

# the WholeNote™

Vol 26 No 4

December & January 2020 / 21

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

Beautiful Exceptions • Sing-Alone Messiahs  
Livingston's Vocal Pleasures • Chamber Beethoven  
Online Opera (Plexiglass & All) • Playlist for the  
Winter of our Discontent • The Oud & the Fuzz  
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# the WholeNote

Volume 26 No 4 | December 2020 - January 2021

## ON OUR COVER



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I was getting ready to go to Australia in March. The pandemic came and all of a sudden I had six productions cancelled and two symphony concerts gone. ...This period will be interesting because it will make many of us – whatever profession we're in – decide whether this is really what we want to do. How patient are we and how willing to make the sacrifices. And how positive. — **Judith Yan**

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# All in Good Time



Looking over my notes, there were a lot of things I thought this last “For Openers” of 2020 was going to be about.

**Last week, for example,** I had what I am tempted to call my “usual” chat with a cherished reader, who calls without fail after receiving the issue, but only after having had time to read it closely enough to make specific observations (occasionally trenchant), about its contents. But also always unfailingly encouraging, as well as (time after time over the years) offering suggestions (usually in the form of questions) for stories we should consider taking on.

This time the question was “*Have you considered doing a story for readers like me (who need for various reasons to get tax receipts for our donations) who are willing and able, especially at a time like this, to support musical organizations (particularly those with a sense of social justice)? A story like that would help us figure who to give our money to.*” A good idea indeed, I agreed.

Except that afterwards, I’m sorry to say, I found the idea irking me like a scratchy tag in a new shirt. Why? Because I am less sure than ever before that being able to issue tax receipts for donations is necessarily a reliable indicator of which organizations, in the music community and beyond, are the most at risk right now, or the most deserving of support. A bit like the way, back in March and April, when it came to deciding who should be eligible for governmental pandemic support, only T4 employment earnings were initially deemed proof of “real work” – no comfort to workers in the gig economy, or small businesses, where the dreamers usually pay themselves last anyway.

So, there’s a story there, but definitely a more nuanced one than at first glance. And yes, we’ll probably tackle it – but, um, not right now.

**A few weeks before that,** according to my notes, it was the “We’re all in this together” pep talks from our social, cultural and civic leaders that were seriously irking me to the point I was vowing to thunder about them here. *What’s the “this” we’re supposedly all in?* Not the “same boat,” that’s for sure, I scribbled. The same storm? Yes indeed, but in a whole range of craft, not all equally

seaworthy and not all equally equipped to issue life jackets (or T4s) to those on board. But that one is not so simple either. After all, how do you define “seaworthy” when what is needed for the urgent task at hand is the alacrity to change course to avoid an iceberg?

So, yes, there’s a story there too, but definitely a more nuanced one than at first glance. So ... um, not right now.

**Instead, there’s this,** from all of us at *The WholeNote* whose lives, like most of yours, are under (re)construction without benefit of blueprint: a crazy quilt of artistic initiative and endeavour and tenacity on the cusp between what was then and who knows what next? Still all doing the things we know how to do, but in ways we never needed to know till now; still figuring out ways to keep telling the stories we are driven to tell; hanging in until we can hang out. And maybe, just maybe, getting a teensy bit better, with each other’s help, at figuring out when to say “um, not right now” to the things we long for that just bloody well have to wait.

Right now “all in good time” is not the worst thing to wish on. Enjoy the read, and we’ll see you on the other side.

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## Upcoming Dates & Deadlines for our February 2021 edition

**Free Event Listings, deadline**  
Midnight, Friday January 15  
**Display Advertising, reservation deadline**  
6pm Friday January 15  
**Display Advertising, artwork due**  
6pm Wednesday January 20  
**Classifieds deadline**  
6pm Saturday January 23  
**Publication Dates**  
Tuesday, January 26 (online)  
Friday, January 29 (print)

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# Beautiful Exceptions

In conversation with  
**JUDITH YAN**

LYDIA PEROVIĆ



DAVID HOWELL

One of Canada's busiest conductors is just back from Hong Kong, where she conducted *Don Quixote* from a COVID-proof orchestra pit. She spoke with Lydia Perović via Zoom from her home in Guelph.

**LP:** Hi Judith Yan! Oh, what's that artwork behind you?

**JY:** This here is a print of Jackson Pollock. But then this round one here, this is our favourite. It's by a Guelph-area artist, Chelsea Brant; we have two of her works. She's fabulous. And this one over here, that's by Amanda. [Yan's partner Amanda Paterson, the artistic director of Oakville Ballet and Oakville School of Classical Ballet] And then there's the dog, have you met the dog? Mexxie, come here buddy, come say hi! He's the best.

(Mexxie the black and white Shih Tzu comes into the frame, checks out what's going on.)

**What were the last eight months like for you? I expect you had a busy start to the year, and then mid-March happened!**

I was getting ready to go to Australia in March. The pandemic came and all of a sudden I had six productions cancelled and two symphony concerts gone: a new production of *Sleeping Beauty* with West Australian Ballet and *Dracula* later; the Canadian premiere of *Powder Her Face* by Thomas Adès at Opera on the Avalon, and a premiere of John Estacio's *Ours* at the NAC. A second *Sleeping Beauty* in Hong Kong, and a very cool production of Gluck's *Orfeo* at the Kentucky Opera. My farewell concert with the Guelph Symphony Orchestra, where I've spent eight years – I absolutely adore them – also had to go, as did my debut with Saskatoon Symphony. Saskatoon are so forward-thinking and carrying on with programming, but we have decided to postpone due to quarantining rules and the changing regulations about indoor gatherings.

**So Saskatoonians have been performing before an audience? Ontario is completely closed. I think people will forget why they ever wanted to come to concerts...**

This experience in Hong Kong completely changed my mind about that. At first I was concerned that audiences may not come

back, but in Hong Kong the 500 allowed seats sold out immediately and when the numbers went even lower, they said, OK we'll open up another 250. And it sold out. Virtual will never take the place of live performance. Hong Kong had of course gone through SARS and already, since February, had strong protocols in place. Art organizations managed to strike a balance: they were concerned about the welfare of people, and also aware of the impact on businesses, and arts are a big part of it. They continue to support the arts and that philosophy feeds into organizations and empowers them. The Hong Kong Ballet I think never stopped moving. (I think that's their logo this year too: Don't Stop Moving.) The minute the city said that you can have six people in a space, they rehearsed with six people. At a time! They persevered, they were patient, they kept working, and as soon as the city said they could open, they were ready. That takes courage, and a positive attitude.

**Was this [*Don Quixote*] an old contract signed ages ago?**

No, I was supposed to be conducting *Sleeping Beauty* and then of course it didn't happen. But as soon as things started to look positive again, we talked about doing *Don Quixote* and the contract came. I said to my manager and my partner, wow I can't believe this is happening. I signed it, we sent it back and every day I thought, this is probably going to be cancelled. But then the flight booking came, and the list of requirements for quarantine. You have to do a COVID test the minute you land, and then on the tenth day of the 14-day quarantine, and if you test negative, you're allowed to leave the quarantine. And that's how it happened. The entire orchestra and the dancers, we all tested one more time before beginning the work.

**What was your life between that March and the Hong Kong trip? I believe you accompanied your partner's ballet classes from the piano for a while?**

Oh that! [laughs]. She's a principal of a wonderful ballet school in its sixth decade, and when the first lockdown happened, we cleared out our dining room and that became the studio. And I said, I haven't played class in 20 years, but I'd be happy to, and she said, "Sure, that'd be great." Anyway, I got fired. Supposedly I wasn't paying enough attention! So I got demoted to tech help. When Zoom goes out on her students' computers, people call my phone number



for tech help. Which is hilarious! I think she probably got back at me for playing silly things on the piano. She's using recorded music now and has her own perfect playlist.

What I've been actually doing is I've been preparing and online-meeting with opera companies and orchestras (Kentucky Opera, Opera on the Avalon, Saskatoon Symphony, Hong Kong Ballet) to discuss ways to continue the productions in current circumstances. I've been on a granting review committee for Canada Council, on a panel of judges for National Opera Association (opera productions) and in talks with Hong Kong to come up with a viable solution for the orchestra pit. We were the first company to be in the pit since the pandemic.

This period will be interesting because it will make many of us – whatever profession we're in – decide whether this is really what we want to do. How patient are we and how willing to make the sacrifices. And how positive. For example, Opera on the Avalon have done two commissions in the last three years, and they just announced another commission, to premiere in 2022. I love working with OOTA. It's nice to be able to work in Canada because the majority of my work is not here.

#### More opportunities around the globe, I suppose?

Yes. Asia, Australia, US... and nobody ever bats an eyelid that I'm not a man. It's never been a problem. They just hire you because you're useful. It's not a big deal. In Canada, my first appointment was by Richard Bradshaw at the Canadian Opera Company, in 1998 I think. Maestro Bradshaw said once in an interview "I didn't hire her because she's a woman, I hired her because ..." and then he said

**Some people will use that excuse, we'd hire more women if they were more competent, and I kind of laugh because they hire incompetent men all the time.**

some nice things about my work. In 2003, I was hired by Sir Donald Runnicles at San Francisco Opera. So, two men, right? Runnicles didn't care either that I was a woman, he just hired me. I worked there, Seattle Opera, Polish National Ballet in Warsaw...

**It's not always that easy for women conductors, right? I think it's oftentimes not even conscious discrimination – it's like hires like, it's inertia, so of course men will hire more easily other men, but as you say, there are always those beautiful exceptions.**

That's well put: beautiful exceptions. It's been like that for the last 20 years. First with Maestro Pierre Hétu, then Maestro Bradshaw

COVID-secured orchestra pit, Hong Kong Ballet



# Music TORONTO

## VIRTUAL CONCERT SERIES

Thur. & Fri. December. 10 & 11, 2020, 7:00 pm

### Gryphon Trio

6 Beethoven trios in 2 concerts

Thur. January 14, 2021, 7:30 pm

### St. Lawrence Quartet

The Dohnanyi Piano Quintet with  
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Thur. February 18, 2021, 7:30 pm

### St. Lawrence Quartet

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Tues. March 16, 2021, 7:30 pm

### Vadym Kholodenko

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**Strong protocols in place: Hong Kong Ballet orchestra rehearsal**

and Maestro Runnicles. And I mean, with Ballet, they primarily care that you give them the right tempo and the right phrasing.

Sure, some people will use that excuse, we'd hire more women if they were more competent, and I kind of laugh because they hire incompetent men all the time. You have to hire people when they are incompetent because otherwise how else will they become competent?

**That's exactly the step that's harder to cross for women and minorities. Young unprepared men are hired all the time because somebody has understood their potential.**

Often we look at incompetence as "growing pains," but for women, people are less forgiving. To women conductors I say: if it doesn't work in one place, and you really want to do it, get on an airplane and fly somewhere else. There's always going to be someone who's going to open the door for you, you just have to work hard enough. The events like this pandemic will certainly test you; you'll see how many risks you're willing to take, how far you're willing to go.

**You hear a lot about conductor stamina. How physical is the job? I expect you have to be pretty fit.**

You get there step by step and as needed. In my 30s I transitioned from pianist to conductor, but I was a rehearsal conductor and worked for hours on end. I must have injured every part of my back, to a point now where there is no feeling left. So it was gradual, and yes you start with the smaller pieces. For example, *Sleeping Beauty* is three and a half hours long and it gets harder and harder. When I was in Hong Kong, I would do five of them on a weekend. One on Friday, two on Saturday, two on Sunday. That's seven hours of conducting a day, with intermissions. *Don Quixote* is not that long, but strenuous – mentally. About two and a half hours – I did a single and a double-double. You don't stop moving and you don't stop thinking. But you have to build up to it.

In Australia, the run is 15 shows. I premiered *Dracula* there – which is the most amazing music by Wojciech Kilar. It's difficult and long, and you do 15 of them over two weeks. In Seoul, in Korea, beautiful company, orchestra to die for – we had four readings, one tech with orchestra, three dress rehearsals and five performances; 13 work sessions with the orchestra in the span of week and a half. It's go-go-go.

**Classical music in East Asia is seeing some extraordinary growth?**

Yes! In Seoul, the performances are always full. When we come out through the stage door, it's filled with people who've come to thank us. There are pictures, there are flowers, there's always big support. And in the house, there are seats specifically for children,

because there's demand – they're like boosters, a child seat on top of the regular seat. The same level of enthusiasm as in Hong Kong.

**Renée Fleming was saying in an interview after her East Asia tour that the lineups after the show are incredible. And it's mostly young people.**

Part of it too is that in Asian cultures, schooling is important, education is important, the arts are revered. Highly respected. Your academic success is incomplete without ballet, piano or violin. Most of the kids do everything. I was born in Hong Kong and that is how it worked: I had ballet and piano; it's part of growing up. I started ballet at four, piano at six. This kind of information starts coming at you at the age of four and six and it doesn't stop until you finish your high school. You can't help it, you know?

And being at a live orchestra performance... it's like opening up an iPod and seeing how everything is made. Oh it's the horns, that's what makes that sound! Seventy people in the pit, a hundred people on the stage, without anything being amplified, and it's all happening before you. How exciting is that.

**And before I let you go: what's next on the horizon?**

The symphony concert in Saskatoon has been postponed to the spring, and then the Adès with OOTA that's scheduled to go in 2021. In 2022, things are starting to come back. *Orfeo* in Kentucky is rebooked, and we're waiting to see what's going to happen with Hong Kong ballet...

It really comes down to the leadership of individual companies. The companies that are very positive are already talking about it and I don't think they're being foolhardy, I think they're being ready. That's the way one has to look at it. Before each of the performances of *Don Q* in Hong Kong, Septime Webre the artistic director, who's also a fabulous choreographer, went on stage and welcomed the audience. He was so gracious and positive and we really needed it, since all of us had not performed in ten months. When I first emailed the company to inquire about the distancing rules and health regulations for the pit, the entire plan was in my inbox, with pictures, within 24 hours. So that's the desire, right? They are ready. This is what we're going to do, and it's important to us. Companies in Australia that are still going strong, the Finnish National Ballet, the OOTA, which is commissioning works, the Saskatoon Symphony – it's companies like these that will show us the way. The positive, don't-stop-moving attitude, that is the way to go. ●

**Lydia Perović is an arts journalist in Toronto. Send her your art-of-song news to [artofsong@thewholenote.com](mailto:artofsong@thewholenote.com).**



# A Messiah for our Complex Times

BRIAN CHANG

No performing arts organizations can pretend they don't exist in a specific time and place – responding to cultural and political moments of the right now, even when the music they perform comes from very different times. Choirs are grappling with the loss of rehearsals and live performances, but they are also grappling with the overlapping realities of fighting for justice and emancipation in a very complex world.



ATG THEATRE

Against the Grain's Elliot Madore

*Messiah/Complex* is an upcoming new digital performance from Against the Grain Theatre (AtG). Artistic director Joel Ivany and his innovative team are taking the Handel and Jennens masterwork and breathing it alive with diverse voices, languages and cultural inspiration of people across Canada. Ivany has been joined by Renelta Arluk, director of Indigenous arts at the Banff Centre. Together they have assembled a vast collection of performers representing every province and territory. *The WholeNote* had a chance to connect with artistic director Joel Ivany to share just what a complex *Messiah* looks like in our times. "There are complex layers to this work," AtG's Ivany shares. "Handel, himself, had investments in the Royal African Company. This means that he profited off of slave trade during the 1720s and 30s."



## Concerts and Special Services

Saturday Dec. 5 at 7pm  
*And He Shall Come: Music & Poetry for Advent*

Sunday Dec. 13 at 1pm  
*Deck The Halls! Carol Sing with Silver Band*

Friday Dec. 18 at 12pm  
*Noon at Met Concert: David Simon, organ*

Sunday Dec. 20 at 7pm  
*Candlelight Lessons and Carols*

Thursday Dec. 24, Christmas Eve  
*Family Service at 5pm*  
*Candlelight Communion at 11pm*

[metunited.ca](http://metunited.ca)

YouTube



Joel Ivany



Renellta Arluk



Deantha Edmunds

Connecting the history of the work to *its* time and place is necessary to connect to *our* time and place, he says. “We’ve asked Indigenous artists to learn settler music set to Biblical text. They have interpreted it and now sing it in their own language. We want to reconcile our relationship with First Nations, but it’s not easy; there are layers and it is complex. We want to support our Black, Indigenous and People of Colour community, but there’s no easy answer or quick fix.”

“When we all witnessed the protests around Black Lives Matter, our company decided that we would use what space we have to be agents of change,” says Ivany. “We therefore committed to finding soloists from different backgrounds and featuring them in the videos that we would create. That turned into a multi-lingual, cross-cultural presentation that kept growing as our lists of artists began confirming.”

Reimagining Handel and Jennens’ *Messiah* is in and of itself nothing new: it has been a tradition of the masterwork for centuries. Handel himself changed which songs were performed as part of the complete work depending on where he performed it, the performers and the audience. Annual visitors to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Toronto Mendelssohn Choir performances of *Messiah* will hear different sets of music, different instrumentation, and different solos depending on who the conductor is and their vision of this complex work.

In 2019, the TSO and TMC presented the Mozart interpretation of the *Messiah* under the baton of Alexander Shelley. Every year, Soundstreams presents its evolving *Electric Messiah* with different sets of musicians. And Tafelmusik presents its consistent period interpretation under Ivars Taurins every year. These are staple performances that go hand in hand with dozens of other performances by choirs of every size across Southern Ontario.

This year, though, you won’t find the usual plethora of *Messiahs* being performed across the region, but you *will* find this daring imagining by ATG.

#### A Complex Undertaking

“We were already planning on remounting our staged and choreographed production of ATG’s *Messiah* pre-pandemic,” shares Ivany. “As the world changed, we realized we wouldn’t be able to do what we had wanted. We weren’t sure if the world was

moving towards digital or if this would be a pause.” Like so many performing arts organizations, ATG’s plans have started, been cancelled, and reimagined in different ways. “No one expected, nine months on, that we’d be facing a Christmas season without live music” Ivany continues: “The longer the pandemic went on, the more our thinking began to shift. We thought that the winter wouldn’t have the usual presentations of *Messiah*, so we decided to pivot, to be more ambitious instead of less as this project evolved.”

“We’ve had to be very aware of travel restrictions and COVID protocols in each of the provinces and territories. That has definitely been a challenge. We also had to reimagine how we can record.” Some of the Atlantic artists were in the Atlantic bubble with very different public health guidance than Toronto.”

There are six languages, twelve soloists and four choirs as part of the project. Johannes Debus is leading the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in the instrumental tracks. These recordings have

been the backbone of the tempi and dynamics. All of the singers performing have the backing tracks to record their contributions.

Doug Doctor is mastering the audio and working with Stephen Bell and Coffeshop Creative in the videos that will make up the final 70-minute work. Ivany is excited about the end results, “We’re going to be amazed at how vast and grand the land is that we live on and how lucky we all are to be connected.”

Having the courage and vulnerability  
to trust that what we feel and hear will  
help us grow to be a better community  
and ultimately a better country.

— Renellta Arluk

#### Breathing Diversity into Complex Times

The breadth of artists being assembled for this project is remarkable. As the ATG release for the show notes: “This interpretation of Handel’s enduring holiday classic really is national in scope, with singers participating from every province and territory in Canada.” And in the same release, Renellta Arluk asks: “How can we sing, act, write, speak, create art with one another in ways that allow for full, uncompromising voices to be heard?”

And her answer? “By having the courage and vulnerability to trust that what we feel and hear will help us grow to be a better community and ultimately a better country.”

This project includes a new Inuktitut translation of the Jennens libretto. “Our work reimagines this standard oratorio by illuminating the diversity of artists across what we now call Canada,” says Deantha Edmunds, who identifies as Inuk and is a



resident of Newfoundland and Labrador, in the AtG release. "It is a joy to sing one of my favourite Handel arias in Inuktitut, as translated by a respected Elder and teacher in Nunatsiavut."

"AtG has always looked to find ways to breathe new life into older works as a way to see and hear them in new ways," says Ivany. "We've done that with this very piece when we've presented it as a staged and choreographed work. We've gone a bit further this time with translations and interpretations as well as having many soloists and even having a mezzo sing a traditionally sung bari-tone number. It's to shake it up a bit and to show that we can still present it beautifully and differently."

Against the Grain Theatre's 70-minute, pre-recorded video features voices from across Canada: Cree-Métis baritone Jonathon Adams; Inuktitut singer Looee Arreak; British Columbia tenor Spencer Britten; Canadian-Tunisian Rihab Chaieb in Montreal; Inuk singer Deantha Edmunds in Newfoundland and Labrador; Dene singer-songwriter Leela Gilday in Northwest Territories; Lebanese-Canadian soprano Miriam Khalil; Saskatchewan soprano Andrea Lett; Diyet van Lieshout, who sings in Southern Tutchone, from Yukon Territory; Métis singer Julie Lumsden; and Toronto baritone Elliot Madore; and is accompanied by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra conducted by Johannes Debus.

*Messiah/Complex* premieres on December 13, 2020 at 8pm and will be available on demand until December 26, 2020. You can register online at [atgtheatre.com](http://atgtheatre.com)

### Create Your Own Messiah

Over the course of a normal December, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra would fill Roy Thomson Hall with over 25,000 patrons with their holiday offerings. The Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts would be filled continuously every evening through December with the music of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*.

Churches across the city from Kingsway United to Grace Church on-the-Hill to Morningstar Christian Fellowship would be filled with glorious festive music. There is no way to offset the loss of the communal experience of music this season, but that doesn't mean that your homes should be quiet.

Explore some of the recordings released this month. *The WholeNote* contains lots of great reviews and information on new offerings. And there are classic options you can find wherever you stream your music, YouTube Music, iTunes, Spotify, and throughout the season with our radio colleagues at Classical 96.3 FM.

Indulge in the clear, ringing beauty of Kathleen Battle in the classic and much-loved Toronto Mendelssohn Choir and Toronto Symphony Orchestra recording of 1987.

Mark the passing of Erin Wall in the most recent 2016 Toronto Symphony Orchestra reimagining of *Messiah* by Sir Andrew Davis featuring fellow soloists Elizabeth DeShong, Andrew Staples, and John Relyea. Wall's beautiful memory will live on in this performance.

Hear the clarity and focus of the final "Amen" in Tafelmusik's super-popular period recording from 2012. This album is a standard go-to for anyone looking for a more traditional *Messiah*.

Enliven your tree decorating with *Too Hot to Handel: The Gospel Messiah* led by Marin Alsop in 1993 and performed around the





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**A Quiet Village**  
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Featuring Britten's Christmas masterpiece "A Ceremony of Carols", with harpist Julia Seager-Scott, Ēriks Ešēvalds' "Stars", and Marie-Claire Saindon's "Constellation".

**A Village Messiah**  
DECEMBER 12 | 8PM

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

**A Festival of Carols**  
DECEMBER 19 | 8PM

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world annually. Only available on iTunes, this recording with the Colorado Symphony dares you to try to listen without feeling good, tickling your ears with new, dynamic, energetic inspiration weaving in and out of the music you know so well.

And on December 13, 2020, catch the launch party of *Messiah/Complex* with Against the Grain Theatre.



*Too Hot to Handel: The Gospel Messiah* led by Marin Alsop

## DIGITAL CONCERT QUICKPICKS

The **Toronto Children's Chorus** presents *A Chorus Christmas: Holiday Journeys*. The annual Christmas Concert put on by the Toronto Children's Chorus is a huge affair with hundreds of performers spread across the stage and into the rafters of Roy Thomson Hall. This year, the many choirs making up the TCC community join together for a digital concert this year. The TCC Alumni Choir has a long tradition, bringing back familiar faces to sing lobby carols. This year, the alumni will be recording a virtual choir presentation of "Hark the Herald Angels Sing." December 19 and 20. Register at [www.torontochildrenschorus.com](http://www.torontochildrenschorus.com).

