spoken Awake*. Setting the scene on *Part 1*, the three create an ambulatory introduction that is rounded and mellifluous until propelled to double in speed by drum rim shots and spiccato violin strokes. This leads to a repetitive multi-string motif that defines *Part 2*. As the violinist triple stops his strings at prestissimo tempo, Drury's martial beats and striking pumps from Filiano prevent the narrative from breaking apart while maintaining intensity. Climactically altering his lines by loosening and tightening strings while strumming complementary tones, Hwang supplely and spectacularly demonstrates his skill with a final section where string splays bring up reed or brass intimations as the musical thoughts expressed at the CD's beginning track are completed.

It's clear that the variety of ways violins and violas can be integrated into improvised music are as individual as the person playing them. These discs confirm this truism. **🎻**

Old Wine, New Bottles

Fine Old Recordings Re-Released

BRUCE SURTEES

During 2020, the classical music world celebrates, or at least recognizes, the 100th anniversary of the Salzburg Festival. Each year, for five weeks beginning in late July, Salzburg is teeming with all things Mozart, who was born there on January 27, 1756. It is a joyous time of music and theatre with a special focus on opera.



Over the years Unitel, in cooperation with Austrian Broadcasting, preserved these operas and has selected ten titles to issue in DVD and high-definition Blu-ray video discs in an Anniversary Edition boxed set, **Salzburg Festival 100 (Cmajor 755704 naxosdirect.com/search/755704)**. Here are the operas, year, set designer, conductor,

orchestra and leading voices: **Verdi** *Otello* (2008) [George Souglides] Riccardo Muti, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Aleksandrs Antoņenko, Marina Poplavskaya, Carlos Álvarez; **Handel** *Theodora* (2009) [Annette Kurz] Ivor Bolton, Freiburger Barockorchester, Christine Schäfer; **Janáček** *The Makropulos Affair* (2011) [Anna Viebrock] Esa-Pekka Salonen, VPO, Angela Denoke; **Schubert** *Fierrabras* (2014) [Ferdinand Wogerbauer] Ingo Metzmacher, VPO, Michael Schade; **Strauss** *Der Rosenkavalier* (2014) [Hans Schavernoch] Frans Welser-Möst, VPO, Krassimira Stoyanova; **Strauss** *Salome* (2018) [Romeo Castellucci] Welser-Möst, VPO, Asmik Grigorian; **Rossini** *L'Italiana in Algeri* (2018) [Christian Fenouilliat] Jean-Christophe Spinosi, Ensemble Matheus, Cecilia Bartoli; **Mozart** *Die Zauberflöte* (2018) [Katharina Schlipf] Constantinos Carydis, VPO, Matthias Goerne; **Tchaikovsky** *Pique Dame* (2018) [Christian Schmidt] Mariss

Jansons, VPO, Brandon Jovanovich; **Verdi** *Simon Boccanegra* (2019) [Harald B. Thor] Valery Gergiev, VPO, Luca Salsi.

I wonder how these ten performances were selected from what must have been quite an assortment of available choices. Most probably these were acclaimed productions that deserve the opera lover's attention. As such, here is an esoteric collection that, from those I have watched, fills that bill.



The latest edition, at this writing, of the **Michael Gielen Edition** is **Volume 9, the Beethoven Complete Symphonies, Overtures and Mass in C Major (SWR19090, nine CDs and one DVD naxosdirect.com/search/swr19090)**. For those who are unfamiliar with Michael Gielen, he was a German-Argentinian conductor and composer who studied piano, composition and philosophy in Buenos Aires. He

performed Schoenberg's complete piano works there, and was also coach and assistant conductor of the Teatro Colón. He joined the Vienna State Opera in 1951 and was permanent conductor there from 1954 to 1960. He was also assistant and répétiteur for conductors such as Karl Böhm, Clemens Krauss and Herbert von Karajan. No better way to immerse in the classics than rehearsals and performances. From 1960 he was the first conductor of the Royal Swedish Opera, Stockholm. Gielen was principal conductor of the National Orchestra in Belgium from 1968 to 1973 and of the Dutch Opera in Amsterdam from 1973 to 1976. He later conducted the West German Radio Orchestra in Cologne and from 1977 to 1987 was general music director of Oper Frankfurt. Concurrently from 1980 to 1986 he was music director of the Cincinnati Symphony and from 1986 to 1999 principal conductor of the of the SWR Orchestra of Baden-Baden and Freiburg.