The **Elora Singers** present an ambitious three-concert series for the holidays. *A Quiet Village*, December 5. *A Village Messiah*, December 12. And *A Festival of Carols*, December 19. All online at [www.elorasingers.ca](http://www.elorasingers.ca). *A Quiet Village* features harpist Julia Seager-Scott and works by Canadian composers Tawnee Olson and Marie-Claire Saindon. The feature is Britten's *Ceremony of Carols* for mixed choir (originally written for a treble choir). Wolcum Yole!

For a fun sing-along, the **Guelph Chamber Choir** is crowdsourcing some holiday cheer with a livestream carol sing-along on December 13 at 7pm. They've been working towards a virtual recording of Mozart's *Laudate Dominum* which will have its premiere during the concert. Check them out on Facebook for more information.

If you're watching the *AtG Messiah/Complex* on December 13 and miss the **Guelph Chamber Choir**, you can have another chance to participate in a sing-along with the **Amadeus Choir** on December 15. The choir is hosting a "Virtual Carolling Party." There will be an hour of fantastic favourites; all livestreamed with special guests, performances, and festive cheer. Register online at [www.amadeuschoir.com](http://www.amadeuschoir.com).

Whatever you do this season, add some music to your holiday, with a safe livestream or your favourite recordings. 🎵

Follow Brian on Twitter @bfchang.

Send info/media/tips to [choralscene@thewholenote.com](mailto:choralscene@thewholenote.com).

## EARLY MUSIC

# New Bottles for Old Wine? EarlyMusic.tv and Sing-Along Messiahs

MATTHEW WHITFIELD

Over the last few issues of *The WholeNote*, this column has explored some of the ways that presenters, festivals, orchestras and other performing groups have pivoted and adapted to 2020's unexpected and unforeseen challenges. With the arrival of a second pandemic wave, a surge in case numbers and consequent public health interventions – most recently through the implementation of a second lockdown here, Toronto-area performers have had to dig in their heels even deeper and continue to use technology to bridge the gap between themselves and their audience.

As announcements of vaccine developments are released and plans for mass distribution are devised by governments around the world, it appears more likely that the waning of the pandemic itself is on the not-too-distant horizon, a hopeful and encouraging revelation after months of uncertainty. Far less likely though is that the return to concert halls will be suddenly reinstated as before, not with the technological advances made by so many through livestreaming and the broadcasting of pre-recorded material.

And why should it? Although the maintenance and operation of remote viewing technologies is another line on the expenditures sheet, it is also an opportunity to increase audience bases (and revenue) by engaging with audiences that would otherwise be unable or still reluctant to attend in-person concerts. The Internet has no borders and is the perfect vehicle for making both domestic and international connections without in-person touring by planes, trains and automobiles, especially for those unable to fund such globetrotting ventures. This pandemic has brought the future closer to us, accelerating the development of technologies that support interpersonal connections and introducing us to different ways of meeting and greeting our friends, acquaintances, and even complete strangers, and it is very unlikely that we will simply revert to our old ways once COVID-19 is relegated to the history books.





Apple TV, Amazon, and Chromecast, as well as a soon-to-be-released RokuTV app. This means that no matter your choice of device, operating system and mode of access, EarlyMusic.tv will be available for viewing everywhere that there is an Internet connection.

When looking at a streaming service, the two fundamental questions that must be answered affirmatively are: "Is the interface intuitive?" and, "Is the material good?" In the case of EarlyMusic.tv, both questions can be answered with a resounding "Yes." The online interface is very straightforward, if not slightly understated, and content is easily explored, filtered and toggled through. Visitors are able to choose between video presentations, searchable by period, composer and arranger, as well as the Consort's album library and individual audio tracks, which are also able to be searched and filtered.

The Android app is similarly streamlined, a mobile-friendly reduction of the online website, with identical options to the desktop site. In addition to the aforementioned filtering options, the app contains a universal search function, which returns all applicable video and audio results for the search thread, such as "Byrd" or "Guerrero." The well-thought-out nature of the

COLIN SAVAGE

The Toronto Consort's *All in a Garden Green* with Alison Melville (L) and Katherine Hill

#### EarlyMusic.tv

Even before the arrival of the pandemic, streaming services were hugely popular, allowing anyone with a compatible device and an Internet connection to access a near-infinite variety of entertainment. Within this vast expanse of material, classical music occupies a minuscule slice of the market, primarily through Medici.tv and a few other, smaller services, which present a wide range of performances and documentaries for enthusiasts everywhere, performed by an equally wide range of musicians, orchestras and ensembles. Last month the Toronto Consort joined the party by launching EarlyMusic.tv, an on-demand online streaming service devoted entirely to the Consort and featuring a variety of audio and visual material.

Although still in its infancy, this service clearly has great potential and is a commitment on the part of the Consort to remain active and present, regardless of external circumstances. While classical musicians can occasionally be rather backwards-looking, EarlyMusic.tv engages with the majority of available technology and is accessible through web browsers, apps on iOS and Android, streaming through

EarlyMusic.tv app is particularly appreciated, as it makes the process of accessing content straightforward and simple, with easy access to both audio and video.

If the mode of accessing content is particularly good, the content itself is exceedingly so, with high-quality video and CD-quality audio across the streaming service. The audio tracks are taken directly from the Consort's previous recordings, providing the listener with a superb auditory experience. The videos are brilliantly done, enhancing the traditionally static concert experience by providing close-ups on soloists and ensemble members throughout, with lighting and acoustics that enhance, rather than detracting from, the musical works themselves.

For anyone with a passion for early music, EarlyMusic.tv is a terrific resource to reconnect with one of Toronto's finest performing groups. The streaming service is straightforward enough that even the least tech-savvy person can navigate it, and the content itself is both engaging and satisfying. With a variety of material already available and more to come as Consort invites contributions from other early music practitioners, is there a better way to whittle away the winter

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Pictured:  
Soprano Meghan Lindsay  
and Tenor Colin Ainsworth  
Photo by Bruce Zinger

Tafelmusik's *Sing-Along Messiah*, 2017

IN WITH THE NEW

# Cecilia Livingston's Vocal Pleasures

WENDALYN BARTLEY


months than immersing oneself in some of the best music from the medieval, Renaissance and Baroque eras?

## *Sing-Along Messiah – The 2020 Edition*

A *Sing-Along Messiah* addict can be identified in one or more of the following ways: multiple dog-eared Watkins-Shaw scores, with the orange covers dyed brown through time and repeated use; multiple recordings of said work, from barn-burning massed-choir singspiels to lean-and-mean, historically informed interpretations; and one or more special outfits, worn once a year, specifically designated for maskless communal singing *Messiah*.) For all such addicts, this December will be a time of painful withdrawal, as public health restrictions continue to prohibit large gatherings, particularly those involving singing.

While in-person sing-alongs will be *verboten* for the foreseeable future, Tafelmusik releases their *Sing-Along Messiah on Screen* this December, directed by the inimitable Herr Handel himself. As Tafelmusik Chamber Choir conductor (and Handel doppelgänger) Ivars Taurins writes, “for over three decades, George Frideric Handel has stepped onto the stage to lead Tafelmusik and an audience chorus of thousands through his timeless masterpiece, *Messiah*, in a sing-along version. This year we must come together in spirit rather than in person. So, until we can join our voices once again to ‘raise the roof,’ I sincerely hope that our *Messiah* sing-along film presentation, and Handel’s music, will rekindle the flame of all that is best within us, bringing joy, peace, and hope to your homes.”

Captured live at Massey Hall in 2010, this video of *Messiah* excerpts features soprano Suzie LeBlanc, countertenor Daniel Taylor, tenor Rufus Müller, baritone Locky Chung, the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and Chamber Choir, and a chorus of 1000 enthusiastic audience members. This video will be released on YouTube on December 17 at 7pm, and available until December 27. For those without multiple scores on their bookshelves, choruses will be available to download directly from the Tafelmusik website in the days prior to the video launch. While there is nothing that can compare with an authentically interpersonal singing experience, this is a wonderful opportunity to bridge the gap between our annual traditions and what is currently permitted; with such resources available to help us through what will undoubtedly be a strange and unfamiliar holiday season, we wait with anticipation for the joy of coming together, live and in-person, next year.

It is encouraging to see the development of such high-quality online content as a way of combating the widespread isolation imposed by the pandemic. If you come across a technological marvel produced by one of Toronto’s early music performers that you think deserves a place in this column, let me know at [earlymusic@thewholenote.com](mailto:earlymusic@thewholenote.com). “See” you next year! 

**Matthew Whitfield is a Toronto-based harpsichordist and organist.**

I’m always curious to see what the Royal Conservatory of Music’s 21C Festival will be offering each season; this year being unlike every other performance season, I was even more curious as to what we could expect from this annual offering of new sounds and the latest in contemporary music creation. I was pleased to see that the festival will be moving ahead despite the complexities of producing concerts for limited and virtual audiences. Running from January 15 to 29, this year’s offerings will be a scaled-down version of previous years, but still filled with premieres and outstanding performers, both local and from further afield.

We will hear concerts by two Toronto-based pianists: Eve Egoyan will perform pieces written for her imagined piano that combines original piano sounds with an extended software-based piano; and Royal Conservatory alumna Morgan-Paige Melbourne will perform two of her own compositions along with pieces by several other composers, including one by Brian Current, the director of The Glenn Gould School New Music Ensemble. The GGS New Music Ensemble will also have a concert of their own with several works combined with projected images. The well-loved Kronos Quartet will make a return visit with three different events to choose from. Their multimedia performance piece, *A Thousand Thoughts*, blends live music by Kronos, narration, as well as archival footage and filmed interviews. Kronos’ *Fifty for the Future* initiative, designed to create a repertoire of contemporary works for young string quartets they introduced to 21C audiences in 2016, will be the focus of a concert featuring four quartets from the Glenn Gould School after a two-day mentorship with Kronos.



JAY BLAKESBERG





Cecilia  
Livingston

DANIEL ALEXANDER DENINO

The highlight of the Kronos visit will be a concert of music from seven countries banned from entering the USA along with protest music inspired by Pete Seeger. It will be a tribute to the tumultuous and free-spirited 1960s that eventually led to the formation of Kronos in 1973.

A highlight of the festival for me will be a unique work, *Garden of Vanished Pleasures*, a co-production by Soundstreams and Pinkhouse Productions, currently scheduled to be performed on January 22 via livestreaming and with possible limited audience. (However, readers are advised to check ahead regarding the hoped-for live component of anything these days.) This semi-staged work will combine compositions by Canadian composer Cecilia Livingston and English composer Donna McKevitt into a new creation, conceived and directed by opera and theatre director, Tim Albery. Speaking recently with Livingston, I was able to learn more about what to expect with this new production, as well as find out more about her current projects.

To create *Garden of Vanished Pleasures*, Albery has interwoven a selection of songs from McKevitt's larger work *Translucence: A Song Cycle*, based on the poetry of Derek Jarman, with Livingston's

Kronos Quartet



arrangements of seven different pieces of her own that range from art songs to chamber music. Together, these separate pieces by both composers have been uniquely interleaved to create an original dreamy sequence, all scored for two sopranos, mezzo, countertenor, viola, cello and piano, which is the instrumentation McKevitt used in *Translucence*.

Since most of Livingston's pieces that were selected were scored differently, she was asked to create arrangements so that both composers' works could share the same instrumentation. Her *Kiss Goodnight*, originally for men's choir, and *Snow*, originally for marimba and voice, for example, will now be heard arranged for this new combination of instruments.

How did this all work out? I asked in our conversation about the production. "I'm really quite struck by the mesh of our two voices," she answered "It's really interesting to experience your own work being seen by someone else in a different way than how you had understood it. I'm finding that what they have created rings very true to what's in the pieces themselves." Since her works were originally created without any dramatic context, she has found it particularly fascinating to see them now being drawn into this larger dramatic whole. She spoke about how both composers have a similar interest in the themes of intimacy and loss and use similar imagery in their pieces: bodies of water and night-time, for example.

The overall impact will be the creation of a fluid dreamscape world, and even though the two composer's pieces may sound different, she was confident that there would be an organic realism to the whole. Albery will also be adding video projections to make a full artistic rendering that is also very suitable for online performance.

**Writing for voice** has developed into one of Livingston's big passions, and she is currently enjoying her role as composer-in-residence at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, located just outside of London, England, in what was originally conceived as a two-year residency that has now been expanded into three, thanks to COVID. For her, this



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English composer Donna McKeivitt (L) and opera and theatre director, Tim Albery.

experience has been a rare opportunity to see up close how one of the top companies rehearses and puts together their programs. She was originally drawn to writing for voice through her activities as a choral singer, giving her the opportunity to meet many singers who eventually began asking her for pieces. As her career developed, writing for voice “really seemed to speak to me creatively,” she said, largely because of the role of text in the process. This was the “compositional and creative puzzle that my mind truly sparks over. I love those places where words and music come together to make meaning and emotions complicated.”

Her love of working with singers expanded into a deeper understanding of what it means to be a performer, how theatre works, and how drama is communicated through music. Many of her pieces feature libretti by Duncan McFarland whom she met when they were both fellows at American Opera Projects, an opera training program in Brooklyn. She was drawn to the richness of his poetry and the wealth of his imagery. “He also has a really deep understanding of how music and texts go together, even though he’s not a musician himself. It’s lovely to work with somebody who trusts the compositional side of the process and can make changes in response to questions.”

I listened to some of her recorded works before our conversation and was struck by *Listen to the Chorus*, a video installation that she was involved in. The piece was conceived by spoken-word poet Nasim Asgari and performed by four members of the art collective Madeleine Co. The video features four separated images with close-up shots of the mouths of four female performers of different racial backgrounds, their voices whispering, speaking and singing in overlapping layers. Livingston explained that the group had come to her looking for a polyphonic choral interpretation of the original text to be sung alongside the spoken word performance of Asgari. The piece is raw, provocative and direct, mincing no words about women’s experiences of violence and suppression, beginning with the phrase “I was born resisting” and, at a later point, “We are not silent, more often just silenced.” This project was the first time Livingston had been involved in creating something with such a sharp socio-political edge to it. And even though it took her out of her comfort zone at the time (2013), she had great respect for the response the piece received, which inspired her to ask questions of herself: “What stories does my work tell, and who are these characters? There is definitely now a thread of thinking about women’s experience and how that’s shared musically that runs through a lot of what I do.”

One example of that is a recently completed commission from **Women on the Verge**, a trio of female musicians who focus on performing works that tell historical and fictional stories about women’s experience. Collaborating with Toronto Poet Laureate Anne Michaels, this new piece, *Breath Alone*, is a song cycle about the type of women that classical art song rarely allows to speak. The space that is given in this piece to the lives of artist/sculptor Eva Hesse, poet Nelly Sachs and painter Paula Modersohn-Becker, highlights the fact

that they were either overlooked or ignored in their own time. “This was a chance to look at real women and try to give voice to what the complexity of their experience might have been.” Livingston is looking forward to the time when it will be possible to share this work with an audience. This experience was, she said, “a crucible of realizing that these types of stories are really important to me.”

Currently, she is finishing up a new 90-minute opera, *Terror & Erebus*, for six singers and percussion quartet, an unusual combination for opera, commissioned by **Opera 5** and **TorQ Percussion Quartet**. She knew the members of TorQ during their university days together, and loved the sense of theatre in the way they played. “That was the genesis for making an opera with them,” she said. “Instead of being put in the corner or a dark orchestra pit, they will be a part

of the stage experience and take on the role of being characters with their physical presence being a big part of the visual spectacle.” The story is about the Franklin expedition to find the Northwest passage, and the opera’s title comes from the names of the two ships of that doomed expedition.

While composing, she imagined what the experiences of the crew might have been like, and she has approached this chilling narrative far more as an immersive dreamscape and hallucination than as a pirate-like adventure story. Scored for two sopranos, mezzo, tenor, baritone and bass baritone, this full range of sound gives lots of room for play and offers the audience the variety so necessary to sustain a long vocal work. Using the mallet percussion instruments, she is able



Women on the Verge

to create a strong harmonic core. Livingston is currently putting the finishing touches to the score, awaiting the time when a performance will be possible. (We can all look forward to the flood of new creations being made during this time of isolation, time awaiting us when we are out of the dark waters of this time of isolation.)

Coming full circle to the theme of unusual and original productions coming from Soundstreams, they will also be premiering a new version of their already original retake of Handel’s *Messiah* they call *Electric Messiah*, livestreaming on December 17. This version will be a full-length music video, with a mix of different outdoor filming locations, studio recordings and cinematic interpretations. The musical styles will range from jazz to soul/hip-hop and more, with a tradition-bending ensemble: soprano, treble, tenor, bass, turntables, guitar, harpsichord, electric keyboards and dancer. A new work by Ian Cusson, *O Death, O Grave*, will also be part of this holiday spectacle.

I end this last column of 2020 with a wish to all readers that you have a safe and celebratory holiday time, however you chose to observe it. ●

**Wendalyn Bartley is a Toronto-based composer and electro-vocal sound artist. [sounddreaming@gmail.com](mailto:sounddreaming@gmail.com).**



# Azrieli Commission winner, composer Keiko Devaux reflects on the debut of *Arras*

CAMILLE KIKU BELAIR



Keiko Devaux

CAROLINE DESILETS

The gala concert for the Azrieli Foundation biennial Azrieli Music Prizes (AMP) took place on Thursday, October 22, 2020 at 8pm, live-streamed on Facebook and Medici.tv. The concert featured the works of this year's winners: Keiko Devaux (Azrieli Commission for Canadian Music), Yotam Haber (Azrieli Commission for Jewish Music) and Yitzhak Yedid (Azrieli Prize for Jewish Music).

According to their website, the Azrieli Foundation was established by David Azrieli in 1989 as a philanthropic effort based in both Canada and Israel. In 2014 they introduced their first two prizes for new Jewish concert music. In 2019, the AMP announced the creation of a new prize – the Azrieli Commission for Canadian Music, intended to encourage the creation of new Canadian concert music – and invited all Canadian composers to apply. Awarded every two years,

2020 marked the first opportunity for composers to win the prize: a world premiere by the Montreal-based Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, a commercial recording to be released on the Analekta label, another national or international premiere after the gala concert and \$50,000 in cash. The award's full value is quoted at \$200,000.

I had the opportunity to speak with the inaugural winner Keiko Devaux at the end of October 2020, and reflect on the debut of *Arras*, the piece she composed for the commission. Originally from British Columbia, Devaux is a Montreal-based composer currently pursuing a doctorate in music composition and creation at Université de Montréal. Her work directly integrates extra-musical sources through transcription and translation, with a focus on what she calls “emergence and the memory of sound.” Her varied musical background is reflected in the diverse layers and influences of her concert works, which often contain stunning juxtapositions that blend melodic lines with gestures drawn from electroacoustic music.

In *Arras*, a concert piece written for a 14-instrument ensemble, Devaux masterfully blends together vastly different textures, creating

20/21

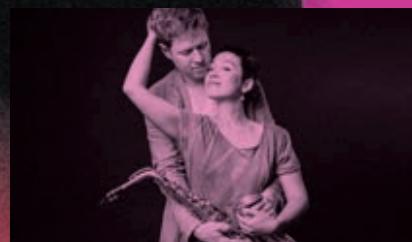
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Eliot Britton, and James O'Callaghan



Le Nouvel Ensemble Moderne performing the premiere of Devaux's *Arras*, live-streamed by the Azrieli Foundation on October 22, 2020.

a constantly shifting and captivating work. Named after the term for an elaborate French tapestry or wall hanging, the composition weaves the different sections of the chamber orchestra together in exciting and evocative ways.

Devaux said the pandemic emphasized how important it is to her compositional process to experience a new piece with other people. "I leaned into the positive elements of it," she explained. "It's nice to be at home. I dressed up just to make it feel special, but I was holding my cat and drinking champagne while listening to my piece. That was kind of special and amazing, and I don't know when that would ever happen, but you have this sense of 'I don't know who's listening to this'. (...) It was like, I could be listening to this in a void. I'm sure there's other people listening, but you know, it made me let go a bit more about what other people might think and just enjoy it for myself."

While aspects of the Oct. 22 gala concert, such as the welcoming remarks and the composer portrait segments were pre-recorded, the performances themselves were live-to-air; Devaux attended all of the rehearsals, but she was not able to be present at the performance due to the venue's space limitations.

The live-streamed gala will be available on Medici.tv until January 23 2021. And the audio recording sessions for the Analekta release are slated for spring 2021. In the meantime, Devaux will be reviewing the debut performance's recording to make sure the final outcome is exactly what she wants.

Outside of the commission, *Arras* is a significant piece for Devaux because it is the first piece in which she actively explored her Japanese Canadian heritage.

"I feel like, if you don't look like 'a typical composer', you end up getting a lot of questions about who you are and not about what you're doing," Devaux explained. "I feared, being a woman composer of half Japanese Canadian heritage, that my profile as a composer would be more focused on my identity rather than my explorations and voice as a composer. This tendency had always bothered me so I made a point of not writing pieces inspired by my heritage, not because it wasn't important to me, but to avoid being perceived and packaged in a certain way."

"As times change, and as I get more confident about embracing and understanding who I am and how it integrates into my artistic practice, I thought, these are important elements, and it was impossible to separate identity from artistic voice. I realized it was important to represent who you are."

In the application process for the Azrieli commission, applicants were asked to respond to the prompt, "What is Canadian music?" For Devaux, the prompt became an exercise in examining her own feelings around personal and national identity, in a way she hadn't written about before.

"I gave a very honest answer, which is why I was very surprised, amongst other reasons, that I got it, because I was hard-hitting in my answer in a way I think is respectful, but also 'let's be real!' about what being Canadian means. You can't talk about 'Canadian Music'




MARIE ISABELLE ROCHON

You can't talk about 'Canadian Music' without talking about what the word Canadian means.

without talking about what the word Canadian means," Devaux said. "It forced me to think about that and the only way I felt I could respond responsibly is to speak about who I am. I can talk about other people, but I can't represent other people. It was really just about sitting in my history for a while and thinking about my life."

"It's a personal response not just to skirt larger answers, but also because it's not for me to answer," she added. "I don't know if it's really for anybody, in my opinion, to answer that question, because the moment you start to answer that question in a way that tries to represent a group of people, then you are excluding people. I think that's the gist of what I said in my application: the way I think that this prize could be really interesting, amazing really, is that if every time somebody applies and gets it, it's somebody with a very different background, and very different approach and very different voice. (...) Having a canon of works that sound aesthetically the same, historically the same, is not interesting to me. It's dangerous. It's boring. So I'm just one brush stroke."

*Keiko Devaux is currently a composer-in-residence at the National Arts Centre until 2022. She recently released a recording from the opera Echoic Memories, completed in 2019 as part of a commission from the music@villaromana festival in Florence, which is available on her SoundCloud.*

The Azrieli Foundation live-streamed the 2020 Azrieli Music Prize Gala Concert on October 22 at 8pm, and this story appeared first in our blog at thewholenote.com, November 26 2020; updated November 30 2020. 

**Camille Kiku Belair is a Toronto-based classical guitarist, composer and writer. They are currently pursuing an MFA in Composition and Experimental Sound Practices at California Institute of the Arts.**



# Chamber Beethoven

## As His Birthday Beckons

PAUL ENNIS

As Beethoven's 250th birthday approaches – thought to have been born on December 15 or 16 he was baptized on December 17, 1770 – there are several notable chamber music concerts being livestreamed from December 5 to December 13, the last remnants of what was to have been a year-long celebration that was curtailed by the pandemic.