In Europe, Gielen was the most radical innovator of Beethoven's music. He conducted the first live performance in Germany of the *Eroica* based on Beethoven's tempo markings, in Frankfurt in October 1970. That performance is to be heard on the sixth CD in this set.

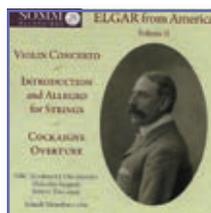
Outside the opera house he conducted contemporary music. He was a performer and promoter of works embracing the Second or New Viennese School, having premiered several works in the new tradition of Ligeti, Stockhausen, Zimmermann et al. His own works were premiered by respected soloists and ensembles of the day.

Along with his involvement with the New Viennese School, throughout his career he paid particular attention to the First Viennese School of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. His first recordings of Beethoven were Symphonies Two, Seven and Eight which had been allocated to him as part of a complete Beethoven Symphonies edition with various conductors, made for Vox and later available on Audio Fidelity. The orchestra, incidentally, was composed of members of the Vienna Volksoper, identified on the label as the Wiener Staatsoper-Orchester.

Now, back to 1980 in Cincinnati where Vox made a widely discussed recording. During October of Gielen's first year there, he recorded Beethoven's *Third Symphony*, observing the composer's prescribed tempos and markings in all four movements, particularly effective in the first, previously ignored by traditional conductors. Those were the days when it was claimed that Beethoven's metronome was defective, only to be countered by the growing number of groups observing original performance practices. This collection offers the listener three performances of the *Eroica*. The 1970 from Frankfurt mentioned above, the celebrated 1980 from Cincinnati and another from the Festspielhaus, Baden-Baden in February 2000 that is also to be seen on the enclosed DVD. Of the three I am attracted to the 2000 performance because of the distinct feeling that everyone in the orchestra, as a group and individually, is very happy to be there playing this music. That stood out to me on the first hearing and has not lessened in subsequent listenings.

Along with the symphonies, Gielen offers these overtures: *Egmont*; *Consecration of the House* and two from *Fidelio*. Also, Gielen's orchestration of the *Grosse Fuge*, and the *Mass in C Major, Op.86* for soloists, choir and orchestra. There are many exciting differences from the accepted practice here. For instance, the first movement of the *Fifth Symphony* is not a proclamation of defiance or victory, but simply *Allegro con brio*. We hear with new and different ears throughout. In every respect, the SWR orchestra plays with effortless virtuosity. Note that these are modern instruments and not original instrument performances. The sound is uniformly ultra-realistic and articulate wherein the various instruments are clearly located.

This could be the first choice for anyone thinking about a Beethoven set updated from the same-old, same-old weighty, routine editions.



SOMM has issued **Volume II of Elgar from America** containing three archive performances of his music played by the **NBC Symphony Orchestra (Ariadne 5008 naxosdirect.com/search/ariadne+5008)**. On this disc we are treated to three favourites, all from Studio 8H in New York's Rockefeller Center, now the home of SNL.

In 1945, Arturo Toscanini, conductor of the NBCSO, had invited Malcolm Sargent to conduct four concerts of English music. On February 18, 1945 Sargent conducted the *Cockaigne Overture (In London Town) Op.40*. One week later, Yehudi Menuhin joined Sargent for the *Violin Concerto in B Minor Op.61*. The *Introduction and Allegro for Strings Op.47* had been in Toscanini's repertoire since 1911 when he prepared the orchestra there for Elgar's impending arrival. This is the third work on this disc in a hugely impressive Elgarian performance from April 20, 1940. Toscanini evinces a rounder sound, more akin to a British orchestra than Sargent does in the overture and the concerto, but both performances are most enjoyable and Menuhin is inspired.

The restoration, from available sources, is produced by Lani Spahr, who was responsible for earlier discs devoted to historic Elgar performances.



Annie Fischer was a Hungarian pianist who was born in Budapest in 1914 and rose to become a much-admired artist for her freedom of expression over half a century. But she is not so known nor appreciated here, although she had a loyal following in the Classical Record Shop where news of a new Fischer disc spread... albeit mostly to Hungarians. She died in Budapest in 1995.

Annie Fischer SECRETS (Hungaroton HCD 32845-46, 2CDs, naxosdirect.com/search/5991813284525) features two of her beloved composers, with Schubert *Sonatas D845 and D959*, and Schumann's *Fantasiestücke Op.12* and *Kreisleriana Op.16*. As a little encore, Chopin's *Nocturne in C-sharp Minor, Op.27 No.1*. The "secret" of these recordings is quite fascinating but too long for here. You'll just have to check it out for yourself. You'll find it well worth the effort! 🎧

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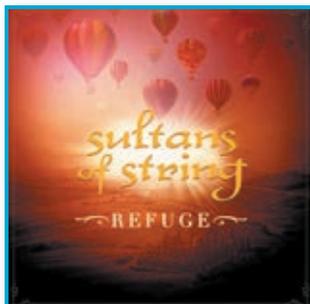


Remastering the Art of the Record Release

CATHY RICHES

Kevin Laliberté, Chris McKhool, Drew Birston, from their first ever livestream

Musicians are starting to get their feet back under them and are finding new ways of releasing new and recent recordings. We checked in with a few stalwarts to find out how it's going in the "brave new world."



When **Chris McKhool** first conceived of his latest album, *Refuge*, back in 2018, he had no way of knowing how the rug would be pulled out from under him when it came time to launch it. As the leader of the group Sultans of String, this was the biggest project of the fiddle player's 25-year career. Two years in the making, the project brought together more than 30 guest artists – such as Bela Fleck,

Yasmin Levy and Duke Redbird – from multiple genres and locales as far away as Turkey.

The initial launch concert was envisaged as a massive undertaking involving nearly all the musicians on the recording and was being billed as a "Woodstock of World Music." It was to take place in May 2020, then was supposed to be followed by a full-day remounting at Luminato in June. About 80 shows, including a big U.S. tour, were scheduled throughout 2020/21. McKhool saw all the pieces of the plan crumble one by one as the pandemic unfolded and the shutdown happened in March.

"To say I was disappointed when we had to cancel everything is an understatement," said McKhool. "I was devastated."

As he and his bandmates gradually came to grips with the fact that months of planning were going out the window, they tried to adapt as each new phase presented itself. Although McKhool has done some press for the project and has taken part in events such as an online talk and video presentation at Luminato, he and the band realized that they were going to have to adjust how they do things in order to stay active and relevant.

Livestreaming was becoming more and more the norm for presenting performances, and that meant McKhool learning a whole new skill set. So he invested in five video cameras and other recording equipment and set about teaching himself how to shoot and edit video.

"I must have spent a hundred hours this summer learning about the

world of video," said McKhool. "But I figured this new way of doing concerts isn't going to go away anytime soon, so I'd better invest in the equipment and learn the skills so I can stay on top of things."

The band (McKhool on violin; Kevin Laliberté, guitar; and Drew Birston, bass) also decided to try using Zoom to present concerts. The first one took place in September and there was a lot of trepidation about whether they could pull it off. It took days of preparation and fiddling around with cameras and microphone placement, in order to have multiple camera angles and a rich experience for the audience, rather than just one camera pointed at the band.

"That first Zoom show was a really emotional experience for me," said McKhool. "Seeing how the audience not only connected with the music and the band, but how they connected with each other was really heartening."

McKhool realized that doing interactive Zoom concerts enabled audience members from diverse locations to come together, unlike with live shows. They can congregate via video prior to the show and chat and get to know their fellow fans in a way they probably wouldn't at a live show. They also had a robust Q&A between the band and audience after the concert.

"People were really engaged and curious. We were able to talk with them in a way we can't normally at a live show. There's a surprising sense of intimacy and give and take that happens doing a Zoom show as opposed to the one-way push of a live show."



McKhool and the Gang: I make music for families stuck at home due to covid-19 with my educator wife Catherine Kurucz and our nine-year-old daughter working the puppets.



SANDY MAMANE

JAZZ.FM91's FRIDAY LIVE live-to-air concert series, October 9: Dione Taylor performed music from *Spirits in the Water* with Nichol Robertson, guitar, Mark McIntyre, bass, and Lyle Molzan, drums.



Dione Taylor takes a more philosophical approach. When her fourth album, *Spirits in the Water*, was supposed to come out in March and everything came grinding to a halt, the veteran blues/roots singer and songwriter decided to just put things on pause. Then, after several months of reflection on world events and discussion with her team, she decided September was the right time to bring *Spirits in the Water* to people.