### Goodyear and Ehnes

Internationally acclaimed superstar and Canada's preeminent violinist, James Ehnes, will be joined by virtuoso pianist Stewart Goodyear for a complete traversal of the ten sonatas for violin and piano in three recitals – to be livestreamed from Koerner Hall December 11, 12 and 13. Goodyear is celebrated for prodigious pianistic feats like performing all 32 of Beethoven's piano sonatas on the same day.



James Ehnes

BEN EALOVEGA

Despite the marathons and the prodigious technique and memory that they require, the basis for Goodyear's appeal is his empathetic relationship with the music he performs and his ability to communicate that to an audience.

Beethoven's sonatas for violin and piano were spread over much of his lifetime, falling into the early and middle periods of his compositional career. The December 11 recital features the first four sonatas: the delightful Op.12, Nos.1–3 filled with grace – written in the last years of the 18th century – and Op.23 from 1801. The December 12 concert begins with the freshness of *Sonata No.5, Op.24 "Spring"* followed by Op.30 Nos.1 & 2, from 1803. December 13 at 3pm features Op.30 No.3, the virtuosic, justly popular *Sonata No.9 Op.47 "Kreutzer"* and the intimate Op.96 "The Cockcrow" that sits on the precipice of Beethoven's visionary late period.

Interestingly, Ehnes and Goodyear have performed together only once before – the afternoon of December 6, 2007 at the Women's Musical Club of Toronto – but these Koerner Hall concerts will be the first time they will play Beethoven together. I asked each of them to respond to two simple questions about their relationship to the music of Beethoven.

  
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Stewart Goodyear

### What was the first piece of Beethoven's music that made a strong impression on you (and why)?

**Stewart Goodyear:** One of the first pieces of Beethoven that made a strong impression on me was the final movement of his Ninth Symphony. My introduction to this mammoth utterance was on a greatest hits album, and what first enthralled me was that the finale of the Ninth Symphony took up the entire Side 2 of that LP, while the first side had the first movement of the Fifth Symphony, the first movement of the "Moonlight" Sonata, and other famous works that were around three to four minutes long. As soon as I saw the second side, and seeing that the movement was around 24-minutes long, I knew I was going to be on a long adventure, but I had no idea what I was in for!

The first chord made me jump... that startling dissonance, as if to say, "Forget what you heard on Side 1... this is the music of the future!" From there, I heard the operatic cellos and basses, the orchestra interrupting them by playing snippets of various themes that somehow did not belong. The cellos and basses became more gruff, almost like they were insisting they needed to be heard. And finally... they play the glorious, famous "Ode to Joy" theme, and slowly the orchestra comes in, finally in agreement that despite intense differences, the hymn of peace, brotherhood and sisterhood, and love, united them all. I was already moved to tears, and it was only the first four minutes of that 24-minute movement. Twenty minutes later, I was riveted... I never heard such music – comforting and exulting the listener, a music of optimism and a bright hope for humanity.

**James Ehnes:** Beethoven's music was always in my life (my parents always played music in the house), so I can't exactly say, but I remember becoming obsessed with Beethoven's Seventh Symphony when I was probably about eight or nine. The second movement made a profound impression on me; it was the first time I think I really understood that music could express emotions for which we have no words. I still think it's impossible to express the emotions in that movement, and I think the world would be a vastly poorer place without it.

### And what does Beethoven's music mean to you today?

**JE:** Beethoven's music is central to the art form. It's impossible to overstate his influence, or to imagine how music would have developed without him. His music made the world a better and richer place.

**SG:** More than ever, I think all of us need Beethoven's music. Every work he has written leaves feelings of comfort and exultation, especially this year. I believe that it is no accident that this dark year of COVID-19 is also the Beethoven 250 year, because everyone needs to know that, although this chapter of our lives seems unending and painful, it is a chapter that will soon end, and if we hold on, have faith and take care of one another, we will get through this.

### The Gryphon Trio

Canada's foremost piano trio, will also string together all-Beethoven programs back-to-back, performing Beethoven's six most celebrated piano trios on December 10 and 11 in Kingston's Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts in an interactive livestream event hosted by broadcaster Eric Friesen and featuring guest commentator

Rob Kapilow. The concerts will include a 20-minute intermission during which Friesen and Kapilow will discuss aspects of Beethoven's life and work. Both livestream performances will remain accessible until December 17.

Beethoven built on the development of the piano trio begun by Haydn and extended by Mozart. The Gryphon Trio will perform the first three trios, Op.1, Nos.1-3 on December 10; Op.70 No.1 "Ghost" and Op.70 No.2, plus Op.97 "Archduke" on December 11. With its grandeur, textural richness and melodic content, the "Archduke" stands out as the greatest of Beethoven's trios. Its premiere in 1814 with the composer at the piano was Beethoven's last public appearance as a pianist. Archduke Rudolph of Austria was also the dedicatee of the Fourth and Fifth Piano Concertos, the "Hammerklavier" Sonata, the *Grosse Fuge* and *Missa Solemnis*, among others.

Each concert will be followed by a Q&A session with the Gryphons. Patrons will be encouraged to submit questions via the chat function throughout the concert. Tickets will be available directly through the Gryphon Trio for \$25 for the pair or \$15 for a single event, per household by contacting [gryphontrio.com](http://gryphontrio.com). All these ticket buyers will be sent an invitation to participate in a Zoom party hosted by the Gryphon Trio on December 17 at 7pm.

Tickets can also be obtained (terms may vary) via partner websites (presenters in various Canadian and US cities). During the 90-minute interactive event, the Gryphon Trio, Rob Kapilow and Eric Friesen will also engage in a series of discussions and share pre-recorded musical offerings that will include musician colleagues such as Duo Concertante, Bergmann Duo and Jon Kimura Parker (Orcas Chamber Music Society).



The Gryphon Trio

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**Here are responses by Gryphon Trio violinist, Annalee Patipatanakoon, and pianist, Jamie Parker, to the same two questions I asked Ehnes and Goodyear.**

**Annalee Patipatanakoon:** I had learned and performed many works of Beethoven (sonatas, concerto, quartets, short works, trios etc.) from the beginning of my musical education, but interestingly, it was much later when the Gryphon Trio presented Beethoven's famous and much-loved "Archduke" Trio with our colleague, Rob Kapilow, as part of his series titled "What Makes It Great?" that I reflect on as leaving a strong impression. I was reminded of something I always knew and understood – that there is always more to learn even if the work is well known to you, and to explore and be amazed every time we pick up any piece of music.

And today I am so grateful to have this incredible music available to the Trio, and that I can continually explore these works and share my exploration with others. As well known as most of these works are to the Gryphon Trio, I love that every time we pick up one of the trios, something new is revealed, and it is this possibility of adding these discoveries into our next performance that keeps our performances fresh and inspired.

**Jamie Parker:** I can't even remember the first Beethoven piece that made a strong impression on me. They all did. The Fifth Symphony. The Third Symphony. Whichever symphony!

And today, Beethoven is the world to me. He's the first composer that accesses the totality of human experience; he accesses the totality of the collective unconscious; he transcends time. It is one of my great joys in life to be able to share this music with people today.

#### And elsewhere

Earlier in the month, December 6 finds the Gryphon Trio in Koerner Hall for a livestreamed performance of the "Archduke" Trio, this time preceded by Beethoven's effervescent *Clarinet Trio in B-flat Major Op.11 "Glassenhauer"*. James Campbell joins Roman Borys (cello) and Jamie Parker (piano) for the first work, replacing Annalee Patipatanakoon's violin with his clarinet. Both pieces are in the same key (B-flat Major).

Still in Koerner Hall – on December 10 – (but not all-Beethoven) the **New Orford String Quartet** opens a livestreamed concert with Beethoven's *String Quartet No.3 in D Major Op.18, No.3* followed by a slice of French Romanticism, Chausson's gorgeous *Concerto in D Major for Violin, Piano and String Quartet Op.21*. The Chausson could be thought of as a sonata for violin and piano accompanied by a string quartet. Joining the New Orford will be the co-curator of this RCM mini-Beethoven festival, violinist James Ehnes, and pianist Charles-Richard Hamelin, whose attentive and sensitive keyboard playing makes him a natural for chamber music. Interestingly, both pieces are again in the same key (D Major).

**Sinfonia Toronto** began the year pre-pandemic with Beethoven – the Triple Concerto and Sixth Symphony. They will end in his birthday month with a Beethoven livestream at 8pm on December 5 (available until 11pm on January 4, 2021). The composer's *Six Ländlerische Dances* will be followed by the rousing *Symphony No.7 in A Major, Op.92* arranged for chamber orchestra by Sigmund Anton Steiner and adapted by Sinfonia Toronto's music director, Nurhan Arman. In a deft piece of programming, Arman has paired the symphony – dubbed "the apotheosis of the dance" by Richard Wagner – with six ländlers (folk dances in 3/4 time that were the progenitor of the waltz). Tickets are \$15 (plus HST) from [sinfoniatoronto.com](http://sinfoniatoronto.com).

Also in December, **ARC Ensemble** (Artists of the Royal Conservatory) will contribute to The Royal Conservatory's Beethoven anniversary celebrations with a concert of some of the composer's less-familiar works: his own arrangement for piano trio of his Second Symphony; the *String Quintet in C major, Op. 29*; and a set of five folk song arrangements performed by soprano Monica Whicher. For the moment, social distancing measures will not permit an audience



ARC Ensemble

in Mazzoleni Hall, but the concert will be recorded so that it can be shared online in the future at a date TBD. 🎧

**Paul Ennis is the managing editor of The WholeNote.**

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*Lucrezia* (L to R) Tyler Cervini as Lorenzo, Noah Grove as Ignacio, Ariana Maubach as Lucrezia, Katelyn Bird as Annunciata, and Jordan de Sousa as Chucho.



KAITLYN SMITH / GLENN GOULD SCHOOL

# This fall, the GGS adapts opera for online – plexiglass and all

JENNIFER PARR

**H**ow do you teach opera during a global pandemic? This was the question facing the team at the Glenn Gould School (GGS) in Toronto, tasked with planning its annual fall opera production. It was April 2020, and no one knew how long newly imposed COVID-19 restrictions would stay in place, or what might be happening six months in the future when rehearsals were officially scheduled to begin. Little did they know at the time that they would be working on a new, operatic hybrid of stage and film – rehearsed, sung, and recorded for online consumption.



Amanda Smith

“My meetings in the spring and early summer were all about ‘How can we do this? What kind of project can this be?’” explained director Amanda Smith when I spoke with her in November 2020. “Just trying to pay attention to what was happening in the world and what would be safe meant that it took several months to figure this out, always looking at the potential of what we could create.”

The production was arranged as a double bill of two chamber operas with small casts, chosen by music director Peter Tiefenbach to minimize the number of singers needing to be onstage at any given time: Kurt Weill’s well-known visceration of capitalism, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, created with Bertolt Brecht in 1933, and William Bolcom’s 2004 comic Zarzuela-meets-Commedia Dell’Arte work *Lucrezia*, with a libretto full of wicked pastiche by Mark Campbell. The two pieces are a fascinating combination with overlapping themes, as well as a shared

cabaret musical influence. Rehearsals have taken place over fall 2020; the online premiere of the double bill is set for January 8, 2021.

The one thing the whole team, led by Smith and Tiefenbach, agreed upon from the start was that there had to be a live element to the process. After investigating early pandemic productions presented on Zoom, they were unanimous in wanting to experiment in another direction. As a professional school preparing young singers for a career in opera, Smith explained that even though the final product would likely be viewed online, the foundation of all their discussions was the need and desire “to give the students an in-person operatic learning experience where they could experience what it feels like to handle a character and be immersed in a scene, where they could learn staging and how to follow a conductor, and also to sing operatically in character, onstage with other performers.” This last point led to another significant decision: that they would not dub anything. Unlike what many other current productions are doing, the music would not be pre-recorded but would be sung live as it was filmed, another decision that would inform the whole process.

After these initial decisions had been made, for Smith the rest of the process became defined by three questions. “First – what are we safely allowed to do?” she said. “Second – what can we technically do? And third – what kind of conceptual approach can we take?”

“It felt like working backwards, in a way,” she added.

Luckily for the GGS, Smith is well known for working within restrictions and for boldly pushing boundaries and incorporating multimedia elements into her shows. “We had to have someone who was willing to adapt and be open-minded about the show not being a ‘stand and sing opera’,” production manager Kaitlyn Smith told me, “and [Smith] really embraced that from the beginning.”

Still, the project kept throwing up surprises. In spite of the constantly changing safety protocols, the team originally hoped that it would be possible to have at least a small live audience. It wasn’t until August that the “pivotal decision” was made that the show would be built for an online audience only.

In consultation with an experienced cinematographer, Smith created a conceptual approach that would make use of the online



viewing platform to amplify the two shows' themes, using projections to make the setting and action more dynamic. Also on the advice of the consulting cinematographer, the decision was made not to livestream, with the need for a much larger technical team and the risk of things not going as planned outweighing the draw of sharing a fully live experience.

Safety also remained paramount for the team, with the first week and a half of rehearsals taking place on Zoom, and then, once they moved into the theatre, everyone (including the singers) wearing masks and maintaining a distance of at least six feet from one another onstage and off. Additional safety measures were also taken, with electrostatic foggers used to clean every surface and HEPA filter air purifying units deployed in each room, recycling 99% of the air every five minutes.

Plans for filming were underway and runs of each opera were taking place when the company arrived for a Saturday evening rehearsal in Mazzoleni Hall to discover that at midnight the night before, a new bylaw had been enacted mandating that Plexiglass barriers be placed between all singers onstage. It was immediately clear that the barriers would not fit on the stage, so the whole production would have to move – a week before the load in of final set and tech elements – from the traditional Mazzoleni concert hall to the Royal Conservatory's flexible Temerty Theatre, one floor above.

Of course, as well as the venue change (which would actually make the filming easier), the team also had to reconsider other aspects. "[We] had to change a lot of conceptual approaches as well as make changes in terms of how the project could be executed so that it still made sense, still looked good, and so that the singers could still sing," said Smith. "It was a pretty big moment of 'How are we going to do this?' But we basically re-conceptualized in 15 minutes."

A welcome unexpected bonus, Smith added, "was even though it created an immense number of restrictions in how to create a



Chelsea Pringle Duchemin as Anna I



Thera Barclay as Anna II

dynamic piece on a stage filled with boxes, I found that it actually helped me as the director to think more quickly, and the singers (now not needing to wear masks or be physically distanced) seemed more relaxed as well. I do think it was better for the performance in the end."

The boxes also play into the team's concept of *The Seven Deadly Sins* being set in a contemporary online gaming context, with the practical "Anna I" being an online "influencer" and her sister/other half "Anna II" serving as her online persona, the boxes helping to highlight the fact that the online content projec-

tions really are a character in this story. With *Lucrezia*, Smith took a different approach as they filmed, minimizing the visibility of the boxes, presenting the comedy as an absurd online soap opera. The two pieces will be clearly connected for the audience onscreen in an online world, as well as being linked thematically through the exploration of "the various strategies through which women can perceive their own value and get other people to perceive it as well."

"We followed a totally different process from either stage or film alone," Smith said. "We're creating a hybrid, and it has been a massive learning experience for everyone involved figuring out how to adapt the stage experience for the screen in a new way."

*The Glenn Gould School Fall Opera, Kurt Weill's The Seven Deadly Sins and William Bolcom's Lucrezia, will be presented for free online on January 8, 2021 at 7:30pm (EST). Details will be made available on the website of The Royal Conservatory. This story appeared first in our mid-November e-letter HalfTones and simultaneously on our blog at thewholenote.com. ○*

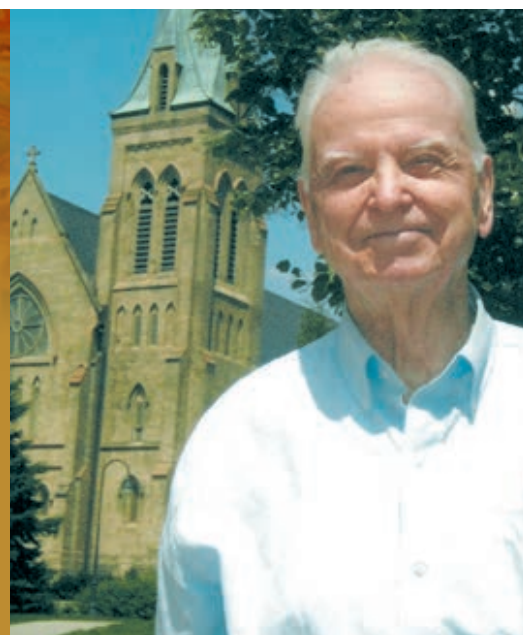
**Jennifer Parr is a Toronto-based director, dramaturge, fight director, and acting coach, brought up from a young age on a rich mix of musicals, Shakespeare and new Canadian plays.**

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# Modal Stories Are Alive and Well in the Labyrinth

ANDREW TIMAR

**W**hat is 12-ET A440 anyway?

Over the course of more than a decade, my *WholeNote* editor and I have developed a certain ritual around each upcoming article. After we agree on the story that month, it's usually followed by a conversation on the phone, where I present my take, ask practical questions, and fret about approach and tone. My editor offers editorial guidance, and invariably offers an offhand quip or two in regard to whatever I am fretting about. As lay rituals go, I find it reassuring.

This month's conversation point revolved around "a truly fret-worthy concern," as my editor described it – for Labyrinth Ontario, the subject of this story, and all practitioners of modal music. One of LO's signature concerns around its core concept of "modal music" is the ever-growing bias for "flattening out" traditional regional tunings, some very ancient, and modal-melodic performance practices in favour of the ubiquitous so-called "concert pitch." That's the Western-origin A440 pitch, the "settler" in the tuning house, which, given its ubiquity, we may assume has been around for centuries. But no: it was reconfirmed under the name ISO 16 recently as 1975 by the International Organization for Standardization.

Concomitant with it is the older model of 12-tone equal temperament (12-ET), where the octave is theoretically divided into 12 equal intervals. Taken together, this conglomerate-tuning model, with minor deviations, defines the sound of the modern symphony orchestra, its many spinoffs, and nearly all of the world's commercial vernacular music.

Incrementally throughout the course of the last century, starting in Europe and assisted by mass media, 12-ET A440 has spread globally to become the international tuning standard for music-making even in remote corners. It's the ubiquitous factory preset tuning found on every electronic keyboard I know of. It has influenced the way most people hear music, how they play acoustic instruments and how they sing. In more recent decades it's become the default tuning for numerous music genres around the world, colonizing something that resonated with indigenous character before 12-ET A-440's hegemony took hold.

Am I exaggerating for effect here? Yes, a bit. But only a bit.

Granted, an international tuning standard such as 12-ET A440 may make it easier for musicians from many geographically and culturally distant – even continentally disjunct – regions to play together. But there is a hidden-in-plain-hearing trade-off. Accepting 12-ET A440 wholesale poses an existential challenge to some regionally distinct tuning systems and thus to the melodic practices that engendered them – practices that are embedded deep within their musicians' fingers, voices and hearts, and within the hearts of their audiences.

In this way, when applied across the board, 12-ET A440 can ultimately prove to be an (often covert) challenge to the cultural identity of a community. Often it's these very regionally specific musics, sonic *terroir* if you will, which allow musicians to tell their most resonant stories – sometimes thereby inadvertently touching the most universal



Araz Salek

in us because of their singularity. Such regional music is the poetry of the human condition where you live.

## Back to Labyrinth Ontario

I first introduced LO in my September 2017 *WholeNote* column, where I described the then-fledgling organization and its two Toronto-based founders (Persian tar player and teacher Araz Salek, artistic director, and keyboardist, composer and sound designer Jonathan Adjemian, admin director, as "focusing on the education of a new generation of musicians and also audiences," in its inaugural season of music workshops and concerts. LO had a very specific mission: a commitment to promoting the teaching and appreciation of the varied yet affiliated modal music traditions of large swathes of Asia, North Africa and Mediterranean Europe.

In that inaugural season, the "spirit of an extended modal family" was reflected in LO's ambitious lineup featuring 11 masters of Greek, Turkish, Bulgarian, Iranian, Azerbaijani, Arabic, Kurdish and Afghani music traditions. In Toronto we saw fruitful musical interactions reflecting the demographic musical reality on the ground in week-long workshops and concert performances.

I then dove deeper into LO's vision in my May 2018 column where I explored its roots in the successful Labyrinth Musical Workshop founded in 2002 on the Greek island of Crete by prominent world musician, composer and educator Ross Daly. One of the pioneers exploring the larger *maqam* (Arabic modal system) family, Daly stated that "Labyrinth is more than a musical workshop, it is a way of life through music," an ethos running through his projects. Running ever since, that successful model has inspired affiliated "modal music" workshops in Greece, Turkey, Germany, Spain, Italy, USA and Canada, fostering an expanding international Labyrinth network.

And in that same article, York University ethnomusicologist Rob Simms offered a broader context for understanding LO's modal music model. He proposed that the network of trade routes known as the Silk Road can provide us with "an incredible continuity of musical expression stretching from North Africa, Southern and Eastern Europe, clear across to Central Asia and Western China. This massively extended musical family shares similar social contexts for performance, aesthetics, philosophy, performance practice, instrumentation and musical structures – rhythmic cycles, forms and melodic modes (scales with particular behaviours or personalities)."

## Labyrinth Ontario entering 2021

I called Jonathan Adjemian to find out what Labyrinth Ontario is managing to do today, and we chatted first about its origins, as described here. "It was Araz's idea," Adjemian stated. "He'd been to Crete's Labyrinth headquarters already to teach and perform for quite some time. Inspired by what was going on there we incorporated the company, taking us about nine months to fundraise and organize the





Jonathan Adjemian



Ross Daly

ALEXIS GLAMAS

first workshops in 2018.”

“What really drew me to LO,” he continued, “is that it is a way of not just telling the history of the regions we represent, but of showing that history as something that still lives on in music today. And I think always one of the places where you find peoples’ history is in culture: in their music, dance, food and costume; and these are all things that are shared.”

Labyrinth on Crete is working in a single region where these traditions originate, Adjemian observes. “Here in Toronto we are dealing with diasporic conditions with different communities with their own histories and languages. There’s a lot of work to be done in Toronto if the LO model is going to be successful here. First of all we’ve got to *find* those skilled musicians who have settled here, but who haven’t necessarily had an easy passage into our local music scene. We’ve stepped up to work with newcomers and I think that’s born a lot of good fruit.”

Araz Salek’s linguistic abilities have served as a convenient bridge between Toronto’s disparate music communities, Adjemian adds. “It’s also often not understood here that Iran is a very ethnically diverse country. You can talk about enmities between peoples, but this is also a region where you’ve had people with different languages, customs and religions playing music together for hundreds of years.”

For example, “One of the largest ethnicities in Iran is Azeri, Araz’s background, but he also grew up speaking Farsi, the official language of the country. As a Farsi and Azeri [a Turkic language] speaker, therefore, he can speak with Iranian and Turkish speakers or to people who speak Dari, one of the main languages of Afghanistan,” and thus connect with musicians in sometimes-isolated GTA communities.

That sort of connection extends beyond spoken language to music. A good example is Afghan rabab master Atiq Nikzad, a Dari speaker whom LO recently presented in one of their park videos. “Araz can speak with him and knows some of the customs around social interactions. It’s not that their cultures are exactly the same, but that there is a bridge between them.”

“Araz can also learn music from Nikzad, and this summer he took some rabab lessons,” Adjemian continues. “To be clear, it’s not the music that Araz plays, but the principles that he has to understand to be able to play it, such as the notion of rhythmic cycles, and scales that have quarter tones are familiar enough to be transferrable. And by the way, a ‘quarter tone’ interval in this context still doesn’t mean a fixed pitch – rather it means lots of possibilities for different pitches. And you need a certain kind of ear training to understand all this. Araz has that, given his background.”