"I don't believe in coincidences," said Taylor. "Even though we wrote many of these songs a couple of years ago, a lot of the meaning and messages in them are relevant right now."

Inspired by mythical folklore, Taylor took an insightful road trip to Nashville to find inspiration for her new album. The songs have themes of perseverance, mystical truths, race inequality, homesickness and transformation, while staying true to her signature "prairie blues" style, which is a mix of roots, blues and Americana.

"My sense is that people will feel empowered by our music," said Taylor. "Plus everyone's at home a lot more right now and people like to hear something new."

Taylor said she loves touring and playing live and she's definitely missing the exchange of energy that happens with an in-person audience.

"We've been doing some livestreaming via Facebook and Instagram and it's been a huge learning curve doing those," said Taylor. "We've also used this as an opportunity to produce a video for each song on the album, using existing images and footage, since we weren't able to shoot original footage. That was a fun experience."

Not being able to play live has taken a toll but she's optimistic it won't last forever.

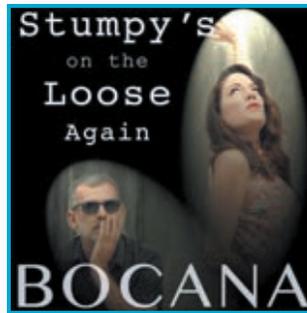
"I did a live to air on JAZZ.FM91 with my band that reminded me what a good feeling it is to play with musicians," said Taylor. "Connecting is what makes the arts so vital but it takes a lot of courage to do that right now. I hope non-arts people will realize it and be kind to musicians because of that."

JUNO Award-winning singer, arranger, producer and voice actor, **Emilie-Claire Barlow**, has been collaborating with musicians and recording remotely for years, so she was prepared when the pandemic hit.



KAREN WIKSTRAND

Bocana: Steve Webster and Emilie-Claire Barlow



"My partner Steve Webster and I have been splitting our time between Mexico and Canada for some time now," said Barlow. "We have a portable set-up to record pretty much anywhere we are. I've been doing voice work for commercials and cartoons and music recordings like this for years now, so the pandemic has not changed this part of our process in any big way."

No stranger to traditional studio work, of course, Barlow

has done many group sessions over the decades and misses the magic of in-person work, especially when it's with the 70-piece Metropole Orkest she worked with on her *Clear Day* album. There's no recreating an experience like that remotely, she says, but enjoys the freedom to make music anywhere in the world with musicians who are anywhere in the world. "Right now we have several musical projects on the go, and are recording singers and instrumentalists in Toronto, Montreal, Chicago, Berlin and LA."

Which isn't to say, even living in Huatulco, that it's all been a day at the beach for Barlow. (Pun intended.)

"I miss my bandmates terribly," said Barlow. "I definitely miss some parts of touring – the music and the audiences, the camaraderie with my band. But I will say that staying put in one place for these seven months has been healing and restorative in some ways. Even as I say that, though, I hesitate, because I'm incredibly sensitive to the fact that for some musicians, touring is their whole livelihood. But for me, while I miss the live music experience, there have also been some positives."

Barlow explained that she and Webster were finally able to work on some musical ideas that had been brewing for years but just hadn't had the time to develop while touring. Making their new duo, Bocana, a priority has resulted in six singles being released and a substantial listenership on digital platforms.

"It's been a hugely rewarding and freeing experience to collaborate together in this capacity to make music that lives in its own space apart from 'Emilie-Claire Barlow.' We truly feel free to make our own rules and defy genres." 🎵

Cathy Riches is a self-described Toronto-based recovering singer and ink slinger.

Rolling with the Punches

A Tale of Two Virtual Festivals

COLIN STORY

A month ago, as I was putting together the October edition of this column, it seemed as though the live music scene in Southern Ontario was beginning – cautiously, carefully – to reassemble itself. Clubs were posting listings on their websites; artists were beginning to advertise gigs on social media; it was possible to plan a night out. Then, on October 10, restaurants in at least three regions were ordered closed for indoor seating and live music was put on hold once again. While there are still some clubs that are presenting shows, including The Jazz Room in Waterloo, there is a cloud of uncertainty hovering over the industry: venues, musicians and patrons alike. If case numbers go down, will venues be permitted to reopen? If they reopen, will audiences feel safe (and motivated) enough to seek out live music?