LO’s project, Adjemian says, is about “showing that sharply defined areas with lines between them, with different people between those lines, is not how the world actually looks today, looked in the past – or how it worked. You *can* talk about musical centres, however.”

From there the conversation flows easily to LO’s ongoing development of its 12- to 15-piece Labyrinth Ensemble earmarked for launch next year. “We’re picking a few musical centres and working within them as a way to create a literacy to approach all these musics and musicians” he states. The regional musical centres on the short list include Ottoman, Syrian/Levantine and Iranian/Azeri.

As for LO programming during our current pandemic restrictions, Adjemian offers kudos to the Toronto Arts Council which has funded two years in a row of LO concerts in city parks, emphatically committing to supporting art happening throughout Toronto, not just in the downtown core. “This year due to COVID-19, we have chosen to shoot six video concerts and associated interviews with the musicians in six different parks.”

Three videos are already up on the LO website, ready for free viewing. The first to be uploaded was the Turkish Music Ensemble featuring Begum Boyanci (vocalist), Agah Ecevit (Turkish ney) and Burak Ekmekçi (baglama) performing two Turkish songs in a very verdant Monarch Park.

Mentioned earlier, the video by Atiq Nikzad (Afghan rabab), accompanied by Tanjeer (Rajeeb) Alam (tabla), presents two Afghani instrumentals, *Banafsha* by Ostad M. Omar, and *Ai Bot bi Rahm* at Riverdale Park. The third video, shot at Flemingdon Park, is of the Varashan Ensemble led by the master Pedram Khavarzamani (tombak) with Alinima Madani and Ilia Hoseini also on tombaks.

The other three videos filmed this summer will be released, one a week, into December.

Somali singer and kaban (oud) player Omar Bongo was videoed at Downsview Dells Park. Representing Iranian classical instrumental music, the Araz & Pedram Duo performed at Grey Abbey Park, with Araz Sale (tar) and Pedram Khavarzamani (tombak) doing the honours.

The final group is Ori Shalva: Georgian Choir, live at Banbury Park just off Bridle Path, north of Lawrence. This family group, singing Georgian three-part polyphonic songs, consists of Shalva Makharashvili, Andrea Kuzmich and their sons Shalva-Lucas Makharashvili and Gabo Makharashvili. Ori Shalva continues the age-old practice of Georgian family ensemble singing, preserving its essence halfway around the world from its mountainous homeland at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. I’ve keenly followed these inspirational pioneers of Georgian choral music in Canada ever since their first gig.

With them, and the other five ensembles and soloists presented by LO online, the “flattening out” of these traditional regional musics is not on the table. Judging from this series, it appears the future of Toronto’s modal music-making is in good hands. **●**

*Andrew Timar is a Toronto musician and music writer.*

# Yes December and January Will Still Have Their Highlights

JENNIFER PARR

**F**or those of you who might not have noticed, this holiday season will not be its usual live(ly) self; however, there are still exciting music theatre and dance productions to cheer the spirit coming to our screens and to at least one live stage. So to save you some shopping time, here's a personal (and partial) list.

## DECEMBER

► **NOV 11 to DEC 19:** The Musical Stage Company's virtual edition of their signature concert series, *UnCovered: Notes from the Heart* (see our November issue), has been extended for an extra two weeks, due to overwhelming demand. The 65-minute series of new linked dramatic music videos can be watched by single ticket buyers or become the heart of a curated group experience. ONLINE. Specific day and showtime only. \$25 - \$40. <https://bit.ly/UnCovered2020>.

► **NOV 25 to DEC 4:** *Musical Concerts from the Shaw* (Festival) directed and choreographed by associate artistic director Kimberley Rampersad, with music direction by Paul Sportelli. Alternating evenings feature the music of Duke Ellington, Dorothy Fields or Cole Porter followed by:

► **DEC 5 to 19:** Also from the Shaw, *Songs for a Winter's Night* featuring favourite melodies from the holiday season. LIVE socially distanced audiences of up to 50. (Masks must be worn.) Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre, Niagara-on-the-Lake. Tickets are FREE but must be reserved by calling the Shaw Festival's box office at 1-800-511-SHAW (7429) For details see <https://www.shawfest.com/event/musical-concerts/>.

► **DEC 4 to JAN 2:** *The Nutcracker* (choreography by James Kudelka.) The National Ballet of Canada, in a new partnership with Cineplex, are making their signature holiday ballet available to watch on both big and small screens. Live captured at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts in 2008, the cast is led by audience favourites Sonia Rodriguez and Piotr Stanczyk as the Sugar Plum Fairy and Nutcracker Prince. Tickets \$12.95-14.95 at Cineplex Theatres not affected by the lockdown, or \$29.99 to stream online from the Cineplex Store. For direct links go to [www.national.ballet.ca](http://www.national.ballet.ca) or [www.cineplex.com](http://www.cineplex.com).

► **DEC 6, 7PM:** *Together, Safe & Warm*. Alexis Gordon, of the Stratford and Shaw Festivals, guest stars with the INNERchamber Ensemble in an intimate program of holiday music new and old, interwoven in the characteristic company style with the stories behind the songs. The performance will be livestreamed from Revival House, the exciting performance and dining venue in Stratford. ONLINE. One show only. Tickets \$35 (student and arts worker discounts available) [www.innerchamber.ca/together-safe-warm](http://www.innerchamber.ca/together-safe-warm).

► **DEC 12, 7:30PM:** *WinterSong: A Virtual Watch Party*. Canadian Contemporary (formerly Children's) Dance Theatre. The annual holiday dance special inspired by the world's rich solstice traditions



December composer Monica Pearce

will be experienced this year through the medium of film combining choreographic world premieres with a retrospective look at iconic solstice work. Nowell Sing We, and highlights from *WinterSong's* 33-year history. ONLINE. Tickets \$30. [www.ccdt.org](http://www.ccdt.org).

► **DEC 12, 7PM:** Opera Atelier presents their first livestreamed production, *Something Rich and Strange*, a brand-new production featuring theatre music by Handel, Lully, Locke and Purcell that explores the realms of sleep, visions and dreams, plus a new creation by Edwin Huizinga for soprano Measha Brueggergosman. Streamed from Koerner Hall. One Show Only. ONLINE. The Royal Conservatory Box Office at 416-408-0208 or [tickets@rcmusic.ca](mailto:tickets@rcmusic.ca).

► **DEC 11 & 12, 7:30PM:** *Going Under*, Toronto's Bravo Academy Senior Troupe presents a newly adapted virtual version of *Going Under* by cutting-edge Canadian musical theatre creators Matt Murray (book), Colleen Dauncey (music) and Akiva Romer-Segal (lyrics): "When the subway train they are riding comes to a screeching halt, a group of high school students on the way to their graduation are caught underground, forced to face each other and their own demons, and the tragic event that tore them apart four years earlier." ONLINE. Tickets: \$16.95-28.25 [www.bravoacademy.ca/events-north-york/going-under](http://www.bravoacademy.ca/events-north-york/going-under)

► **DEC 14:** *Tiny Pretty Things* debuts on Netflix. Based on the best-selling Young Adult book of the same name, this new series – which explores the lives of elite professional ballet students in Chicago – has been eagerly anticipated since filming began last year. Many Canadians are part of the production team, including executive producer Michael MacLennan, music supervisors Scott Belluz and Natasha Duprey, and lead choreographer and dance consultant, Jennifer Nichols (as previewed in *The WholeNote's* summer issue).

► **DEC 19 & 20:** This year, Ross Petty's annual topical fairy tale-inspired Panto has had to travel into the virtual realm. Taking that as a cue, Matt Murray's new script for *There's No Place Like Home For The Holidays* begins as Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz* clicks together the heels of her ruby slippers and embarks on a magical roller coaster ride home during which she encounters new friends and panto favourites played by (among others) Dan (Plumbum) Chameroy, AJ Bridel, Eddie Glenn, and Sara--Jeanne Hosie, (last year's hilarious Sheriff of Nottingham). Tickets: \$35 per household. [www.rosspetty.com](http://www.rosspetty.com). Watch anytime between 10am and 9pm ONLINE. A portion of each ticket sale goes to Kids Help Phone.

► **DEC 21, 8PM:** Essential Opera presents the world premiere of Monica Pearce's new one-act opera, *December*, for three sopranos and string quartet. The story follows new couple Julia and Natasha as they plan to visit Julia's family for the first time at Christmas. ONLINE. Tickets \$22.86 [www.tickethalifax.com](http://www.tickethalifax.com). <https://youtube.com/c/EssentialOpera>.



## JANUARY

► **JAN 8, 7:30PM:** The Glenn Gould School Fall Opera: Kurt Weill's *The Seven Deadly Sins* & William Bolcom's *Lucrezia*. As profiled in this issue, Amanda Smith's *Opera in the Age of COVID* - multi-media filmed production with the students of the GGS. FREE. ONLINE. [www.rcmusic.com](http://www.rcmusic.com)

► **JAN 11, 7PM:** *BIG GIRL & Friends (the Second Wave)*. Toronto Musical Concerts' producer Christopher Wilson and associate director Ryan Kelly's daily online musical chat show kept our spirits high and raised over \$30,000 for the Actors Fund of Canada from the start of the pandemic through mid-June. The show relaunches now in a new weekly, themed, format with musical theatre stars from across the country joining the hosts via Streamyard to talk shop, sing songs, and encourage support of the AFC. FREE ONLINE. Mondays at 7PM on the Toronto Musical Concerts YouTube channel.

► **JAN 30, 8PM:** *A Joke Before the Gallows*. Tapestry Opera and Piano Lunaire join forces to present acclaimed pianist Adam Sherkin, in an innovative program that combines Chopin's dramatic musical *Scherzi* (Jokes) with commissioned, darkly funny, theatrical monologues by poet David James Brock that respond directly to each scherzo. Directed by Tom Diamond; in an experimental twist, Sherkin will perform the monologues himself. FREE ONLINE Livestream (also available afterwards on demand) on Tapestry's YouTube Channel: <https://tapestryopera.com/whats-on/>

► **JAN 31, FEB 1, 7:30PM:** *John & Waleed*. A Theatre Passe Muraille Digital Production in association with Cahoots Theatre, presented by The Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts (Oakville), FirstOntario Performing Arts (St. Catharines), The Grand (Kingston) and The Rose (Brampton). Toronto-based composer, singer and songwriter, John Millard, joins forces with Sudanese composer and multi-instrumentalist, Waleed Abdulhamid, to create a unique evening of interwoven song and story exploring



Toronto Musical Concerts' Christopher Wilson (L) and Ryan Kelly - *BIG GIRL & Friends (the Second Wave)*

their lives and traditions and where their journeys intersect. [www.passemuraille.ca/JohnandWaleed](http://www.passemuraille.ca/JohnandWaleed). Livestream from Theatre Passe Muraille. ONLINE. Tickets TBA. 🎧

*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.*



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*Happy Holidays*

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# The Oud & the Fuzz

## community-building in challenging times

MEGHAN GILHESPY

**W**hen I first walked into The Oud & the Fuzz, it was a profoundly sensorial experience. The aromas of incense and Armenian cooking envelop you. Black-and-white photos of weathered brick buildings in the city of Gyumri, Armenia, catch your eye. Music wafts you through the entrance to the back patio. There, silent listeners are engrossed by groove-based music, or Armenian jazz, or cross-cultural cello improvisations. Though the type of music varies from day to day, its familiar low pulse always seems to force you into movement.

Every sensory feature of the experience has been carefully selected from within a community of like-minded people. Armenian photographer Aren Voskanyan shot the images specifically for the venue. The incense was bought in Kensington Market, and the food is from Karine's – an Armenian restaurant run by a mother and her two daughters a few blocks away. And the music that determines the space's atmosphere is created by some of Toronto's top musicians.

The Oud & the Fuzz is a family affair, owned by Armenian-Canadian brothers Shaunt and Raz Tchakmak. Twenty-eight-year-old Shaunt books, manages, and curates the music in the space.

Shaunt had a revelation when he first heard John Berberian and The Rock East Ensemble's 1969 track "The Oud & The Fuzz." After hearing this music, he tells me, he felt that he started to make sense of his existence as an Armenian living in North America. From the album *Middle Eastern Rock*, the song is a hybrid of traditional Armenian music and psychedelic rock and jazz. Inspired by the musical hybridity of Berberian's music, Tchakmak opened his venue, reverently named The Oud & the Fuzz, to feature music that, according to him, "tries to cross boundaries between timelines and cultures."

Community is deeply important to Shaunt. "Our business would not have survived if it were not for a community, if it weren't for people making the decision to spend their money where it matters to them," he says. "I'm super grateful for the city."

But the city changed drastically with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. "There is a big difference between sustaining and starting a business during a pandemic," Shaunt explains. The Tchakmak brothers gained possession of the space

in January 2020, and had planned an illustrious opening event for March. That obviously couldn't happen. They ended up guardedly launching their business in late June. Shaunt and Raz have meanwhile sustained their other business Antikka, a cafe and record shop on Queen Street West that has remained afloat throughout the pandemic.

While optimistic, Shaunt notes that The Oud & the Fuzz has not been eligible for rent subsidies, as Antikka has. However, he says, "My landlord is a very decent human. This project would not have started if she weren't, and she's maintained her decency over the last four months. That played a huge role in us being here and doing what we do."

The Oud & the Fuzz is fittingly located just north of the corner of Kensington Avenue and Dundas Street West: the southeast corner of Toronto's eclectic Kensington Market.

And yes, the music has been as wide-ranging as the businesses in its neighborhood. Shaunt has booked residencies Wednesday through Sunday, often with two different groups per night. Every Saturday this fall, Toronto band WAPAMA has played in weather that ranged from 21 to -two degrees. The band's exploratory sound, which WAPAMA members describe as African-inspired and groove-based, fits The Oud & the Fuzz impeccably. Other resident artists included Leen Hamo, who plays Arabic jazz, Sarah Jane Riegler, who spins Armenian deep house, and vinyl reggae DJ Brigadier Shazbad, who spins with live trumpet player Rudy Ray. Artists such as Ahmed Moneka, Icedmistoplease, and the George Crotty Trio also graced the stage during The Oud & the Fuzz's short open stint.

While the venue features live music, DJs, or a mixture of the two every open night, it is also a space for activities that transcend the musical and foster the sense of community that Shaunt values so deeply. The Oud & the Fuzz hosts fundraisers supporting the Indigenous people of Artsakh in their defense from Azeri and Turkish aggression (a Kensington Market tailor donated patches to sell in support of the cause). The venue has also hosted Armenian food pop-up events, catered by Armenian pizzeria Mamajoun. Artist David Setrakian sells his works at the venue, and donates his profits, also in support of the Indigenous people of Artsakh.






Razmik (L) and Shaunt Tchakmak, in front of The Oud & the Fuzz

**Our business would not have survived if it were not for a community, if it weren't for people making the decision to spend their money where it matters to them.**

Shaunt has made the live music experience at The Oud & the Fuzz as safe and enjoyable as possible. To keep live music going in cold weather, he's added heaters for patrons and musicians, and has built a covering to protect everyone from the elements, while still allowing for ventilation and circulation. As well, the venue allows no talking during performances in order to reduce the risk of airborne virus transmission that can occur from loud speaking.

Still, Shaunt is realistic about the challenges of running a musical venue during a pandemic. "We don't want to hide from the truth," he says. "We don't want to hide from reality, but we don't want to live in fear. And I think there is a way to exist that gives us an opportunity to do the things that we love, without ignoring the truth."

More information about The Oud & the Fuzz is available on their website at [www.theoudandthefuzz.ca](http://www.theoudandthefuzz.ca). This story appeared first in our mid-November e-letter *HalfTones* and simultaneously on our blog at [thewholenote.com](http://thewholenote.com). As always, before visiting an in-person space, please check the venue website for up-to-date information related to COVID-19 municipal and provincial public health advisories and regulations. 

*Meghan Gilhespy is a vocalist, teacher, and writer from Vancouver, based in Toronto. She is currently pursuing a Doctorate of Musical Arts in Jazz Studies at the University of Toronto.*

## Bandstand

# Time to Reminisce

JACK MACQUARRIE

**H**ere we are at December, with all of the closures and quarantines having pretty well confined most musical groups to such measures as Zoom sessions. We even hear that Christmas will be delayed until some time in January, so Santa can quarantine for two weeks. So, with time on my hands, and since December happens to be my birth month, I decided to do a bit of reminiscing instead.

### Early band days

My plan was to start by referring to a band photograph I've been looking at from time to time for the past many months. Of course when I actually went to get it to refer to it, Murphy's Law prevailed. It has disappeared and is not likely to reappear until this column has arrived at the printer. Ergo, rely on memory.

My band days began in Windsor when two school pals told me about the band that they played in. Jimmy Rees (cornet) and Keith Finney (tuba) took me to a rehearsal and introduced me to Mr. Arthur Laley, bandmaster of the High Twelve Boys Band, an all-brass band in the British tradition. As the name implies, the band was sponsored by the local High Twelve Club – High Twelve being an organization of Master Masons placing a special emphasis on youth support, and so-named because, long ago, noon was known as "high twelve" and the time to call off from labour for lunch.

The band owned all its the instruments, so there would be no significant financial problems for me. Having been given a small toy drum some years earlier, I mentioned that I would like to play drums. Mr. Laley diplomatically informed me that the band did not have an opening for a drummer at that time. He suggested that he could both provide a baritone horn and that he could teach me how to play it. Thus began a lifelong interest in brass instruments.

Most young bands at that time were "Boys Bands". However, at High Twelve there was a difference. Two of Mr. Laley's three children were girls. One was the lead cornet, the other was the lead trombone and the son was the lead euphonium. In addition to the weekly band rehearsals, there were sectional rehearsals in Mr. Laley's basement on other nights. Our summer months were busy too – with parades, small tattoos and competitions in various towns in Southern Ontario, to which we were usually fortunate to have a sufficient number of interested parents to drive us.

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Not the missing 1943 HMCS Hunter Naval Reserve Band photo, but the 1942 HMCS Avalon Brass Band out of Newfoundland is book-ended with a pair of sousaphones too! Some of those young men are clearly too young to shave!

### Labour Day 1939

One in-town event stands out in my mind too. It was at the Labour Day Parade (September 3, 1939) in Windsor. Two days earlier, Hitler's forces had occupied what was then known as the Sudetenland and bombarded Poland. World War Two had begun. Every band in the parade marched past a reviewing stand where there was a feature band and an adjudicator to judge the merits of the bands in different categories. In one of the categories the winning band had performed the march, *Alte Kameraden* (*Old Comrades*), a very popular German military march. Seconds after the adjudicator announced the winner, the bandmaster of a competing band climbed onto the stage and punched the adjudicator for awarding the prize to a band that had played a German march.

The assailant was quickly removed by police, and the adjudicator dusted himself off, then addressed the audience. He pointed out that Bach, Beethoven and Brahms were all German composers, and that he would continue to play their music even though there was now a war on against Germany. As we left the park we passed a newspaper stand with a headline that the liner SS *Athenia* had been torpedoed while enroute from Scotland to Montreal. That was just eight hours after Britain had declared war on Germany. Canada declared war a week later.

### Choosing an instrument

A few years after I joined the High Twelve band, some dispute arose between the High Twelve Clubs and the Masonic order, and the band ceased to exist. I was off to see about the local Kiwanis Club band. It was a well established band with a good reputation, but there was a catch for me. They didn't supply instruments. It was time to buy one.

Should I stick with a baritone or euphonium, or buy and learn another instrument? While I liked the euphonium, if I chose it I would never get to play in a dance band or a symphony orchestra. It boiled down to trumpet or trombone. If I chose trumpet, I would know the fingering, but would have to learn how to adapt to a much smaller mouthpiece. For the trombone, I would be fine with the mouthpiece, but would have to learn the slide positions. Trombone it was, and the price even included a few basic lessons. In a few weeks, I felt comfortable enough to join the Kiwanis Band.

Early in 1943 things took a strange twist for our Kiwanis band. The commanding officer of HMCS *Hunter* asked Naval Headquarters for permission to recruit a band and was informed by headquarters that he could not have a permanent band, but could have a reserve band if he could recruit one. He immediately contacted the Kiwanis Club and asked to recruit us for the duration of the war. The club agreed as long as he obtained permission from all parents. In no time at all, we were all in full Naval uniform and receiving pay as reservists, even the 13-year olds among us, and it is *that* picture that I probably won't find until this column has gone to print.

### The mind's eye

As for the missing picture, there are some people in it that I vaguely remember and there are three in that I recall well. The first of these, obviously, is myself. Normally I played trombone, but they wanted a balanced photo. Since there was only one sousaphone, I was handed a second one to balance the picture. The two sousaphones occupied the upper corners of the picture.

(For those who are not familiar with a sousaphone, it is a member of the tuba family frequently seen in US college marching bands. Unlike the kind of tuba that I frequently play where the bell points up, the sousaphone is bent in a circle to fit around the body of the musician. It ends in a large, flaring bell that is pointed forward, projecting the sound above the head of the player.)

The second person who I remember well is Stan Wood, the son of the bandmaster, holding a clarinet even though he had a

burning desire to get an oboe. Sometime after that, his father did buy him one. Years later, I did bump into him in Toronto, but we didn't stay in touch. The following is his obituary from November 2005.

"Stanley was principal oboe and English horn player for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra for over 35 years; and a founding member of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. He played for the National Ballet of Canada, the Canadian Opera Company and the CBC."

At the other end of the spectrum in that band was a trumpet player who, for reasons that will become apparent, must remain nameless. For the sake of this account, let's call him Ricky. When he was old enough, Ricky joined the Navy full time as a Bandsman. Some years later, I encountered him serving aboard HMCS *Magnificent*, Canada's largest Navy ship. We had a small band aboard, and Ricky was one of the trumpet players. I had no significant contact with him and never saw him again after I left the ship.

Some time later, however, I heard that Ricky had left the Navy and returned to Windsor, around the time the Ontario government announced significant changes to the province's liquor laws, allowing cocktail lounges with entertainment. Ricky was soon employed playing trumpet in a small band at one of these lounges, but evidently not for adequate pay. He had a plan, though, and one night he put it action.

During a break, reckless Ricky left the bandstand, went out to his car, put his trumpet in the trunk and took out a gun. He then went in through the front entrance and robbed the cashier at gunpoint. The gun and money was returned to the trunk, and Ricky returned to the bandstand with his trumpet. The cashier phoned police. When the police arrived, they asked he if she could possibly identify the robber. She quietly led them into the lounge and pointed to the trumpet player on the bandstand. And so ended Ricky's double life.