Meanwhile, amidst the gnawing uncertainty, two organizations have committed to presenting major jazz festivals in November, in streaming formats, with a full range of venues, from clubs to concert halls, involved, playing their part in keeping the music alive.

Kensington Market Jazz Festival

2020 marks the fifth anniversary of the Kensington Market Jazz Festival, which usually takes place, as the name implies, in a network of venues throughout Toronto's Kensington Market. A sprawling affair, the 2019 festival featured over 100 acts in traditional music spaces like



Billy Newton-Davis (KMJF)

Poetry Jazz Café and Handlebar, non-traditional venues like Wanda's Pie in the Sky, and purpose-built spaces, including the Slight Music Big Band Stage.

This year, things will look more than a little bit different. Over two days (November 7 and 8), 27 acts will be streaming short sets, in segments hosted by Garvia Bailey (on November 7) and John Devenish (on November 8). Performers include Jackie Richardson, with Joe Sealy and Dave Young; Robi Botos, in trio format with Mike Downes and Larnell Lewis; and Billy Newton-Davis, whose performance is slated to close out the festival.

Planning for KMJF began as usual in January, according to Molly Johnson, KMJF artistic director. By April, the decision had been made to shift to a virtual format, based on the prevailing outlook for the rest of the year. Rather than livestream the proceedings – with all of the health and safety complications that would attend multiple bands coming in and out of the same space in a strict time frame, or the technical complications that would attend each artist producing their own segment on the fly – the shows were pre-recorded, in August.

Over half of the shows were recorded in artists' homes; the others at Poetry and at Handlebar. The process of recording live in clubs was as involved as one might imagine. Artists and festival crews had two days at each venue. On the first day, as Johnson told me, "Our team came in and did a deep clean prior to our tech team, led by Evan Thompson,



Poetry Jazz Café



Handlebar



Mallory Chipman & the Mystics (COJF)

loading in all our equipment and instruments. The second day was just for recording. Each artist had one hour to film their 20-minute set, with 30 minutes in between shows so that we could sanitize absolutely everything.” Though the heightened vigilance and cleaning protocols made everyone “hyper-aware of one another,” Johnson characterizes the proceedings as safe and enjoyable, giving all involved the satisfaction of returning to the stage after months away.

The streaming format offers unique opportunities, as well as unique challenges. Monetizing one-off events is tricky; divorced from the immersive spectacle of a venue, events such as the KMJF are in competition with Netflix, Spotify and all of the other services to which the vast majority of people have access, and for which they already pay. Rather than charging a per-set cover charge, as in the past, the KMJF presentations will be free. So to bolster returns for performers, the festival has launched the KMJF Music Store on their website, with 100 percent of proceeds going to artists. They will also be including a Make a Gift button, which will allow viewers to pay a virtual cover charge to a particular performance.

While money matters may be more complicated than usual, the virtual format has allowed the KMJF to reach out to international artists who wouldn’t otherwise be likely to perform at the festival, including pianist/vocalist Champion Fulton, saxophonist Nick Hempton, and vocalist Samara Joy McLendon.

Canadian Online Jazz Festival

The KMJF, five years in, is still a relative newcomer in the broader community of Canadian jazz festivals. The Canadian Online Jazz Festival, however, is newer still – and not really a jazz festival in the traditional sense of the term. Organized by Kodi Hutchinson, artistic producer of JazzYYC in Calgary, the COJF is something of a celebratory banner under which a coalition of Canadian jazz festivals, each operating autonomously, will be presenting content, with participating organizations that include both large and small festivals, from Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver to Fort Langley, Victoria, and Niagara.

Taking place over a week, from November 8 to 15, individual festivals will present artists who are, in one way or another, representative of the cities in which the festivals take place. Individual festivals make their own selections regarding content and are responsible for the production and for the choice of streaming mechanism, be it YouTube, Facebook or Instagram live. The COJF, meanwhile, is providing logistical and marketing support, with their website acting

as the festival’s virtual hub. While some festivals will be livestreaming shows, most will be presenting a live performance that has previously been recorded, either specifically for the COJF (in the same fashion as the KMJF) or for another event. Participating artists include Jerry Granelli, for the Halifax festival, Alain Caron, for Montreal, Mallory Chipman & the Mystics, for The Yardbird Suite, and Kelly Bado, for Winnipeg.