### Newsflash

We have just learned of a new "Taking Flight" fundraising venture for the Wychwood Clarinet Choir which kicked off with a "recording launch and live pre-show" on Sunday, November 29. Their promotion employs a very clever analogy. In their words: "Like a monarch caterpillar busily transforming from chrysalis to butterfly, we are busy, waiting to burst forth when the world opens up." Accompanying the words on their website, you see a caterpillar going along a twig upside down. It then spins a cocoon and is closed inside. In time, a beautiful butterfly emerges and flies off. It's well worth a visit to the choir's website. It's also a worthwhile wish for the new year for us all. ●

**Jack MacQuarrie plays several brass instruments and has performed in many community ensembles. He can be contacted at [bandstand@thewholenote.com](mailto:bandstand@thewholenote.com).**



# theWholeNote PRESENTER PROFILES

## 2020/21 PART 3

21<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL

# BLUE PAGES

### BLUE PAGES LIST, OCTOBER, **NOVEMBER**, **DECEMBER/JANUARY** 20/21

Aga Khan Museum  
 Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto  
 Annex Singers  
**Art of Time Ensemble**  
 Azrieli Foundation  
**Barrie Concert Association**  
 Canadian Children's Opera Company  
**Canadian Opera Company**  
 Canadian Sinfonietta  
**Canzona Chamber Players**  
**Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra**  
 Chorus Niagara  
 Church of St. Mary Magdalene  
 Church of St. Peter and St. Simon-the-Apostle  
**Confluence Concerts**  
**Counterpoint Community Orchestra**  
 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  
**Ken Page Memorial Trust, The**  
 Kindred Spirits Orchestra  
**King Edward Choir**  
**Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society**  
**Mississauga Festival Choir**  
**Music at Metropolitan**  
**Music at St. Andrew's**  
 Music Gallery  
**Music in the Afternoon**  
 Music Toronto  
 New Music Concerts  
 Off Centre Music Salon  
 Opera Atelier  
 Orchestra Toronto

Oriana Women's Choir  
 Orpheus Choir of Toronto  
 Pax Christi Chorale  
**Peterborough Singers**  
 Piano Lunaire, The  
**Royal Canadian College of Organists,**  
**Toronto Centre**  
 Royal Conservatory of Music  
 Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra  
 Sine Nomine Ensemble for Medieval Music  
 Soundstreams  
**St. James Town Community Arts**  
**(formerly Reaching Out Through Music)**  
 St. Thomas's Anglican Church  
**Symphony In The Barn**  
 Tafelmusik  
 Tallis Choir  
**Tapestry Opera**  
 Toronto Chamber Choir  
 Toronto Children's Chorus  
**Toronto Choral Society**  
 Toronto Classical Singers  
 Toronto Consort  
 Toronto Mendelssohn Choir  
**Toronto Mozart Players**  
**Toronto Operetta Theatre**  
 Toronto Symphony Orchestra  
 Trio Arkel  
 University of Toronto Faculty of Music  
**Vesnivka Choir**  
**Victoria Scholars Men's Choral Ensemble**  
**Village Voices**  
 VOCA Chorus of Toronto  
**VOICEBOX: Opera in Concert**  
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## REBUILDING LIVE MUSIC: *the writing on the wall.*

COVID-19 has gutted the economy of the live music community as a whole, including us. So we are all busy renovating: re-imagining and rebuilding what we do, brick by brick; leaning on and learning from each another, making virtues of necessity.

On the brick wall to your left are the music makers who have already come forward to take memberships, helping *The WholeNote* keep the lights on. In turn we continue to do what we do best: telling stories about the music makers in our midst, and documenting their musical performances in whatever media.

They in turn are relying on you, our music-loving readers, to pay attention, support and pay for their work where you can. When you buy an online ticket or make a donation you become a one person "foundation." Inspiration, comfort and joy will reward those who do.

The 16 profiles listed in red on our brick wall are new since November, and are printed in this issue. All directory members are able to update their online profiles on an ongoing basis as their 2021 plans continue to evolve.

You can browse the cumulative Oct/Nov/Dec Blue Pages directory, and see new profiles as they arrive, under the "Who's Who" tab, at [thewholenote.com](http://thewholenote.com)

Interested in WholeNote membership?

Contact Karen Ages at [karen@thewholenote.com](mailto:karen@thewholenote.com) or 416-323-2232 x26.

### BLUE PAGES TEAM 2020/21

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Art of Time Ensemble

### • Art of Time Ensemble

Founded in 1998 by renowned pianist Andrew Burashko, Art of Time Ensemble is a collective of some of Canada's leading musicians from the worlds of classical music, jazz, pop, electronica, gospel and more. The ensemble celebrates great music in all forms through its genre-bending collaborations. Past collaborators include Grammy Award-winning saxophonist Branford Marsalis, Tony Award-winning singer Brent Carver, Chris Murphy of the Canadian rock band Sloan, American jazz vocalist Madeleine Peyroux and Gemini Award-winning singer Jackie Richardson among others.

Since 2006, Art of Time Ensemble has released six records under their label Art of Time Recordings. The group's most recent album, "Ain't Got Long", features a host of guest artists including Gregory Hoskins, Madeleine Peyroux, Jessica Mitchell and Sarah Slean performing song arrangements by longtime collaborator Jonathan Goldsmith.

Art of Time Ensemble recently announced their 2020/21 "Virtually Live" season, which sees the ensemble presenting five digital concerts available for free streaming on YouTube. Each event features archival footage from standout shows over the years, interspersed with newly-filmed commentary from the artists that bring these performances to life.

**Nikki Joshi**

**540-645-0527**

**[www.artoftimeensemble.com](http://www.artoftimeensemble.com)**

**[www.facebook.com/theartoftimeensemble](https://www.facebook.com/theartoftimeensemble)**

**[www.twitter.com/artoftime](https://www.twitter.com/artoftime)**

### • Canadian Opera Company

Based in Toronto, the Canadian Opera Company is the largest producer of opera in Canada and one of the largest in North America. The company enjoys an international reputation for artistic excellence and creative innovation. The company typically presents six fully-staged productions at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts annually. In light of current health guidelines around the spread of COVID-19, the company has created "Opera Everywhere" - a new slate of digital opera experiences that can be shared and enjoyed safely. The COC's repertoire spans the history of opera from the Baroque to the 21st-century and includes several commissioned works and Canadian premieres. The COC engages professional opera artists from all over the world, including a significant number of Canadian singers, directors, conductors and designers. The company performs with its own professional chorus and orchestra. The company also fosters emerging Canadian talent through its Ensemble Studio, Orchestra Academy and company-in-residence programs.

**Alexander Neef, general director**

**416-363-8231**

**[info@coc.ca](mailto:info@coc.ca)**

**[www.coc.ca](http://www.coc.ca)**

**[www.facebook.com/canadianoperacompany](https://www.facebook.com/canadianoperacompany)**

**[www.twitter.com/CanadianOpera](https://www.twitter.com/CanadianOpera)**

### • Canzona Chamber Players

The Canzona Chamber Players concert series is a volunteer community group, founded in 2002 by Jacob Stoller and Jonathan Krehm. Prior to COVID-19, live concerts were produced for St. Andrew by the Lake church, on Toronto Island by Roger Sharp and Jonathan Krehm, and beginning in 2012 for venues in downtown Toronto, most

recently the St. George the Martyr church. Many of the live concerts were documented by Alison Gray (video) and John Gray (audio) and are available to watch on Canzona's YouTube Channel or on our website.

Since the onset of the pandemic, Canzona Chamber Players have been safely broadcasting recitals, recorded to the highest standard, made possible by technical wizardry of Evan Mitchell (video), and John Gray (audio). These performances can be viewed on our youtube channel. The concerts are free to view, and Canzona Chamber Players asks for any amount to be made to the St. Michael's Hospital Foundation COVID-19 Courage Fund at <http://smh.convio.net/couragefund>.

**Jonathan Krehm**

**416-822-0613**

**[canzonatoronto@gmail.com](mailto:canzonatoronto@gmail.com)**

**[www.canzona.org](http://www.canzona.org)**

**[www.facebook.com/CanzonaChamberPlayers](https://www.facebook.com/CanzonaChamberPlayers)**

### • Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra

Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra is a volunteer community orchestra that has been based in Scarborough since 1986. The orchestra presents seven concerts each season, including a subscription series of five concerts.

Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra brings to life some of the greatest musical masterpieces, presents internationally-acclaimed performers, and helps introduce some of Canada's rising stars in their debut performances with a symphony orchestra. Looking for an orchestra to play in? Send your inquiries to us via email.

**Peggy Wong**

**416-879-5566**

**[info@cathedralbluffs.com](mailto:info@cathedralbluffs.com)**

**[www.cathedralbluffs.com](http://www.cathedralbluffs.com)**

**[www.facebook.com/CathedralBluffsSymphonyOrchestra](https://www.facebook.com/CathedralBluffsSymphonyOrchestra)**

**[www.twitter.com/cathedralbluff](https://www.twitter.com/cathedralbluff)**

### • Counterpoint Community Orchestra

Counterpoint Community Orchestra has been operating as a community orchestra in downtown Toronto for 36 years. Formed in 1984, it was the first LGBTQ+ orchestra in Canada and in the world. Counterpoint is a full symphony orchestra with repertoire drawn from the Baroque through to the contemporary periods.

Counterpoint Community Orchestra performs three concerts during the season in December, March and June and participates in "Nuit Rose".

**Kevin Uchikata**

**647-970-8057**

**[www.ccorchestra.org](http://www.ccorchestra.org)**



## • Ken Page Memorial Trust, The

The Ken Page Memorial Trust is a non-profit charitable fund supporting jazz and the artists who create such lasting memories for all of us. The aims of the Trust are to encourage emerging talent, foster an understanding of the evolution of the music, promote jazz education through workshops, masterclasses and outreach programs conducted by established professionals, and to provide financial aid to jazz musicians on an emergency basis.

The KPMT holds annual jazz fundraisers featuring some of the world's leading jazz artists and honours jazz professionals with its Lifetime Achievement Award; it also presents seasonal performances of Jim Galloway's Wee Big Band. Most recently, the Trust provided grants to the University of Toronto Faculty of Music, Springboard to Music, the TD Toronto Jazz Festival and the Ken Page Memorial Trust Scholarship Award in memory of Ron Collier established at Humber College.

Donations are our lifeline; our board members are unpaid and every dollar is dedicated to furthering our mission. Contributions are gratefully received, and if you are currently a donor we extend our sincere appreciation. If you would like to help us make a difference please visit our website.

**Anne Page**

**416-515-0200**

**[anne@kenpagememorialtrust.com](mailto:anne@kenpagememorialtrust.com)**

**[www.kenpagememorialtrust.com](http://www.kenpagememorialtrust.com)**

## • Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society

In its 47th season, Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society is one of Canada's busiest presenters of chamber music concerts with over 60 concerts per year, ranging from solo recitals to octets. Programs range from medieval to contemporary; most feature both classics and recent music. Almost all of our concerts take place at our Music Room, 57 Young St. W., Waterloo, in a private home - it holds a maximum of about 85 people. A superb Steinway piano, good acoustics, a supportive audience and an intimate but informal atmosphere make for great concert experiences. Notable performers have included pianists Janina Fialkowska, Till Fellner, André LaPlante, Sofya Gulyak, and many more; the Penderecki, New Orford, Alcan, and many other quartets; the AYR and Andromeda trios and many more.

This year we complete our "Beethoven String Quartets" series featuring the Penderecki String Quartet, with four remaining concerts at First United Church, December 16 and 18 and February 3 and 5. We hope to present three to four concerts per month, all at the church unless the pandemic ends and we can resume in our Music Room.

**Jan Narveson**

**519-569-1809**

**[jnarveson@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:jnarveson@uwaterloo.ca)**

**[www.k-wcms.com/KWCMS/Home.html](http://www.k-wcms.com/KWCMS/Home.html)**



**Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra**

## • Mississauga Festival Choir

With over 150 singers, Mississauga Festival Choir is the largest and most spirited community choir in our city. We first came together in 1984 to celebrate Mississauga's 10th anniversary, and we stayed together to celebrate the joy of singing in a choral community like no other. Our spirited singing springs from our no-audition policy. Everyone who loves to sing is welcome to join us, and audiences hear the joy in every song. Under the leadership of David Ambrose, MFC performs many concerts, raises money for local charities, records professional CDs, holds an annual choral competition and tours the world.

**Jenny Johnston**

**416-986-5537**

**[info@mfcchoir.com](mailto:info@mfcchoir.com)**

**[www.mfcchoir.com](http://www.mfcchoir.com)**

**[www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/TheMississaugaFestivalChoir)**

**[TheMississaugaFestivalChoir](https://www.facebook.com/TheMississaugaFestivalChoir)**

## • Music at Metropolitan

Music at Metropolitan has a long history of presenting a variety of choral and instrumental concerts and special events. During this time, we are planning online events; please visit our website and watch for Wholenote listings. Our planning includes "Friday Noon at Met" livestreamed concerts featuring our Casavant pipe organ - the largest in Canada - as well as our various singers and instrumentalists. Stay tuned! And please stay safe and well.

**Patricia Wright**

**416-363-0331**

**[patriciaw@metunited.org](mailto:patriciaw@metunited.org)**

**[www.metunited.ca](http://www.metunited.ca)**

**[www.facebook.com/MetUnitedMusic](https://www.facebook.com/MetUnitedMusic)**

## • St. James Town Community Arts (formerly Reaching Out Through Music)

Since 2007, St. James Town Community Arts (formerly Reaching Out Through Music) has been providing free arts education programs to the children and youth of St. James Town, one of North America's most densely populated and ethnically diverse communities. We are well aware that early access to artistic expression is important in enhancing well-being and community engagement, providing enrichment that lasts a lifetime. We offer a range of programs, including choral and instrumental ensembles that provide productive social engagement, refinement of vocal and instrumental skills, performance opportunities and arts appreciation more generally. Although music remains our primary focus, we are slowly adding drama, dance, and visual arts to our program offerings. Aside from the pleasure that we bring to children and their families, especially in these pandemic times when our lessons and rehearsals are mostly virtual, our programs, led by talented and sensitive professionals, have a broad impact on children's self-esteem, resilience, interpersonal skills and aspirations for the future.

**Virginia Gallop**

**416-421-8518**

**[ed.rotm@gmail.com](mailto:ed.rotm@gmail.com)**

**[www.reachingoutthroughmusic.org](http://www.reachingoutthroughmusic.org)**

**[www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/ReachingOutThroughMusic)**

**[ReachingOutThroughMusic](https://www.facebook.com/ReachingOutThroughMusic)**

## • Symphony In The Barn

The critically-acclaimed Symphony In The Barn Festival at Glencolton Farms, Canada's leading biodynamic farm, brings together music, and the tastes and sounds of idyllic farm life as an immersive backdrop for a three-day

open-air weekend festival. A typical concert is accompanied by the sounds of the birds in the rafters, a visit by one of the farm animals, and features a starlight reception, and farm-baked refreshments. Symphony in the Barn has been host to critically-acclaimed opera productions, jazz concerts, an annual film festival, its annual Christkindl market, First Nations dance, classical chamber, and orchestral performances. With the tagline "Where Culture Meets Agriculture", the festival is centred around themes of sustainability, education, and artistic enlightenment.

Symphony In The Barn looks forward to celebrating its 26th anniversary, by producing a full open-air festival on the first weekend in August 2021. Farmer/conductor/general director Michael Schmidt is excited to announce the appointment of pianist Kati Gleiser and conductor Kevin Mallon as co-artistic directors. Virginia Gallop joins the team as Executive Director.

**Virginia Gallop**

**416-421-8518**

**symphonyinthebarn@gmail.com**

**www.symphonyinthebarn.com**

**www.facebook.com/symphonyinthebarn**

### • Toronto Operetta Theatre

Toronto Operetta Theatre is in its third decade as Canada's only performing arts company dedicated to music theatre in all its variety.

The 2021 season opens with an online presentation of our patron's favourite Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Gondoliers* in early Spring of 2021. The world premiere of Canadian work *A Northern Lights Dream* by Michael Rose and Kálmán's *The Csardas Princess* are being planned and the details to be announced at a later date.

Please check our website and social media for upcoming performance announcements and archived video series.

**Guillermo Silva-Marin**

**416-922-2912**

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**www.facebook.com/TorontoOperetta**

**www.twitter.com/TorontoOperetta**

### • Vesnivka Choir

Vesnivka Choir, established in 1965 by founding artistic director Halyna Kvitka Kondracki, is an award-winning women's ensemble whose repertoire consists of Ukrainian liturgical, classical, contemporary and traditional folk music. The choir's regular concert season comprises three major concerts, one of which is an annual Christmas concert. Vesnivka, together with its partner the Toronto Ukrainian Male Chamber Choir (TUMCC), are often accompanied by local professional soloists and chamber ensembles. The choir also sings Christmas and Easter Liturgies. While regular rehearsals (normally held on Mondays for TUMCC and on Tuesdays for Vesnivka) as well as performances

have been put on hold as a result of the current pandemic, the choirs are occasionally meeting virtually to continue their work. New singers are welcome. We invite you to explore our website for information on the choirs and on Vesnivka's e-library of Ukrainian choral music, which offers free downloadable scores in both Ukrainian and transliterated versions. Information on ordering CD recordings is also available on the website. We look forward to resuming our full schedule and sharing live music with you as soon as it is safe to do so.

**Nykola Parzei**

**416-246-9880**

**nykola@vesnivka.com**

**www.vesnivka.com**

**www.facebook.com/vesnivka**

### • Victoria Scholars Men's Choral Ensemble

The namesake of the Victoria Scholars, Tomás Luis de Victoria, was an outstanding Renaissance composer whose music is renowned for its spirituality and emotional expressiveness. The Victoria Scholars bring clarity and balance of sound so characteristic of Renaissance music to all their repertoire, encompassing Medieval plainchant, works from the Baroque, Classical, Romantic and contemporary eras, and newly-commissioned works. Past winners of the Healey Willan Grand Prize in the CBC Radio National Competition for Amateur Choirs, the Victoria Scholars have performed with many exceptional arts organizations (including Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Kiev Chamber Choir) and vocal soloists (including Sondra Radvanovsky, Michael Schade, Russell Braun and Norine Burgess). They have toured nationally and internationally and are heard regularly on CBC Radio 2 and Classical 96.3FM.

We are pleased to offer audiences a three-concert series each year; however, due to COVID-19 and in the interests of the health and safety of both our audience and choir members, we currently do not have any concerts planned. Please visit us on our website or Facebook for updates on the remainder of the 2020/21 season should the situation change.

**Jerzy Cichocki**

**416-476-4078**

**admin@victoriascholars.ca**

**www.victoriascholars.ca**

**www.facebook.com/vicscholars**

### • VOICEBOX: Opera in Concert

VOICEBOX: Opera in Concert is Canada's only company dedicated exclusively to the presentation of rare opera programming. Our performances rely on the power and beauty of the human voice, the dramatic inflexion of text and poetry accompanied by orchestra or piano. We are having a modified season with a double bill online presentation in January 2021 - Francis

Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine* and Jean Cocteau's play of the same title on which the opera was based. Featuring artists are soprano Miriam Khalil and Chilina Kennedy, with Narmina Afandiyeva as music director. Francesco Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur* and Georges Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles* are planned in Spring 2021 and the details to be announced at a later date.

**Guillermo Silva-Marin**

**416-922-2147**

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**www.twitter.com/OperainConcert**

## SECTION II: ARTS SERVICES

### • Eric Alper Public Relations



For the past 25 years, Eric has been at the forefront of the Canadian entertainment industry – making the Public in Public Relations his business. His enthusiasm, encyclopedic knowledge

of the past and present have made him a go-to music commentator across North America. He is also host of one of the top-rated SiriusXM shows "ThatEricAlper".

Services include: Canadian traditional print and online press campaigns for latest single and/or EP /Album; TV and radio appearances in markets including media and industry tours; Canadian Tour Publicity for target/region-specific outreach as well as nationally broadcasted media placements; Online Publicity for editorial, reviews, product features and promotions/giveaways; PR campaigns for all formats of radio in Canada, including interviews and promotions/giveaways; Focus on campus radio shows, music-based media outlets, and online blogs geared towards music and lifestyle; Assists with media interviews for living room/live concerts online and offline; Daily personal tips with social media initiatives, updated information on industry events, deadlines for awards and grants and social media opportunities with brands.

**Eric Alper**

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Updated online at  
**thewholenote.com/blue**



# 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](http://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](mailto: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](http://thewholenote.com/applylistings)
2. Email listings to [listings@thewholenote.com](mailto: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 covers February 2021 and the submission deadline is **6pm Friday January 8.**

## Events by Date

**NOTE:** All times are Eastern Time unless otherwise noted. Listings are based on information sent to WholeNote in advance by event presenters. Due to current COVID-19 restrictions, some events may subsequently be cancelled or postponed in different areas. Please visit presenters' websites or contact them directly for updated information. The deadline for the next monthly issue covering events between Feb 1 and Feb 28, 2021 is Thur, Jan 07, 2021, at 6pm. Thank you for your understanding and stay safe!

### Wednesday December 2

- **4:30: International Resource Centre for Performing Artists (IRCPA).** *Moving Artists Forward: A Conversation with Managers Kathy Domoney and Andrew Kwan.* Two of Canada's artists managers have devised new programs to move their artists forward. They discuss their new initiatives in the latest Zoom conversation. Debra Chandler, host. Free with pre-registration at [ircpa.net](http://ircpa.net). ZOOM
- **7:00: Tafelmusik.** *Tafel Talks: Music as Resistance.* Online panel discussion. Exploring how music has given voice to resistance over the centuries, whether political, religious, social, or economic. Torquil Campbell, musician; Kate Helsen, educator; Reginald Mobley, countertenor; Raha Javanfar, moderator. Visit [tafelmusic.org](http://tafelmusic.org) or call 1-833-964-6337. \$15. Discussion will be followed by a short Q&A. ONLINE

### Thursday December 3

- **8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music.** *Beethoven 250 Festival.* Beethoven: Symphony No.2 in D Op.36; "Abscheulicher, wo eilst Du hin?"; "Gott, welch Dunkel hier!"; and "O namenlose Freude" from Fidelio. Canadian Opera Company Orchestra; Johannes Debus, conductor; Adrienne Pieczonka, soprano; Michael König, tenor. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$50. LIVESTREAM

### Friday December 4

- **12:00 noon: Metropolitan United Church.** *Friday Noon at Met.* Purcell: *Blessed Virgin's Expostulation*; and works by Wolf, Grieg and Gordon. Chelsea Van Pelt, soprano; Andrea

Van Pelt, piano. Visit [metunited.ca](http://metunited.ca) for link. ONLINE

- **12:00 noon: Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra.** *SPO Music Performance S41E05.* New music performances by members and friends of the SPO. Today's theme: Celebrating the SPO's 40th Anniversary Online. Details at [spo.ca](http://spo.ca). ONLINE
- **7:00: TD Niagara Jazz Festival.** *LIVESTREAM.LOVE.JAZZ.Series #45 with Faith Amour Duo.* Free. Information at [niagarajazzfestival.com](http://niagarajazzfestival.com). ONLINE
- **7:00: The Music Gallery.** *Emergents I: Reroots.* Curated by Sara Constant and ML Gamboa. Tamayugé and masc4masc. The event will be streamed via Facebook and Twitch. Information at [musicgallery.org](http://musicgallery.org). ONLINE
- **7:30: Upper Canada Choristers/Cantemos Latin Ensemble.** *Comfort and Joy: A Holiday Offering.* Vivaldi: *Gloria*; Laurie Evan Fraser: *Comfort and Joy*; Villancicos de Navidad; sing-along carols. Hye Won Cecilia Lee, piano. Grace Church on-the-Hill, 300 Lonsdale Rd. Information at 416-256-0510 or [info@uppercanadachoristers.org](http://info@uppercanadachoristers.org) or [uppercanadachoristers.org](http://uppercanadachoristers.org). LIVESTREAM
- **8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony.** *The Triumph of Optimism.* Haydn: Symphony No.28 in A Hob.I/28; Schumann: Symphony No.2 in C Op.61. Links at [kwsymphony.ca/concerts/the-triumph-of-optimism](http://kwsymphony.ca/concerts/the-triumph-of-optimism). Choose what you pay from \$15. Available until Dec 6 at 11:59pm. ONLINE

### Saturday December 5

- **4:00: Beach United Church.** *Jazz and Reflection: Heart of the Holiday.* Seasonal

- jazz favourites including River, Mary's Boy Child, The Christmas Song, and Children Go Where I Send Thee. Alana Bridgewater, vocalist; Nathan Hiltz, guitar. Beach United Church, 140 Wineva Ave. Visit [eventbrite.ca/e/jazz-reflection-heart-of-the-holiday-tickets-128656437869](http://eventbrite.ca/e/jazz-reflection-heart-of-the-holiday-tickets-128656437869) or call 416-690-8082. Donation through Eventbrite. Supports lunch programs and other church outreach. ONLINE
- **7:00: Duo Teneramente.** *Online Concert.* Beethoven: Op. 22 Piano Sonata and Piazzolla: Tangos. Visit [eventbrite.com/myevent?eid=127970620571](http://eventbrite.com/myevent?eid=127970620571). LIVESTREAM ONLINE
- **7:00: Metropolitan United Church.** *Friday Noon at Met: And He Shall Come - Music and Poetry for Advent.* Works for the season by Gibbons, Sirett, Todd and others; poetry by Patricia Orr. Metropolitan Lead Singers and Choir members; Dr. Patricia Wright, conductor. Visit [metunited.ca](http://metunited.ca). ONLINE



THE Elora SINGERS  
MARK VUORINEN, CONDUCTOR

DECEMBER 5  
A Quiet Village  
8PM

[www.elorasingers.ca](http://www.elorasingers.ca)

- **8:00: Elora Singers.** *A Quiet Village.* Eriks Esenvalds: *Stars*; Tawnee Olson: *Scel Lem Duib*; Benjamin Britten: *Ceremony of Carols*; Marie-Claire Saindon: *Constellation*; Eric Whitacre: *Lux Aurumque*. Elora Singers; Julia Seager-Scott, harp. From \$15. Visit [Elorasingers.ca](http://Elorasingers.ca). Available from Dec 5, 2020 to Jan 3, 2021. ONLINE
- **8:00: Joseph Petric & Martin Carpentier/Canadian Music Centre.** *Reimagining.* D. Edward Davis: *más tranquila* (for pauline); Juro Kim Feliz: *Kinamulaitan*; Daryl Jamieson: *foxred*; Kathryn Knowles: *Biarç*; Gabriel Málancioiu: *Transonique*. Joseph Petric, accordion; Martin Carpentier, clarinet. Watch on [on.cmccanada.org/event/reimagining](http://on.cmccanada.org/event/reimagining). ONLINE
- **8:00: Sinfonia Toronto.** *Beethoven@250 Livestream.* Beethoven: Six Ländler, WoO 15; Symphony No.7 in A Op.92 (chamber version). Nurhan Arman, conductor. Vimeo. \$15. To view the livestream and performance video until Jan 3, 2021 visit [sinfoniatoronto.com](http://sinfoniatoronto.com). LIVESTREAM

### Sunday December 6

- **1:30: Matthias Maute.** *Business as (un)usual: Theme and Variation.* Matthias Maute, flute and recorder. Info at [info@tempotonto.net](http://info@tempotonto.net). ONLINE

- **Dec 06 2:30: Kingston Symphony Orchestra.** *Mozart Clarinet Quintet.* Mozart: *Clarinet Quintet K581*. Erika Sloos, violin; Julia McFarlane, violin; Kelvin Enns, viola; Jill Vitols, cello; Carina Canonico, clarinet. Info at [facebook.com/KingstonSymphonyAssociation](http://facebook.com/KingstonSymphonyAssociation). ONLINE
- **3:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society.** *Christmas Concert: Carols and Non-Carols from Many Ages.* Sheila Dietrich, soprano; Jennifer Enns Modolo, alto/mezzo; Magdalena Tomsinska, lute, guitars. First United Church (Waterloo), 16 William St. W., Waterloo. 519-569-1809. \$25; \$15(st). LIVE
- **3:00: Royal Conservatory of Music.** *Beethoven 250 Festival: Gryphon Trio.* Beethoven: *Clarinet Trio in B-flat Op.11* ("Gas-senhauer"); Piano Trio in B-flat Op.97 "Arch-duke". Gryphon Trio; James Campbell, clarinet. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$50. LIVESTREAM
- **4:00: St. George's-on-the-Hill Anglican.** *In the Spirit of Christmas: An Online Benefit Concert.* Dvořák: *String Quintet No.2 in G Op.77*; Christmas music selections in various styles for string quintet. Principal Players of Sinfonia Toronto (Marcus Scholtes, violin; Emily Hau, violin; Anthony Rapoport, viola; Andras Weber, cello; and Jesse Dietschi, double bass). Visit [stgeorgesonthehill.ca/spiritofchristmas](http://stgeorgesonthehill.ca/spiritofchristmas). All proceeds donated to: The Daily Bread Food Bank, The Jean Tweed Centre & The George Hull Centre. St. George's will match total donations up to \$500. ONLINE
- **4:00: TD Niagara Jazz Festival.** *Home for the Holidays: Online Sing-Along.* Jane Lewis and Andrew McPherson. Info at [niagarajazzfestival.com](http://niagarajazzfestival.com). Free. ONLINE
- **7:00: INNERchamber Ensemble.** *Concert & Dinner.* Alexis Gordon, vocalist. Music by Lightfoot, Mitchell, Ellington, Holst, Correlli, Tchaikovsky, and others. Revival House, 70 Brunswick St., Stratford. Visit [innerchamber.ca/together-safe-warm](http://innerchamber.ca/together-safe-warm) or [tickets@innerchamber.ca](mailto:tickets@innerchamber.ca). \$35. LIVE & LIVESTREAM.

### Tuesday December 8

- **3:00: Orchestra Toronto.** *Sublime Delights.* Brahms: *Academic Festival Overture*; Mozart: *Piano Concerto No.20 in d*; J. Strauss II: *Champagne Polka*; Sibelius: *Pel-léas et Mélisande*; Beethoven: *Consecration of the House*. David Jalbert, piano; Michael Newnham, conductor. \$20. Info at [orchestratoronto.com/concerts-and-performances/sublime-delights](http://orchestratoronto.com/concerts-and-performances/sublime-delights). ON DEMAND

### Thursday December 10

- **7:30: Gryphon Trio/OurConcerts.live.** *Beethoven@250: Virtual Concerts.* Beethoven: *Piano Trio in E-flat Op.1 No.1*; *Piano Trio in c Op.1 No.3*; *Piano Trio in G Op.1 No.2*. Gryphon Trio; Eric Friesen, host; Rob Kapilow, guest commentator. Visit [gryphontrio.com](http://gryphontrio.com) or [ourconcerts.live](http://ourconcerts.live). \$25(2 concerts); \$15(1 concert). Also Dec 11. ONLINE
- **8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music.** *Beethoven 250 Festival: Chamber Music Concert.* Beethoven: *String Quartet No.3 in D Op.18 No.3*; Chausson: *Concerto in D for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet Op.21*. New Orford String Quartet; James Ehnes, violin; Charles Richard-Hamelin, piano. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$50. LIVESTREAM



**CONNECTED WORLD**  
a Winter World Music Celebration..... virtually

Join us online December 20

NIAGARA JAZZ FESTIVAL  
Sing-along Online Fundraiser  
December 06 at 4pm

**WINTER MUSIC SERIES TICKETS ON SALE SOON**

[niagarajazzfestival.com](http://niagarajazzfestival.com) @jazzniagara





## A Tafelmusik Christmas

Dec 10, 2020 at 8pm

Elisa Citterio, director  
Ivars Taurins, director  
Members of Tafelmusik  
Chamber Choir  
[tafelmusik.org](http://tafelmusik.org)

● **8:00: Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra.** *A Tafelmusik Christmas.* Co-curated by Ivars Taurins and Elisa Citterio. Bach: Christmas Oratorio; Charpentier: Christmas Pastorale; Vivaldi: La Pastorella; French noels arranged by Lalande and Corrette; Heinen: Pastorale. Elisa Citterio, director; Ivars Taurins, director; Members of Tafelmusik Chamber Choir; Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra. Visit [tafelmusik.org](http://tafelmusik.org) or call 1-833-964-6337. \$25 (regular); \$32 (deluxe). Single ticket buyers can re-access the concert until Dec 22 at 8pm. ONLINE

### Friday December 11

● **12:00 noon: Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra.** *SPOGreatMusic Podcast S41E07.* Today's theme: Canadian Holiday Music - From the Huron Carol to the Present. Podcast featuring interviews with special guests. Host: Dr. Daniel Mehdizadeh. Details at [spo.ca](http://spo.ca). PODCAST.

● **7:30: Gryphon Trio/OurConcerts.live/Music Toronto.** *Beethoven@250: Virtual Concerts.* Beethoven: Piano Trio in D Op.70 No.1 "Ghost"; Piano Trio in E-flat Op.70 No.2; Piano Trio in B-flat Op.97 "Archduke". Gryphon Trio; Eric Friesen, host; Rob Kapilow, guest commentator. Visit [gryphontrio.com](http://gryphontrio.com) or [ourconcerts.live](http://ourconcerts.live). \$25 (2 concerts); \$15 (1 concert). Also Dec 10. ONLINE

● **8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music.** *Beethoven 250 Festival: Violin Sonatas (Part 1).* Beethoven: Violin Sonata Nos.1-4. James Ehnes, violin; Stewart Goodyear, piano. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$50. LIVESTREAM

● **8:00: Spectrum Music.** *100 Seconds to Midnight.* New music that captures today's terrors and hopes for a better world. Yunjin Claire Lee, piano/synth; Jeff-Antoine Cote (ACOTE): modular synth; Marito Marques, drums; Caleb Klager, bass. Free. Available at [spectrummusic.ca](http://spectrummusic.ca) for only 24 hours. ONLINE

### Saturday December 12

● **7:00: Neapolitan Connection.** *Virtual Virtuosi Series: Bach and Friends.* Boris Slav Strulev, cello. Call 416-231-0006 or visit [neapolitan-connection.com](http://neapolitan-connection.com). \$15. 7-day video access. ONLINE

● **7:00: Opera Atelier.** *Something Rich & Strange.* Measha Bruggersgosman, soprano; Mireille Asselin, soprano; Cynthia Smithers,

soprano; Danielle MacMillan, mezzo; Colin Ainsworth, tenor; Christopher Enns, tenor; Artists of Atelier Ballet; Members of Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra; David Fallis, conductor. Tickets and info at [OperaAtelier.com](http://OperaAtelier.com). LIVESTREAM

● **7:30: Mississauga Festival Choir.** *A Light in the Darkness.* Festive favourites and a sing-along. Mississauga Festival Choir and special performances by our young adult Choir, Resonance. Watch at [mfchoir.com](http://mfchoir.com). YOUTUBE

● **7:30: The Annex Singers.** *A Child's Christmas in Wales.* Dramatic reading of Dylan Thomas's *A Child's Christmas in Wales* with choral works by Morley, Rossini and Walton. Richard Partington, actor; Melanie Conly, soprano; Joshua Clemenger, tenor; Parker Clements, bass; Kelly Lefaive, fiddle; Derek Gray, percussion. Visit [annexsingers.com](http://annexsingers.com) or call 416-847-1065. Free. Donation appreciated. ONLINE

DECEMBER 12

*A Village*  
Messiah

8PM

[www.elorasingers.ca](http://www.elorasingers.ca)

● **8:00: Elora Singers.** *A Village Messiah.* Selections from Handel's *Messiah*. Elora Singers; Members of The Festival Orchestra. Visit [elorasingers.ca](http://elorasingers.ca) or call 519-846-0331. From \$15. Available until Jan 3, 2021. ONLINE

● **8:00: Kindred Spirits Orchestra.** *Mysticism & Spirit: Masterworks by Scriabin & Wagner.* Scriabin: Piano Concerto in f-sharp Op.20; Wagner: Symphony in C. Gregory Vandikas, piano; Kristian Alexander, conductor. Onstage discussion with pianist Gregory Vandikas and composer Michael Berec. Call 905-604-8339 or visit [ksorchestra.ca](http://ksorchestra.ca). ONLINE

● **8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music.** *Beethoven 250 Festival: Violin Sonatas (Part 2).* Beethoven: Violin Sonatas Nos.5-7. James Ehnes, violin; Stewart Goodyear, piano. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$50. LIVESTREAM

● **8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music.** *Beethoven 250 Festival: ARC Ensemble.* Beethoven: Piano Trio in D (arrangement of Symphony No. 2 Op.36 by composer); Folk song arrangements for voice and piano trio; String Quintet in C Op.29. Artists of The Royal Conservatory (ARC); Monica Whicher, soprano. Mazzoleni Concert Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$50. LIVE & LIVESTREAM

### Sunday December 13

● **11:00am: Xenia Concerts.** *Livestream Concert with the Despax Quartet.* Visit [xeniaconcerts.com/events](http://xeniaconcerts.com/events) or call 416-927-1555. Free. LIVESTREAM

● **1:00: Metropolitan United Church.** *Deck the Halls!* Sing-along carols and other holiday music. Metropolitan Silver Band. Visit [metunited.ca](http://metunited.ca) for Facebook link. ONLINE

● **3:00: Royal Conservatory of Music.** *Beethoven 250 Festival: Violin Sonatas (Part 3).* Beethoven: Violin Sonata Nos.8-10. James Ehnes, violin; Stewart Goodyear, piano. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$50. LIVESTREAM

● **7:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra/Against the Grain Theatre.** *Messiah/Complex.* Handel: *Messiah*. Jonathon Adams, Looee Arreak, Spencer Britten, Rihab Chaieb, Deantha Edmunds, singers; diverse choirs from across Canada; and other performers; Johannes Debus, conductor; Joel Ivany and Renelta Arluk, co-directors. Register at [againstthegraintheatre.ticketleap.com/messiahcomplex](http://againstthegraintheatre.ticketleap.com/messiahcomplex). Available until Dec 26. ONLINE

### Wednesday December 16

● **8:00: Achill Choral Society.** *Star Light, Holiday Bright!* Choral selections from our past few years, with songs celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah and Winter Solstice. Introduction by renowned choral composer Eleanor Daley. Shawn Grenke, conductor; Nancy Sicsic, piano; and others. Tickets and direct links at [achill.ca](http://achill.ca). ONLINE

● **8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society.** *Beethoven Quartets: Concert V.* Beethoven: String Quartet No.15 in A Op.132; String Quartet No. 13 in B-flat Op.130 with Grosse Fuge. Penderecki String Quartet. First United Church (Waterloo), 16 William St. W., Waterloo. 519-569-1809. \$40; \$25 (st). Also on Dec 18. LIVE.

● **8:00: Toronto Mendelssohn Choir.** *Festival of Carols.* Performances of new works, some favourites from previous seasons, story-telling, and sing-along carols. Visit [livestream.com/tmchoir/foc2020](http://livestream.com/tmchoir/foc2020). ONLINE

2021

Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

**FESTIVAL OF CAROLS**

Dec 16 at 8 pm  
on Livestream  
[tmchoir.org](http://tmchoir.org)

**MYSTICISM and SPIRIT**

**KINDRED SPIRITS ORCHESTRA**

Saturday, December 12, 2020 at 8 pm (EST)  
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Piano concerto

**WAGNER**  
Symphony in C

Kristian Alexander  
conductor

Gregory Vandikas  
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## Events by Date

### Thursday December 17

- **7:00: Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra.** *Sing-Along Messiah on Screen.* Daniel: Messiah. Suzie LeBlanc, soprano; Daniel Taylor, countertenor; Rufus Müller, tenor; Locky Chung, baritone; Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and Chamber Choir; G. F. Handel, conductor. Visit [tafelmusik.org](http://tafelmusik.org). Available through Dec 26. ONLINE
- **7:30: Art of Time Ensemble.** *To All A Good Night.* Stephen Colbert & Elvis Costello: There Are Much Worse Things to Believe In; John Prine: Christmas in Prison; Tom Lehrer (arr. Jim McGrath): (I'm Spending) Hanukkah in Santa Monica; Tom Waits (arr. Steve McKinnon): Silent Night/Christmas Card from a Hooker in Minneapolis; Johnny Moore & Lou Baxter (arr. Jim McGrath): Merry Christmas Baby. Jessica Mitchell, Jackie Richardson, Liam Russell, David Wall and Tom Wilson, singers. For the YouTube link, visit [artoftimeensemble.com](http://artoftimeensemble.com) or call 647-344-2254. Available until Dec 20. ONLINE



**ELECTRIC MESSIAH**  
ONLINE DEC 17  
[soundstreams.ca](http://soundstreams.ca)

- **8:00: Soundstreams.** *Electric Messiah.* Features a theatrically exciting cast, a brand-new commission, and a feast of musical styles ranging from jazz to soul/hip-hop, Electric Messiah brings the past to life in a fresh way that reflects the city in which we live. Visit [facebook.com/Soundstreams](https://facebook.com/Soundstreams). Registration for this event will be open in late November. ONLINE

### Friday December 18

- **12:00 noon: Metropolitan United Church.** *Friday Noon at Met.* Works for Advent by Reger and Dupré. David Simon, organ. Visit [metunited.ca](http://metunited.ca). ONLINE
- **12:00 noon: Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra.** *SPO Music Performance S41E06.* New holiday music performances by members and friends of the SPO. Today's theme: SPO Music for the Holidays. Details at [spo.ca](http://spo.ca). ONLINE
- **8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society.** *Beethoven Quartets: Concert V.* Beethoven: String Quartet No.15 in a Op.132; String Quartet No. 13 in B-flat Op.130 with Grosse Fuge. Penderecki String Quartet. First United Church (Waterloo), 16 William

- St. W., Waterloo. 519-569-1809. \$40; \$25(st). Also on Dec 16. LIVE
- **8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony.** *Yuletide Spectacular Online.* Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser, conductor; Mike Nadajewski and Glynnis Ranney, hosts; Chilina Kennedy, vocalists; and surprise guests. Visit [kwsymphony.ca/concerts/yuletide-spectacular-online](http://kwsymphony.ca/concerts/yuletide-spectacular-online). Choose what you pay from \$15. Available until Dec 20 at 11:59pm. ONLINE
  - **8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** *TSO On Demand: Holiday Pops.* Andrea Menard, vocalist; Robert Walsh, guitar; Steven Reineke, host; Simon Rivard, RBC Resident Conductor. Visit [bit.ly/TSO-On-Demand-Holiday-Pops](http://bit.ly/TSO-On-Demand-Holiday-Pops) or call 416-598-3375. \$20. On sale from Nov 26, 2020 and available to view until Jan 3, 2021. ONLINE

### Saturday December 19

- **8:00: Elora Singers.** *A Festival of Carols.* Beloved and new Christmas carols. Elora Singers. Visit [elorasingers.ca](http://elorasingers.ca) or call 519-846-0331. From \$15. Available from Dec 19, 2020 to Jan 3, 2021. ONLINE

### Sunday December 20

- **4:00: Travel by Sound.** *Winter Classics.* "Winter" from Vivaldi's Four Seasons; excerpts from the Nutcracker Suite; and holiday piano favourites. Victoria Yeh, violin; Natalie Wong, violin; Fanny Tang, viola; Jill Sauerteig, cello; Tyler Yarema, piano. Visit [VictoriaYehLive.com](http://VictoriaYehLive.com) or call 416-799-0737. \$40(1 concert); \$100(all 6 concerts). Virtually from Meaford Hall. Series runs until Feb 2021. Unlimited replays until Mar 2021. ONLINE
- **7:00: Metropolitan United Church.** *Candlelight Lessons and Carols.* Choral music for Christmas. Metropolitan's Lead Singers; The Metropolitan Handbells; and Dr. Patricia Wright, organ. Metropolitan United Church (Toronto), 56 Queen St. E. Call 416-363-0331 or visit [metunited.ca](http://metunited.ca). Free. Registration is necessary to attend. LIVE & LIVESTREAM

### Monday December 21

- **7:00: Essential Opera.** *December.* Libretto and Music by Monica Pearce. World premiere of a new one-act opera. Erin Bardua, Maureen Batt, Danielle Buoniuto, sopranos; Tara

Scott, conductor. Visit [essentialopera.com](http://essentialopera.com) or call 647-290-7970. ONLINE

### Thursday December 24

- **11:00: Metropolitan United Church.** *Candlelight Christmas Eve.* Choral music for Christmas. Metropolitan's Lead Singers; Dr. Patricia Wright, organ. Metropolitan United Church (Toronto), 56 Queen St. E. Call 416-363-0331 or visit [metunited.ca](http://metunited.ca). Free. Registration is necessary to attend. LIVE & LIVESTREAM

### Sunday December 27

- **3:45: Wychwood Clarinet Choir.** *A New Performance Video.* The last Sunday of every month, the WCC releases a new concert video performance by The Wychwood Clarinet Choir, preceded by a live chat with Michele Jacot and Roy Greaves. Visit [wychwoodclarinetchoir.com](http://wychwoodclarinetchoir.com). Free. LIVESTREAM

### Friday January 8

- **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". Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). Free. ONLINE
- **8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society.** *Chamber Music Concert.* Ravel: Sonata for violin and cello. Laura Andriani, violin; Katie Schlaikjer, cello. First United Church (Waterloo), 16 William St. W., Waterloo. 519-569-1809. \$35; \$20(st). LIVE

### Sunday January 10

- **3:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society.** *Chamber Music Concert.* Beethoven: Piano Trio in D Op.70 No.1 "Ghost"; Symphony No. 2 in D Op.36 (arranged for chamber ensemble); and other works. Julie Baumgartel, violin; Margaret Gay, cello; James Mason, oboe; Peter Shackleton, clarinet. First United Church (Waterloo), 16 William St. W., Waterloo. 519-569-1809. \$35; \$20(st). LIVE

### Thursday January 14

- **6:15: Magisterra Soloists.** *Holocaust: Forbidden Music.* Schulhoff: Saxophone Sonata; Zemlinsky: "Maiblumen blühten überall"; Hindemith: Trio for saxophone, viola and piano; Smit: Songs. Bobbi Thompson, saxophone; Hillary Tufford, mezzo; Brian Cho, piano. Museum London Theatre, 421 Ridout St. N., London. 519-615-0163 or [magisterra.com](http://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. Introduction by Dr. Joseph Gilbert followed by pre-concert viewing of Auschwitz testimony by Henry Meyer (LaSalle Quartet) in Community Space. LIVE
- **7:30: Music Toronto.** *Chamber Music Concert.* Dohnányi: Piano Quintet in c. St. Lawrence Quartet; Stephen Prutsman, piano. Visit [music-toronto.com](http://music-toronto.com). Free. ONLINE

### Friday January 15

- **7:30: Royal Conservatory of Music.** *21C Music Festival Series: The Glenn Gould School New Music Ensemble: FLIPBOOK: Music & Images.* Matalon: Las siete vidas de un gato for 8 players, video, and electronics; Lizée: 8-Bit Urbex, for 15 players, soundtrack, and film; Jodkowski: Respire, for 11 players, video,

and electronics; Suzuki: Umidi Soni Colores, for videos and electronics (8-channels). Temerty Theatre, Telus Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$21. Some images not suitable for children. LIVE

### Saturday January 16

- **7:00: Neapolitan Connection.** *Virtual Virtuosi Series: Beethoven - A Monument to a Monument.* Aljosa Jurinic, piano. Call 416-231-0006 or visit [neapolitanconnection.com](http://neapolitanconnection.com). \$15. 7-day video access. ONLINE
- **8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music.** *21C Music Festival Series: ARC Ensemble.* Marc Neikrug: "A Song by Mahler". Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$21-\$90. LIVE