In the continued fallout of the pandemic, Hutchinson told me over the phone, “It’s been heart-breaking seeing how artists are suffering.” But Hutchinson – a working jazz bassist with a business degree and a consistent sense of optimism – was eager to find ways to engage and build within the Canadian jazz community. Bringing the COJF project to the board at JazzYYC, he found support, both logistically and financially; when he then presented the idea to festivals across Canada, the response was overwhelmingly positive.

Beyond presenting quality, Canadian-focused jazz, one of the long-term goals of the COJF is to generate helpful data that will allow festivals to better plan for the future. A series of surveys will be going out to audience members; all festivals will be sending the same survey, the results of which will be shared amongst all participating organizations. Right now, Hutchinson says, “All organizations want to find out more information,” want to know “how to be better online.” Increasingly, Hutchinson suspects, it will be a norm to have livestreaming options for major jazz festival presentations, pandemic or not.

As jazz festivals look towards next year, and grapple with the strong possibility that physical-distancing guidelines will not be lifted for the summer festival season, the necessity of robust, accessible streaming options is becoming clear. Both the KMJF and COJF present excellent opportunities to better understand the possibilities (and limitations) of festival streaming, and will help to set the standard for production values, artist support and audience experience for streaming events to come, including, it is to be hoped, ways to preserve traditional year-round jazz live venues as an essential part of the musical ecosystem. ●

Colin Story is a jazz guitarist, writer and teacher based in Toronto. He can be reached at www.colinstory.com, on Instagram and on Twitter.



Kelly Bado (COJF)

Testing the Waters: Tafelmusik's *Baroque for Baby*

MATTHEW WHITFIELD



The cognitive benefits of musical studies are well-documented and often repeated – used to attract and draw in prospective students to music schools and studios across the world. For many parents, music lessons for their children is as much an investment in their future as the pursuit of cultural understanding and artistic accomplishment – a résumé-building, college-application-enhancing tool in some future well beyond the horizon.

But while the decision to undertake musical studies is often pragmatic, even when it is not it should be initiated as early as possible, exposing even babies' ears to the widest possible range of symphonies, songs and sounds and encouraging our little geniuses to connect with as much aural diversity as possible. As a parent, it can be challenging to consider such things, especially when entering one's fourth *Baby Shark* marathon of the day, but Tafelmusik is helping make the introduction of classical music to our youngest family members slightly easier with their latest album, *Baroque for Baby*.

Curated by Tafelmusik violinist and mother of two, Cristina Zacharias, *Baroque for Baby* was released digitally on major streaming and digital music services on October 16 and features repertoire by a wide range of early music composers including Telemann, Purcell, Lully, Vivaldi, Handel, Monteverdi, Rameau, Merula, Sweelink and Marais. With Tafelmusik's entire discography to choose from, achieving a balance of enlivening music with calming, quieter pieces for relaxation and sleep, would be a challenge to almost anyone, but not so for Zacharias, who comments in the *Baroque for Baby* release:

"There is nothing more magical than watching a baby or young child respond to music – the immediate natural and instinctive response to melody and rhythm is a reminder of just how fundamental music is in our lives ... Improvements are evident in self-regulation, spatial awareness, memory, language development, self-expression, motor skills, just to name a few. As a musician and a parent, the importance of music for babies is no surprise to me.

With the notable exception of Johann Sebastian Bach (and some of the more complex works by Handel and Zelenka), much of the Baroque-era repertoire here is relatively straightforward and accessible, using driving rhythmic figures, simple melodic and harmonic devices, and repetition-based forms, all of which make this style of classical music perfectly suited to younger listeners. Within this general framework, however, there were many decisions to be made:

"I looked for music that I thought was particularly engaging for kids and I wanted to present a wide range of styles and moods[...] I tried to feature all of the instruments that make up Tafelmusik's core group (strings, winds and harpsichord), and looked for a variety of



SIAN RICHARDS

Cristina Zacharias

rhythmically or lyrically catchy pieces, and lots of different versions of what Baroque music could be."