### Sunday January 17

- **4:00: Travel by Sound.** *Freeman Brothers.* Original music by Carson & Curtis Freeman, and songs from Marcus Miller; David Sanborn, Bela Fleck and the Flecktones. Carson Freeman, sax; Curtis Freeman, bass; Stefan Carriman, keyboards; Alek Sekulovski, drums & percussion. Visit [VictoriaYehLive.com](http://VictoriaYehLive.com) or call 416-799-0737. \$40 per concert; \$100 for 6 concerts. Virtually from Muddtown Station. Series runs until Feb 2021. Unlimited replays until Mar 2021. ONLINE

### Wednesday January 20

- **10:00am: Royal Conservatory of Music.** *Discovery Series: The Glenn Gould School Concerto Competition Finals.* Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). Free. LIVE

### Friday January 22

- **8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music.** *21C Music Festival Series: Soundstreams Presents "Garden of Vanished Pleasures"*. Co-produced with Pinkhouse Productions. Cecilia Livingston & Donna McKeivitt: Pieces for 4 voices and instruments. Devised & directed by Tim Albery. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). From \$22. Please visit [soundstreams.ca](http://soundstreams.ca) for updated details. LIVE
- **8:00: Sinfonia Toronto.** *Mozart &*

*Music* TORONTO

## VIRTUAL CONCERT SERIES



January 14 at 7:30 pm  
**ST. LAWRENCE QUARTET**  
with **STEPHEN PRUTSMAN**





*Tchaikovsky. Mozart: Eine kleine Nachtmusik; Tchaikovsky: Sinfonia in e-flat Op.30a.* Nurhan Arman, conductor. \$15. To view the livestream and performance video until Feb 20, 2021 visit [sinfoniatoronto.com](http://sinfoniatoronto.com). ONLINE

#### Saturday January 23

- **5:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. 21C Music Festival Series: 21C Cinq à Sept: Eve Egoyan.** World premieres by Eve Egoyan for a newly imagined piano. Temerty Theatre, 273 Bloor St. W. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$21-\$50. LIVE
- **7:00: Rezonance Baroque Ensemble. Birds, Beasts, and Rustic Revelry.** Music inspired by sounds of the outdoors. Works by H. I. F. Biber, J. Schmelzer, and others. Rezan Onen-Lapointe, baroque violin; David Podgorski, harpsichord. Call 647-779-5696 or visit [rezonanceeventbrite.com](http://rezonanceeventbrite.com). \$10. ONLINE
- **8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. 21C**

*Music Festival Series: Angèle Dubeau & La Pietà. Works by Armstrong, Korzeniowski, Einaudi, Gregson, Blais and others.* Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$21-\$105. LIVE

#### Sunday January 24

- **1:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. 21C Music Festival & Sunday Interludes Series: Morgan-Paige Melbourne.** Mazzoleni Concert Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). Free. LIVE

#### Tuesday January 26

- **8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. 21C Music Festival Series: Kronos Quartet on Film: "A Thousand Thoughts".** Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$21-\$85. LIVE FILM SCREENING

#### Thursday January 28

- **8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. 21C Music Festival Series: Kronos Quartet.** With students from The Glenn Gould School. "Fifty Forward". Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$21. LIVE

#### Friday January 29

- **2:00: Art Gallery of Ontario. AGO Live: Hello from the Other Side - Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** Walker Court, 317 Dundas St. W. Free with gallery admission. Also at 4pm. Please book a timed-entry ticket at [tickets.ago.ca/events](http://tickets.ago.ca/events).
- **8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. 21C Music Festival Series: Kronos Quartet - Music for Change: The Banned Countries.** Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$21-\$105. LIVE

#### Saturday January 30

- **7:30: Royal Conservatory of Music. Discovery Series: The Glenn Gould School Vocal Showcase.** Mazzoleni Concert Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$20. LIVE

#### Sunday January 31

- **3:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Invesco Piano Concerts Series: Nicholas Angelich.** Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. Call 416-408-0208 or visit [rcmusic.com/performance](http://rcmusic.com/performance). \$40-\$105. LIVE
- **3:45: Wychwood Clarinet Choir. A New Performance Video.** The last Sunday of every month, the WCC releases a new concert video performance by The Wychwood Clarinet Choir, preceded by a live chat with Michele Jacot and Roy Greaves. Visit [wychwoodclarinetchoir.com](http://wychwoodclarinetchoir.com). Free. ONLINE

## 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](http://artsathome.ca) to learn more about this exciting collaborative initiative. ONLINE

● **Canadian Opera Company. Key Change.** The COC's new podcast offers a fresh take on today's opera issues. Co-hosted by classical singer and culture critic Robyn Grant-Moran, a member of the COC's Circle of Artists, alongside COC Director/Dramaturg-in-Residence Julie McIsaac, the first season of bi-weekly episodes explores the operagoing experience from a variety of perspectives, with special guests from the opera field and beyond. Info at [coc.ca/keychange](http://coc.ca/keychange). PODCAST

● **Global Toronto 2021 (GT21).** Online Jun 14-18, 2021. GT21 Artist Submissions are open now through 11:59pm on December 6, 2020. GT is rooted in re-imagining the music sector with the priorities being the interests of equity-seeking communities and showcasing Canada's musical diversity. We encourage applications from Canadian artists who

employ diverse artistic/musical aesthetics, traditions, expressions, and approaches; explore/expand genre boundaries; identify as part of an equity-seeking community; and are ready for the international stage. Application info available at [smallworldmusic.com](http://smallworldmusic.com). ONLINE CONFERENCE

● **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](http://facebook.com/kevin.barrett.165470). FACEBOOK

● **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 [chamberfest.com](http://chamberfest.com). ONLINE

● **Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts. a-P-art {of} performance series,**

every Thursday at 7:30pm at [facebook.com/RHCPA](http://facebook.com/RHCPA). ONLINE

● **Toronto Consort. Early Music TV.** Begins November 29, 2020. A subscription-based video streaming service dedicated to music of the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Baroque. Founded and curated by The Toronto Consort. A Medieval Christmas debuts on December 14, 2020 and includes serene works like laude, English carols, and Notre Dame polyphony by Pérotin and anonymous medieval masters. This on-demand service is available at [earlymusic.tv](http://earlymusic.tv). ON DEMAND

● **Toronto Consort. Explorer: Discovering the World of Early Music.** Explorer is a blog for the curious; a place of learning, sharing, and community. This all-new offering will present an assortment of curated content in a range of formats, like original short- or long-form

articles, original video and audio recordings, and educational content on relevant topics relating to Early Music, history, and world music, as they relate our beloved repertoire. Info at [torontoconsort.org](http://torontoconsort.org). ONLINE BLOG

● **Recollectiv.** A unique musical online meeting 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, providing a positive intergenerational experience for all. Participation is free with pre-registration. E-mail Recollectiv at [info@recollectiv.ca](mailto:info@recollectiv.ca) for meeting times, information and registration. ONLINE GROUP

● **Thirteen Strings! Virtual Concert.** Purcell: Excerpts from The Fairy Queen. Handel: Concerto grosso, Op. 6, No. 5 in D. Vaughan Williams: The Lark Ascending (Marc Djokic, violin). Elgar: Serenade for Strings. Visit [thirteenstrings.ca](http://thirteenstrings.ca). Free. ONLINE

● **Toronto Operetta Theatre.** An archival video of Toronto Operetta Theatre's production of *H.M.S. Pinafore* performed March 4-8, 2020, at Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts. Visit [torontooperetta.com](http://torontooperetta.com). ONLINE

● **VOICEBOX: Opera in Concert.** Archival Video Project: *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* by Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht. Enjoy some archival scenes from our 2019 production at [operainconcert.com](http://operainconcert.com). ONLINE

## YIP'S MUSIC FESTIVAL VIRTUAL COMPETITION

**Piano  
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Musical Theatre  
Strings Duet**

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**Video Submission Start Date:  
February 23, 2021**

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# Editor's Corner

DAVID OLDS

**H**ousebound in these COVID-19 days, I find I'm reading even more than usual. And it's taking longer than normal because I'm making a point of supplementing my reading by listening to all the music mentioned in the books as I go. Pauline Delabroy-Allard's *Ça raconte Sarah*, a tragic story of the love between two young women, included Schubert's *Trout Quintet* and the quartet *Death and the Maiden*, Bartók's *String Quartet No. 4* and Mendelssohn's *Octet*. Sarah Léoni's *Wanderer*, a saga of friendship and unrequited love between a child prodigy pianist and a young composer/cellist featured Schubert's *Arpeggione Sonata*, his late piano works, *Winterreise* and other *lieder*, along with Chopin's *Piano Trio* and Brahms' *Alto Rhapsody*. Wallace Stegner's *Crossing to Safety*, the story of the lifelong friendship of two couples who meet early in their academic careers, led once again to the *Trout Quintet*, Ferde Grofé's *Grand Canyon Suite* and Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. Most eclectic of all is Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*, which I'm only a third of the way through. It has already sent me off to find Brahms' *Fourth Symphony* and *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Bill Evans' *Waltz for Debby*, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* plus a number of pop classics and, strangely, a whistled version of Creedence Clearwater Revival's *Proud Mary*. (It took a while to track this last one down, but I was able to find it on Amazon for 99 cents.)

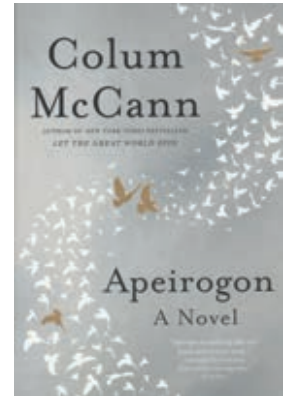
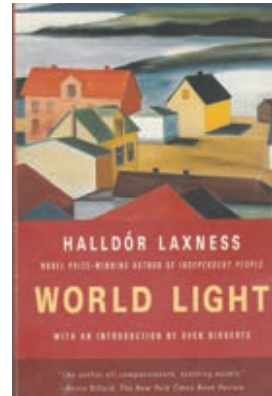
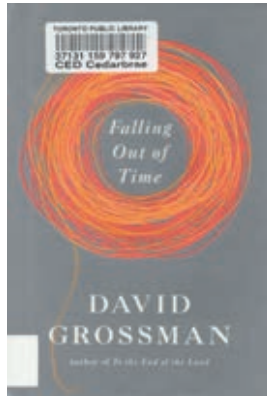
All this could be considered incidental music to the books, although *Death and the Maiden* loomed larger than that in Delabroy-Allard's tale, as did *Winterreise* in Léoni's, but two discs I want to talk about this month actually take their inspiration and *raison d'être* from specific works of literature. My interest was sparked for **Osvaldo Golijov's *Falling Out of Time*** when I realized that it was based on a book of the same name by David Grossman, an author whose works I have previously enjoyed. And **Kjartan Sveinsson's *Der Klang der Offenbarung des Göttlichen*** is based on the novel *World Light* by Icelandic Nobel Prize-winning author Halldór Laxness, another of my favourites.



**Golijov's *Falling Out of Time***, performed by the **Silk Road Ensemble (inacircle-records.com/releases)** has another serendipitous connection to my reading life. It seems that Golijov conceived of the project after a meeting with the founder of the Parents Circle, an organization that brings together Palestinian and Israeli parents who have lost children in the ongoing conflict in

their homeland(s), in hopes of finding some semblance of healing and some road to eventual peace. I had not been aware of this organization until about a month ago when I read an incredibly moving "novel" called *Apeirogon* by Colum McCann. I use quotation marks to qualify the definition. Although a work of fiction, McCann's main characters are actual members of the Parents Circle, a Palestinian whose daughter was shot and killed by an Israeli soldier, and an Israeli whose own daughter was killed by a Palestinian suicide-, or more accurately, murder-bomber, both as innocent bystanders. The book incorporates chapters by both of these real fathers who describe their own states of being and give context to McCann's fiction (which they condone). A truly magnificent book.

How does a person stay alive after losing a child? Grossman's poetic book tells the stories of a number of people in that situation who, as a result, have fallen out of their own lives into a dreamlike state. It opens



with a narration by the Town Chronicler who describes the village at night, much in the way of Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood*. We next meet a Man who decides he must go "there" to find his dead son, although his wife assures him "There is no such place. *There* does not exist." Nevertheless he departs to wander, muttering, in ever-widening circles in his search. As the book unfolds more and more lost parents join the ghostly parade, each telling of their own loss. For the Walkers, "Poetry is the language of my grief." Golijov's stark and wrenching adaptation of the texts, originally in Hebrew but presented in both Hebrew and English translation (included in the booklet), is extremely effective. Wu Tong is especially moving in his heart-wrenching depiction of the Walking Man. Drawing on the resources of the Silk Road Ensemble, Golijov employs a variety of traditional and exotic instruments and some electronics to accompany and extend the voices of the various characters. As Grossman calls his book "a Novel in Voices," Golijov describes his rendition not as an opera or a song cycle, but "a Tone Poem in Voices." Grossman says in an introductory note: "In this work by Osvaldo and the wonderful Silk Road Ensemble, I heard the voice of human pain and grief laid bare – the scream of an animal. [...] It is true that no one knows what hides behind the impenetrable wall of death. But there is one place, or rather one dimension, where we can feel, if only for an instant, both the absolute nihilism of death and the full absence of life. And that dimension is art. It is literature and poetry, music, theatre and cinema, painting and sculpture. When we are in that place we can sense, concurrently, both the everything and the abysmal void. The negation of life and its affirmation. I hope that listening to this creation will provide you, too, with this sensation." It did for me.



**Sveinsson**, a member of the Icelandic ambient/post-rock band Sigur Rós, has in recent years become a celebrated film composer, including the 2005 Academy Award-nominated short film *Síðasti bærinn* (The Last Farm) and the 2011 *Eldfjall* (Volcano). ***Der Klang der Offenbarung des Göttlichen***, *The Explosive Sonics of Divinity* in English, is performed by Filmorchester

Babelsberg and Filmchoir Berlin under Davíð Þór Jónsson ([sonoluminus.com/store/derklang](http://sonoluminus.com/store/derklang)).

Laxness' four-part novel revolves around Ólafur Kárason, an unloved foster child on a farm in rural Iceland around the turn of the last century, his belief that one day he will be a great poet, and his "incurable longing for beauty and its catastrophic consequences." Sveinsson's adaptation uses Kárason's poems and thoughts from the book, translated into German. Magnus Magunsson's English

translations – he also translated the novel – are provided in the booklet. Sveinsson calls his creation an opera, but the only characters in this unique work are set designs painted by Ragnar Kjartansson. There are no people on the stage, (an opera with no divas says the composer); the orchestra, solo cellist, vocal trio and chorus perform unseen from the pit. The first of its four movements is purely instrumental and is strongly reminiscent to my ear of Górecki's *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*. The sombre mood continues in the following movements where the choral settings are somehow lush and stark at the same time. Kjartansson's stage sets are said to be rooted in "Germanic romantic clichés" and I assume the striking paintings, which adorn the four panels of the cardboard packaging, are drawn from them. It is an impressive addition to Sono Luminus' ongoing commitment to bringing Icelandic culture to the world.

During my tenure at CJRT-FM in the 1990s, one of my great pleasures was getting to know and work with Latvian-Canadian composer **Tālis Kalviņš** (1919–2008). During one of my years there "Tāli" was the subject of our annual week-long Canadian Composer Retrospective, which involved an extended documentary which I produced, and daily broadcasts of his music, including a concert that featured his *Viola Sonata*, commissioned for Rivka Golani especially for the occasion. After service in the Second World War, Kalviņš settled in Paris where he studied with Tony Aubin and Olivier Messiaen at the Conservatoire. After successful completion of his degree, including a first prize in composition for his *Cello Sonata*, he moved to Canada and became an important fixture in our musical life, teaching for many years at the University of Toronto and serving as the president of the Canadian League of Composers. 2019 marked the centenary of Kalviņš' birth and although I'm not aware of any particular fanfare to mark that occasion, it is nice to see that two new recordings of his orchestral music have just become available.



The first to arrive, **Tālis Kalviņš – Symphony No.1; Two Concertos**, features the **Latvian National Symphony Orchestra** on the **Ondine** label ([naxosdirect.com/search/ode+1350-2](http://naxosdirect.com/search/ode+1350-2)). The *Concerto di camera No.1* for piano and chamber ensemble (flute, clarinet and strings) was composed in 1981 and first performed during the Latvian Song Festival at U of T on

Canada Day that year. Kalviņš says, "This is not a virtuoso romantic concerto but rather a work held within the baroque and classical framework in a concertante style, where the thematic material is a never-ending development and takes shape in the dialogue between the soloist and the other members of the chamber group." The soloist in this performance is Agnese Egliņa. In the *Concerto for Piano* from 1990 the accompanying string orchestra is complemented by an extensive obbligato percussion part, performed by Edgars Saksons. Once again the soloist is Egliņa. Both concertos are conducted by Guntis Kuzma. The earliest work, dating from 1959, is the first of eight symphonies that Kalviņš would pen over his career. The eminent Latvian critic in exile, Janis Cīrulis, called this work "a mighty symphonic edifice, which rises above our local musical structures." It was first played at the Indianapolis Latvian Song Festival in 1960 and shortly thereafter in Vancouver and Winnipeg and broadcast by the CBC. This June 2020 performance from Riga's Great Guild Hall is conducted by Andris Poga.



The second disc was produced by the Latvian Music Information Centre. **Tālis Kalviņš – Violin Concerto; Concerto for Five Percussionists and Orchestra; Beatae voces tenebrae** (LMICo88 skani.lv) once again features the **Latvian National Symphony Orchestra** under the direction of **Andris Poga** in performances from the Great Guild Hall earlier this year. The *Violin Concerto*

dates from 1974 and was commissioned by the CBC for Steven Stryker who gave the first performance with the CBC Vancouver Orchestra.

The internationally renowned Canadian soloist and concertmaster – he had been the youngest ever to hold that position with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the age of 24 – was visiting professor at the University of Victoria at the time. At the premiere, Vancouver Sun critic Lloyd Dyck perceived the *Violin Concerto* as "an old-fashioned melange of Romantic and Neo-Classical patterns and moods ... prominent in its Milhaudish playfulness." The soloist in this performance is Eva Bindere, winner of the Latvian Grand Music Award in 2016 for musician of the year. She says: "This concerto was a true surprise. I believe it's absolutely world-class music, written extremely professionally, with a wonderful technical understanding of the instrument, [...] In the musical sense, the concerto is very saturated; much depends on the soloist's personal contribution... [but] the whole process brought me joy, and I never felt that this composition needed any sort of subjective 'assistance'."

The *Concerto for 5 Percussionists and Orchestra* (1983) was commissioned by the Faculty of Music, U of T, with support from the Ontario Arts Council, on the occasion of Kalviņš' retirement (although he would stay active as professor emeritus for many more years). Kalviņš had a close relationship with percussion. In a conversation with Edgars Kariks, he stated: "I appreciate the extensive opportunities that percussion instruments offer. They provide so much colour. They give my music a dynamic profile... something like an independent objective. They serve as the foundation for all of the dramatic elements..."

*Beatae voces tenebrae* was commissioned by the Composers, Authors and Publishers Association of Canada (CAPAC, now SOCAN). In 1977, in conjunction with the Frankfurter Buchmesse, the world's largest trade fair for books, CAPAC organized Canadian Music Week in several cities in Germany – eight concerts featuring various compositions and performers from Canada. The premiere of *Beatae voces tenebrae* was given by the Beethovenhalle Orchestra in Bonn, conducted by Boris Brott. The CBC issued a double LP of works featured during that event which has held a treasured place in my collection over the years. I am delighted by this new recording of one of Kalviņš' most moving orchestral works. He did not often provide detailed program notes, but this work is an exception: "This composition coincides with a period of grief in the life of the composer who was mourning the sudden passing of two close friends. These events have influenced the meaning and design of the work and explain the frequent allusions to motivic ideas by classical composers bearing on similar concerns. Through a series of images of serenity and drama, past and present intermingle in sudden flashes of emotion and various dimensions of human anguish..." The excellent booklet notes detail some of the quotations from Liszt, Bach (and the well-known BACH motif – B flat, A, C, B natural which appears frequently), Beethoven and Fauré, with bar numbers and timings of where to find them in the recording. The composer's epigraph on the score reads "to those beloved shadows who once were a part of our lives."

I am honoured to have known Tāli Kalviņš as a colleague and proud that he considered me a friend. He inscribed my copy of his biography *Between Two Worlds* (by Ingrida Zemzare, in Latvian, with English summary) "For David Olds, in true friendship." I will treasure it always.

And one final note, speaking of colleagues and friends, while preparing for this article and for David Hetherington's recent virtual recital "Cello Masterworks" ([newmusicconcerts.com](http://newmusicconcerts.com)), I listened to Hetherington and William Aïde's recording of Kalviņš' prize-winning *Cello Sonata* on a disc that also includes his *Piano Quartet No.2* (with Paul Meyer and Steven Dann) and the *Concertante for flute and piano* with Aïde and Robert Aitken (Centrediscs CMCCD5997 cmccanada.org/shop/cd-cmcccd-5997). Highly recommended! ●

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# STRINGS ATTACHED

TERRY ROBBINS

There are two 2CD sets of the complete Mozart violin concertos this month, one of which is simply unique.



On **Mozart's Violin: The Complete Violin Concertos** violinist **Christoph Koncz** and **Les Musiciens du Louvre**, one of Europe's leading period-instrument ensembles perform the concertos with Koncz – astonishingly – playing Mozart's own violin (**Sony Classical Go10004353645E [sonyclassical.lnk.to/Koncz\\_MozartsViolinPR](https://sonyclassical.lnk.to/Koncz_MozartsViolinPR)**).

The violin, made in the early 1700s by Klotz of Mittenwald after a Jacob Steiner model, was played by Mozart while he was concertmaster in the Salzburg Hofkapelle from 1769. It was entrusted to his sister Maria Anna (Nannerl) when he moved to Vienna in 1781. The concertos date from 1773–75, so would have been played on this instrument; indeed, Koncz makes a strong case for the violin's particular sound clearly influencing the compositions. The instrument passed through various owners – all listed in the booklet notes – before being acquired by the Salzburg Mozarteum Foundation in 1955. Remarkably, it has retained its original Baroque form, and not suffered any alterations.

Koncz clearly understood and appreciated the remarkable privilege accorded him by this recording project, and he responded with absolutely faultless performances. The violin has a sweet, clear sound, and Koncz plays it beautifully, with a tasteful use of vibrato and with warmth and feeling. Mozart left no cadenzas – these would have been improvised at the time – and Koncz supplies his own, after studying the extant cadenzas for the piano concertos and immersing himself in the style of Mozart's Salzburg years. Les Musiciens du Louvre, the first ensemble to perform Mozart on period instruments at the Salzburg Festival, provides the perfect accompaniment.

It's not simply the emotional and personal impact of the instrument that makes this set so special; the performances themselves, recorded in the Salzburg Mozarteum, are technically and musically superb in what is a quite stunning release.

If I could own only one set of the Mozart violin concertos, this would be it.



Normally, any release by the outstanding Latvian violinist **Baiba Skride** would likely be topping my list, but this time her **Mozart: Violin Concertos Nos. 1–5** with the **Swedish Chamber Orchestra** under **Eivind Aadland** (also included are the *Adagio in E Major K261* and the two *Rondos in B-flat K269 and C Major K373*) (**Orfeo C997201 [naxosdirect.com/search/orf-c997201](https://naxosdirect.com/search/orf-c997201)**) is

up against the Koncz set.

Skride draws a beautiful sound from the *Yfrah Neaman* Stradivarius violin that she plays on extended loan, with a clear tone and an effortless grace and warmth. Like Koncz, Skride performs her own cadenzas to great effect.

There's never a hint of an issue with Skride's playing in beautifully judged and finely nuanced modern-instrument performances, but while there's elegance and depth in the orchestral playing, their recorded sound seems less than ideal; they seem set fairly far back with a particularly over-heavy bass line that often muddies the texture.