This daunting challenge of surveying the 17th and 18th centuries through 35 unique tracks is remarkably successful, with juxtaposition and contrast keeping the listener's attention and interest throughout. Whether the percussion-heavy *Moresca* from Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, Handel's virtuosic *Trio Sonata in G Minor* with magnificent woodwinds, or the string-forward *Overture-Suite* by Telemann, this superb album contains something for everyone, aficionado or neophyte, old or young.

As successful a collection as this may be for your early music columnist, the fundamental question pertains to its titled purpose: how well does *Baroque for Babies* test with actual babies? To help answer this, I recruited my son (B, who will be two in February) to listen to as much of *Baroque for Babies* as possible, both while moving around and playing, and also while seated at mealtime. The first, most easily noticed aspect of B's listening adventure was the way in which he physically, viscerally, manifested the sounds he was hearing through physical gesture. With a conductor father, it is no surprise that he has absorbed some association between arm-waving and aural input, but the energy and range of his full-body movements were even more impressive, knees bouncing and arms waving like some sort of juvenile Mahlerian caricature.

It should be noted that such jubilant output was in response to the equally jubilant musical selections playing at the time. More so than any key signature, time signature, or instrumental timbre, it was the tempo and rhythm together that appeared to drive these reactions; more introspective works were met with a trance-like silence punctuated by the occasional transfer of food from the high-chair tray to B's mouth – perhaps in an attempt to refuel before the next barn burner.

While B was unable to listen to all three-dozen tracks over our two allotted listening days, unlike a symphony or song cycle, *Baroque for Babies* allows us to absorb its material in smaller segments, repeat favourites and find those tracks that hold special meaning for both B and me. (As previously mentioned, air-conducting Telemann quickly became our Saturday afternoon activity.) With expertly curated selections showcasing a tremendous range of musical variety, Tafelmusik's newest digital release has something of interest for everyone, big and small.

As pandemic restrictions continue to wreak havoc on the performing arts, being able to share musical moments with the ones we love should be savoured more than ever. By supporting Tafelmusik and other arts organizations through streaming, donating, and purchasing merchandise, you are playing a role in the increasingly precarious future of these groups. So I encourage you to try *Baroque for Babies*, whether you have a child or not – because, as the saying goes, "There's a child in each of us." **🎻**

Matthew Whitfield is a Toronto-based harpsichordist and organist.



ROBERT HARRIS

REAR VIEW MIRROR

“Classical” Baggage vs Necessary Luggage

ROBERT HARRIS

Happy Halloween. So it seems we’re going to have some time on our hands in the musical world, whether we like it or not. It’s clear now. We’re not getting back to anything resembling normal musical life until the fall – next fall that is, September 2021. Joe Biden will have been president for almost a year before we get to go to another live concert (the joke should work either way no matter next Tuesday’s result). And if it’s smart, the classical musical world will use this forced hiatus in its life cycle to confront some of its powerful existential dilemmas.

I know, I know this may seem like exactly the wrong time. High financial anxiety in the classical world may well be upon us a year from now. The Toronto Symphony, for example, just released its financial statement for their fiscal year 2019–2020, which ended in June, reporting a \$600,000 deficit. That represents just four months of reduced activity. What will 15 months look like? It will be more difficult to ask institutions facing potential financial catastrophe to keep their minds on balance and inclusiveness in their hiring and programming, the true nature of classical art in a multicultural society, and other such esoteric existential questions when they’re just trying to keep the lights on.

But we have to. The world is full of institutions who ignored different sorts of challenges, assuming they would pass by, who are now in a death spiral because of their studied indifference to these challenges. Institutions like the recording business, the news business, the TV business, the magazine business, pretty soon the airline business, the hospitality business, and many others. If the thing we call classical music wants not just to survive, but to thrive, it’s got to understand itself in a fundamentally new way.

Lose the label

And the first order of business? – let’s find a new name for the art form, to inaugurate this necessary new understanding. Let’s ditch “classical” – both as a label and as the mindset that clings to the label.

It won’t be easy. It can’t be. The name stands for so much that we value in the music. A noted Internet pioneer, Eben Moglen, once told me why it was so hard to get institutions to change in the digital age. “People spend money and invest their time where they love,” he said, “and getting people to change what they love, or even to understand what they love, is almost impossible.” So it is with classical music, I think. The very thing that makes it so resistant to change is the thing that’s most valuable about it. For some of us. But it provides enormous barriers for the music to fulfill its truest functions, I think, which are, fundamentally, the illumination of the human condition. Music has the power to be supremely all-inclusive.

So the name we find for it has to embody this; but, more importantly, the social and artistic reality it embodies and represents has to do so, as well.

Long before the current virus challenged us in ways unimaginable, our musical world – firmly rooted in the past, as it is – was having its difficulties coming to terms with the realities of the modern world. Are we forgetting the behaviours in the classical music world being called out by the #MeToo movement, less than a year ago? Not just the overwhelming maleness of the traditional power structures of and around the music, but previously unexamined reaches of the musical and performing experience., such as mentoring and the teacher-pupil relationship. And the fragility of attempts at inclusiveness that the classical music world is bringing to the Black Lives Matter movement also demonstrate to me that good will or good intentions (or changing labels, for that matter) are simply not enough to overcome the profound structural realities within which we work. Change, when it comes, will not come easily. One must find places to start.

Where we love

I spent a lot of time as a journalist covering the 2017 Canadian Opera Company production of *Louis Riel*. *Riel* was an obvious choice for the company to celebrate Canada’s sesquicentennial – the most celebrated Canadian opera ever. But *Riel* had a problem – written in 1967, it cast the Riel Rebellion and its aftermath almost exclusively as a narrative exploring the tense historical relationships between French and English Canadians (which in 1967 was exactly how the Riel Rebellion was understood everywhere). The fact that *Riel* and his followers were Métis, and that the rebellion was more accurately a chapter in our Indigenous history, was completely absent from the opera, as conceived. And no amount of well-meaning, expensive and creative stage craft, discussion groups and seminars could change this fact an iota. *Riel* stubbornly refused to give up its ethnocentrism, because it couldn’t. Works of art, especially great ones, can’t be stage-managed to be something they aren’t.

The *Riel* experience, to me, is emblematic of the dilemma we face as those who have invested in a certain style of music, as Eben Moglen says, because it’s where we love and what we love. If we are going to allow it to grow, and reach new people, we must first understand what exactly it is and how to liberate it from the chains with which the word “classical” imprisons it. Exactly when the word stopped referring to the specific period of the First Viennese School and started to be applied to all “serious” music (another term that needs the heave-ho) is far from clear.



Russell Braun in the Canadian Opera Company's *Louis Riel*, in 2017

MICHAEL COOPER

I'm guessing it has to do with the fact that most of the repertoire of our musical tradition is old. And there's nothing wrong with that. We know remarkably little about our past as a contemporary North American society, so having one place where that past is celebrated, and brought to life once again, is not completely without value.

But if we are going to do so, let's call it something that celebrates the music's verve and excitement and creativity. The whole point of our musical tradition to me, one of those who loves it, is its eternal freshness, its ability to always be in the now, no matter what its history. But

“People spend money and invest their time where they love. and getting people to change what they love, or even to understand what they love, is almost impossible.”

you'll never know it by heading to most concerts. Concert music is presented today in almost exactly the same format as it has been for the past 150 years, for no earthly reason except total lack of imagination. There's no need for a night at the symphony or opera in 2020 to be more or less the same as in 1920, or 1820. Let me see and hear something different for a change. And let's call it the thing we want it to be.

But there's a hitch. I'll admit I'm not sure what “the music formerly known as classical” should be called, I only know what it is. “Classical” to me means a kind of free music – something it shares with any music that allows a creator freedom to pursue their imaginative course to the finish line without deadening commercial, or conventional, or any other formulas to drag it down. That's its essence.



Eben Moglen

At the moment, we seem only willing to accord to musicians of the past this freedom to interact with their society and themselves and their sense of the world – but not musicians of the present. Simply put, we're doomed if that continues.

A new classical music, a “free” music of deep-seated creativity (including the widest range of repertoire, historical and contemporary) will allow a vital art form to thrive and develop without dishonouring its past. If and when that happens, the modernization of “the classical musical experience” will happen all by itself. A new renaissance will be upon us, one that is not as far-fetched as we might think. And we will, I guarantee, you, be calling it something else. ●

Robert Harris is a writer and broadcaster on music in all its forms. He is the former classical music critic of the *Globe and Mail* and the author of the *Stratford Lectures and Song of a Nation: The Untold Story of O Canada*.

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