The ongoing **Analekta** series of the complete **Beethoven Violin Sonatas** with violinist **Andrew Wan** and pianist **Charles Richard-Hamelin** continues with the second volume, this time featuring the three *Op.12 Sonatas – No.1 in D Major, No.2 in A Major and No.3 in E-flat Major* – and the “*Spring*” *Sonata, No.5 in F Major Op.24* (**AN 2 8795 [analekta.com](https://analekta.com)**). Volume One

was reviewed here in December 2018.

The *Op.12* sonatas from 1797/98 were the first to be written and show the two instruments on an equal footing despite the customary “piano and violin” designation. They are joyful works – only one movement is in a minor key – and, while formally conventional, are imaginative and bright in texture. A pure delight from start to finish, the performances here are of the same high standard as on the earlier volume of a series that continues to impress.

The **Dover Quartet** swept the board at the 2013 Banff International String Quartet Competition, the first prize announcement noting that they “consistently demonstrated an exceptional level of maturity, poise and artistry.” Add five or six years of performance experience to that judgement and you will have a good idea of the exceptionally high standard of their new release (2CDs priced as a single) **Beethoven Complete String Quartets Volume 1 The Opus 18 Quartets**

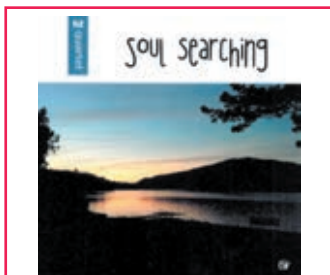
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## C Minor Progression Peter Miyamoto

Pianist Peter Miyamoto performs works in the key of C Minor by Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert



(Cedille CDR 90000 198 [naxosdirect.com/search/cdr+198](http://naxosdirect.com/search/cdr+198)).

The Dover Quartet has performed the complete Beethoven quartet cycle in recital several times, the Montreal Chamber Music Festival performances being reviewed as a “musically transformative” event. The players have waited until they felt completely comfortable with their inter-

pretations before committing them to disc, the recordings here being made in late 2018 and late 2019.

Although influenced by Haydn and Mozart, the Op.18 quartets show Beethoven clearly moving forward on his own path. The Dover members refer to them as playful and conversational and full of dramatic contrasts of mood and character, qualities which all shine through in performances of conviction and depth. This promises to be an outstanding set.



There's a fascinating story behind **Nathan Meltzer: To Roman Totenberg**, the debut CD by the 20-year-old Austrian violinist, who has studied at Juilliard since he was 13, and pianist **Rohan De Silva** (**Champs Hill Records** CHRC161 [nathanmeltzer.com/cds](http://nathanmeltzer.com/cds)). Totenberg's 1734 Ames Stradivarius violin was stolen after his 1980 recital at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts

and was not recovered until 2015, three years after Totenberg's death at 101. Professionally restored and consequently sold by Totenberg's daughters, the violin has been on loan to Meltzer since October 2018.

All the music on this CD was performed by Meltzer at a “Homecoming” concert at that same Longy School in November 2019, with Totenberg's three daughters present. The pieces were all favourites of Totenberg, who recorded two of them – the Franck and the Bartók – on this very violin. It's certainly a glorious instrument. Meltzer describes it as dark and resonant with a warm tone in every register, but there's also a real brilliance in the high register.

Able supported by De Silva, Meltzer is quite superb in a program that includes Bach's violin and keyboard *Sonata No.3 in E Major BWV1016*, Franck's *Sonata in A Major*, Szymanowski's *La Fontaine d'Arethuse* from his *Mythes Op.30*, Bartók's *Rhapsody No.1* and Wieniawski's *Polonaise de Concert in D Major Op.4*.

It's an outstanding debut recording from a prodigiously talented player with an admirable sense of history.



**Fragment**, the new **Schumann Quartet** CD of music by **Franz Schubert**, is part of their return to regular activity after the coronavirus hiatus, the ensemble having already played several concerts in July and August (**Berlin Classics** 030141 **OBC** [schumannquartett.de/eng/discography](http://schumannquartett.de/eng/discography)).

The three quartets here were chosen to show how Schubert evolved over the years, with failure a part of that development. The *String Quartet No.6 D74* from 1813, when Schubert was just 16, shows a composer trying to find his own style. What was intended to become the *String Quartet No.2 in C Minor* in 1820 was apparently abandoned and is now known as the *Quartettsatz D703*, an *Allegro assai* first movement followed by an *Andante* fragment in which the first violin simply fades away after 40 bars. It is included here, giving the CD its title, and the final notes and ensuing silence seem to lead perfectly into the start of the *String Quartet No.13 D804*, the “*Rosamunde*,” a large-scale work that reflected Schubert's approach to the symphony by way of chamber music.

Performances throughout are quite superb, with a lovely balance that allows all voices to be clearly heard, outstanding ensemble work, terrific dynamics and an obvious emotional connection with the music.



In 1938 the Austrian composer **Eric Zeisl** (1905-59) fled Vienna for Paris, where he was befriended by Darius Milhaud. Milhaud helped Zeisl's family move to Paris and subsequently to Los Angeles in 1939, Milhaud himself following to Oakland, California in 1940. The two remained close friends.

The French violinist **Ambroise Aubrun** discovered Zeisl's music during his doctoral research at the University of California in Los Angeles, and his new album **Paris < Los Angeles** with pianist **Steven Vanhauwaert** depicts the composers' friendship as well as revisiting a Mozart sonata that apparently fascinated Zeisl (**Editions Hortus** 189 [ambroiseaubrun.com](http://ambroiseaubrun.com)).

Two short pieces by Zeisl open and close the disc: *Menuchim's Song* (1939) from the incomplete opera *Job* and the world-premiere recording of the lyrical *Zigeunerweise*, the first movement from the unpublished 1919 *Suite for Violin and Piano Op.2* that Aubrun discovered in the Zeisl Collection at the university. The other Zeisl work is his substantial three-movement *Brandeis Sonata* from 1949, named for the California Institute where Zeisl was composer-in-residence.

Milhaud is represented by his four-movement *Violin Sonata No.2* from 1917, a quite lovely work. The Mozart is the *Violin Sonata No.21 in E Minor K304*. Written in 1778 during the Paris visit that saw the death of his mother, it is his only minor key violin sonata as well as his only instrumental work in that key.

There's excellent playing throughout a terrific CD, with the Mozart in particular a beautifully judged reading – clean and nuanced, with a finely balanced emotional sensitivity.



**Viola Romance** is the new 2CD set from violist **Rivka Golani**, accompanied by pianist **Zsuzsa Kollár**. It's a collection of 35 transcriptions of works originally for violin and piano, mostly arranged and revised for viola and piano by Golani (**Hungaroton** 32811-12 [hungarotonmusic.com](http://hungarotonmusic.com)).

Fritz Kreisler and Edward Elgar dominate CD1, with nine Kreisler originals and four Kreisler arrangements of single pieces by Chaminade, Granados, Tchaikovsky and Gluck. Eight Elgar tracks complete the disc.

Kreisler's presence is also felt on CD2 with six arrangements: five pieces by Dvořák to open and Eduard Gärtner's *Aus Wien* as the final track. In between are three pieces by František Drdla, two Brahms/*Joachim Hungarian Dances*, Jenő Hubay's *Bolero* and two Leopold Auer transcriptions of works by Robert Schumann.

The Kreisler influence is no accident, the interpretations here



**Phoenix Rising**  
**Christopher Creviston**  
Christopher Creviston presents a CD with all premiere recordings of works for soprano saxophone written for him



**WANDERLUST. The Flute Music of David Amram**  
**Karen McLaughlin Large**  
Karen McLaughlin Large and Amanda Arrington play music by David Amram, with composer as special guest



having been inspired by Golani's collaboration with Kreisler's long-time accompanist Franz Rupp, who died in 1992; his final performance was with Golani in 1985.

Most of these short pieces (27 are under four minutes) are well-suited to the darker tone of the viola, although Golani's generally wide and fairly slow vibrato tends to reduce the warmth at times. Still, as you would expect, there's much fine playing here.

The New York-based Irish violinist **Gregory Harrington** founded the **Estile Records** label in 2006 ([gregoryharrington.com](http://gregoryharrington.com)), and has built a reputation for successfully transforming movie scores, jazz, rock and pop music into brand new violin concert pieces. His new CD **Glass Hour** with the **Janáček Philharmonic** under **Mark Shapiro** features music by **Philip Glass**, including the world-premiere recording of Harrington's *The Hours Suite*, his own attractive arrangement of music from the 2002 Oscar-nominated Glass score for the movie *The*



*Hours*. The three movements – *Morning Passages*, *The Poet Acts* and *The Hours* – were respectively tracks 2, 1 and 14 on the soundtrack album, and as the timings are almost identical they would appear to be straight transcriptions.

Glass' *Violin Concerto No.2 "American Four Seasons"*, scored for strings and synthesizer, is the other work on the CD.

Glass left the four movements untitled, with a solo *Prologue* and three numbered *Songs* between the movements acting as violin cadenzas. There's a lovely feel to the slower sections in particular, although there are one or two moments in the fast perpetual motion passages where the intonation feels a bit insecure. **O**

## VOCAL

### Voices in the Wilderness – Music from the Ephrata Cloister

**Elizabeth Bates; Clifton Massey; Nils Neubert; Steven Hrycelak; Christopher Dylan Herbert**  
**Bright Shiny Things BSTC-0141**  
**([brightshiny.ninja/voices-in-the-wilderness](http://brightshiny.ninja/voices-in-the-wilderness))**



► This technically thrilling and historically significant recording is the brainchild of noted musical director/producer,

Christopher Dylan Herbert, and boasts the prestigious vocal talents of soprano Elizabeth Bates, alto Clifton Massey, tenor Nils Neubert and bass Steven Hrycelak. The entire project is composed of a cappella hymns, written just under 300 years ago by the residents of the Ephrata Cloister – an 18th-century celibate

community in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, established in 1732. Nearly all of the music here was written by the solitary sisters of Ephrata – the earliest known female composers in North America.\* These challenging pieces have never before been performed by a professional ensemble, and in keeping with the authenticity of the CD, the recording itself was done in the very room for which the material was originally composed.

With the opening, *Rose-Lillie-Blume Sequence*, the voices introduce themselves and come together in perfect symmetry, rendering this rich composition in all of its original majesty. The acoustics of the Ephrata Cloister provide the sonic platform for this stirring piece – rendered in perfect classical, High German. On *Herzog Unsrer Seligkeiten*, dynamics as well as precise rhythmic motifs are utilized, and of special mention is *Wann Gott sein Zion Losen Wird*, where the satisfying arrangement explores curiously modern chordal motifs, foreshadowing chorale works yet to come, and the eventual emergence of 12-tone composition.

The final track, *Formier, Mein Topffer*,

is both emotional and direct. Written by Sister Föbin (Christianna Lasse) the chord voicings are placed in the exact sweet spot for each register, creating a shining jewel of vocal music, and a celebration of early female composers/vocalists, as well as their creative vision, which is more than timely.

**Lesley Mitchell-Clarke**

**Editor's note:** Some might dispute this claim, and suggest that an Order of Ursuline nuns in Montreal were more likely the first female composers on the continent. I checked with noted Canadian music specialist John Beckwith who told me that, in an essay on Canada's earliest music-theory treatise (1718), Erich Schwandt (formerly with the music department, U. of Victoria), claimed that the Ursulines wrote original music. The order was established in 1639 and was noted for its attention to culture and the arts, especially music, suggesting that these sisters were composing nearly a century before those of the Ephrata Cloister.

What we're listening to this month:

[thewholenote.com/listening](http://thewholenote.com/listening)



#### Falling Out of Time Silkroad Ensemble

"Harrowing and hallucinogenic, this song cycle about bereavement and isolation has unintended resonance in a year that has familiarized so many with trauma and loss." - NY Times



#### Paris <=> Los Angeles: Milhaud, Mozart, Zeisl Ambroise Aubrun, violin, Steven Vanhauwaert, piano

This CD depicts Eric Zeisl and Darius Milhaud's friendship and their exile to California.



#### Viola Romance Rivka Golani

"Viola Romance"...is a musical conversation, face-to-face.



**Glass Hour**  
**Gregory Harrington**  
 Features *The Hours Suite* - the Irish violinist's own attractive arrangement for violin and orchestra of Glass' 2002 Oscar-nominated score for the movie *The Hours*.

**Beethoven – Christ on the Mount of Olives**  
**Elsa Dreisig; Pavol Breslik; David Soar;**  
**London Symphony Chorus; LSO; Sir Simon**  
**Rattle**  
**LSO Live LSO0826D (lsolive.lso.co.uk)**



► In the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke capture Jesus' last moments as a free man. Aware of his impending arrest and execution – having been

betrayed by Judas Iscariot – Jesus uses his final night to reflect and pray at a familiar location, the Garden of Gethsemane, located on the Mount of Olives. To this day, the location remains a site of Christian pilgrimage and, in 1803, afforded rich artistic fodder to Beethoven, who used its physical beauty and importance as a site within Christian theology to pen his compelling, rarely performed, and only Passion oratorio, *Christ on the Mount of Olives*.

Although not theologically Christian, but rather an Enlightenment-era deist, Beethoven was most certainly drawing a parallel between this Gospel narrative of Jesus at his most fallible and his own looming existential crisis of encroaching deafness and isolation. Written while living at Vienna's Theater an der Wien and understood, at the time, within the context of other 18th-century oratorios that focus on religious themes, subjects and iconography, *Christ on the Mount of Olives* deserves to occupy a more central place within Beethoven's already bountiful canon. Good thing then, that it is performed and recorded so beautifully here on this 2020 LSO Live release by the London Symphony Orchestra with Sir Simon Rattle at the helm.

Fleshed out with an enormous chorus of nearly 150 under the direction of Simon Halsey and released in honour of the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth, this must-have recording packages together a compelling religious narrative with the majestic backing of the LSO and inspired soloists Elsa Dreisig, Pavol Breslik and David Soar performing a variety of biblical figures from Franz Xaver Huber's libretto. With the religious importance for some of the upcoming Christmas season, this recording could not have come at a better time.

**Andrew Scott**

**Elgar – Sea Pictures; Falstaff**  
**Elina Garanča; Staatskapelle Berlin; Daniel**  
**Barenboim**  
**Decca Records 00028948509683**  
**(deccaclassics.com/en/catalogue)**



► A new and sumptuous live recording from Decca features two important works by Sir Edward Elgar: the five *Sea Pictures*, Op 37 (1899)

and the seldom-heard “symphonic study,” *Falstaff*, Op. 68 (1913).

Elgar was both proud and fond of his *Falstaff*. While it was well received at its premiere in 1913, it hasn't quite found its footing in the standard repertoire to date (at least outside of England). Conversely, the *Sea Pictures* have long captured the imaginations of singers and audiences alike. The sea itself is central to British identity and, while many other cultures could claim the same, an Englishman's love for his island's coastal waters is of a particular brand; Elgar epitomizes this relationship in his cycle. They are unique for their dark and rich soundscapes, initially scored for contralto. (Canada's own Maureen Forrester sang them – almost as trademark – throughout her career.) The five *Pictures* set words from different poets, including the composer's wife: *In Haven* (Capri).

Daniel Barenboim is no stranger to interpreting Elgar. What an experience it is, to hear him steer this record's course. Barenboim's seasoned Elgar is luminous and emotive, ever balanced and rational. One might argue that he brings just a hint of German cerebralism to such overtly English Romantic music. Mezzo-soprano Elina Garanča contributes her own impressive artistry here, embracing this ravishing repertoire with all that she's got. Her voice soars above the Staatskapelle Berlin, buoyed and serene, “to rolling worlds of wave and shell.”

**Adam Sherkin**

**Egon Wellesz – Die Opferung des Gefangenen**  
**Hwang; Cerha; Dewey; Koch; Vienna**  
**Concert Choir; Radio-Symphonieorchester**  
**Wien; Robert Brooks**  
**Capriccio C5423 (naxosdirect.com/**  
**search/845221054230)**



► Austrian-British composer Egon Wellesz (1885–1974), of Hungarian Jewish origin, was a prolific composer. Extensively performed and decorated during

his lifetime, he achieved success early, being the first of Arnold Schoenberg's students to receive a publishing contract from

Universal Edition, before Berg or Webern. Generally neglected in the decades since his death, this world premiere recording, by the Vienna Concert Choir and the Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien of Wellesz's 1924–25 opera-ballet *Die Opferung des Gefangenen* (The Sacrifice of the Prisoner), is part of a wider revival of interest in his music.

The opera's story is based on a scenario by Eduard Stucken after the ancient Mayan play *Rabinal Achi*, performed annually in Rabinal, Guatemala. Subtitled “a cultural drama for dance, solo singers and choir,” Wellesz's work is about an imprisoned prince who is waiting for his execution after a battle. It's not a huge stretch however to see the story reflecting many of the post WWI anxieties around the consequences of the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Replete with dramatic vocal and choral scenes and massive orchestral passages with Mahlerian and Schoenbergian echoes, *Die Opferung* is a prime example of Wellesz's mature Viennese musical style. His signature colourful orchestration is underscored by forte brass choir and bold percussion statements. This theatrical work, parts of which would not be out of place on a later blockbuster movie soundtrack, reads surprisingly well on audio CD, even without the visual and dance elements of a stage production.

**Andrew Timar**

**English Songs à la Française**  
**Tyler Duncan; Erika Switzer**  
**Bridge Records 9537 (bridgerecords.com/**  
**products/9537)**



► British Columbia-born/New York-based baritone, Tyler Duncan, and his wife, pianist Erika Switzer, are internationally renowned performers as

a duo, and individually. The clever idea of performing French composers' settings of original English texts started when French baritone François Le Roux handed them Camille Saint-Saëns' *Cherry-Tree Farm* score, set to Horace Lennard's poetry. More of these Romantic/20th century songs were compiled, which, after their recital in Tours, led to this, their remarkable first duo album.

A literal who's who of French composers successfully set the original English texts. Reynaldo Hahn's *Five Little Songs* (1914), set to Robert Louis Stevenson's words, are short children's songs with tonal word painting like the florid piano lines behind lyrical vocals in *The Swing*, and colourful low vocal pitches with piano tremolo night sky effects in *The Stars*. Darius Milhaud's settings of five Rabindranath Tagore *Child Poems* (1916) are operatic, such as the fully orchestrated piano part supporting lyrical emotional singing in



the closing, *The Gift*. Love Maurice Ravel's *Chanson écossaise* (1910) setting of Robert Burns' text. Ravel emulates a Scottish quasi-bagpipe folk song without ever creating a parody. Jules Massenet's setting of Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Come into the Garden, Maud* (1880) foreshadows future musical theatre sounds. Poulenc, Roussel and Gounod works complete the recording.

Duncan and Switzer deserve a "bilingual" standing ovation for their tight duo musicianship and colourful interpretations of these one-of-a kind art songs.

**Tiina Kiik**

**Saman Shahi – Breathing in the Shadows**  
**Maureen Batt; Fabián Arciniegas; Tiffany Hanus; Various Instrumentalists**  
**Leaf Music LM237 ([samanshahimusic.com](http://samanshahimusic.com))**



► The debut album by Iranian-Canadian composer and pianist Saman Shahi, *Breathing in the Shadows*, feels like a gentle journey through the kaleidoscope

of meaningful images, each captured in a subjective and probing way. The three song cycles included on this album are worlds unto their own – powerful and empowering, existential blocks of unique and diverse musical language combining minimalism, dodecaphony, hints of Iranian traditional music and rock. The poetry is beautiful and impactful, but it is the music that propels it beyond its scope. Shahi's music lets the poetic images breathe and blossom and underlines the themes of inner and outer struggles, yearnings, rebelliousness and death (symbolic and physical). The rhythmic drive and atonal segments create an immediacy that is enlivening.

The titular song cycle, *Breathing in the Shadows*, is based on poems by five poetesses from around the world and features a

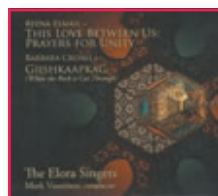
wonderfully talented duo – soprano Maureen Batt and pianist Tara Scott. Each song is a statement of independence and defiance in the face of oppression, longing or, simply, love.

The second cycle, *Orbit*, builds on sharp imagery conceived by Serbian-Canadian singer-songwriter Jelena Ćirić. The waves of colours Shahi creates in the piano lines are just gorgeous and tenor Fabián Arciniegas' phrasing underscores the words with subtle urgency.

The concluding cycle, *Song of a Wandering Soul*, merges several musical forms that Shahi considers a part of his musical identity. Written for a larger ensemble, using improvisation and electronics to create varied textures and riding on the perfectly suited timbre of Tiffany Hanus' voice, this cycle is pure rock 'n roll in a classical setting.

**Ivana Popovic**

**Reena Esmail – This Love Between Us: Prayers for Unity; Barbara Croall – Giishkaapkg**  
**Elora Singers; Mark Vuorinen**  
**Independent TESR-001 ([elorasingers.ca/hear/recordings](http://elorasingers.ca/hear/recordings))**



► The professional Elora Singers have established a reputation as one of the finest chamber choirs in Canada, particularly known for their commitment to Canadian

repertoire. This admirable new release on their own imprint features two contrasting large-scale choral works by Canadian composer Barbara Croall and American composer Reena Esmail.

The subtitle, *Prayers for Unity*, of Esmail's *This Love Between Us* (2016) tips listeners off to the composer's intent. The work's seven movements are titled after the major religious traditions of India: Buddhism, Sikhism,

Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Jainism and Islam. Esmail has selected representative texts in the original seven languages from each, evoking unity, universal brotherhood and kindness. A signature element of the work is the inspired and effective incorporation of a Hindustani sitarist, vocal soloist and tabla player into the orchestral and choral texture, underscoring the fusion of North Indian and Western classical musical elements, both traditions Esmail is at home in.

Odawa First Nation composer and musician Barbara Croall's 2019 *Giishkaapkg* (Where the Rock is Cut Through) is scored for choir, percussion and the pigwagan (Anishinaabe cedar flute) eloquently played by the composer. The vocals are underscored by a powerful, elegiac text condemning the violence to the feminine in creation. "Due to colonization," writes Croall, "many women and girls likewise have suffered (and continue to suffer) ... due to the many past and continuing violations of Shkaskmigiwe (Mother Earth)." Referencing the present tragedy of murdered and missing Indigenous women, Croall reminds us that "the rocks bear witness and speak to us of this" – a message also heard clearly through her powerful music.

**Andrew Timar**

**Rosa Mystica – Musical Portraits of the Blessed Virgin Mary**  
**Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir; Paul Spicer**  
**Somm Recordings SOMMCD 0617**  
**([naxosdirect.com/search/748871061729](http://naxosdirect.com/search/748871061729))**



► Among the stated objectives of this record label, one stands out and it is this: "to uncover new [music] ... from the unique to the extraordinary..."

What we're listening to this month:

[thewholenote.com/listening](http://thewholenote.com/listening)



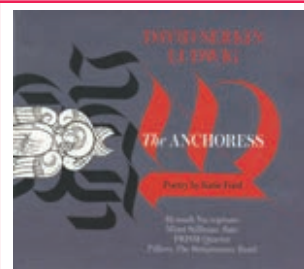
**English Songs à la française**  
**Tyler Duncan and Erika Switzer**  
 Baritone and pianist pair present their debut album, a collection of songs by masters of French mélodie in a rarely heard form: English verse.



**Breathing in the Shadows**  
**Saman Shahi**  
 Stories of oppression through alienation, resistance, and self-actualization. The poems have an inherent musicality, evocative imagery, and a powerful message of unity and hope.



**Voices of the Pearl, Volume 3**  
**Anne Harley and Stacey Fraser**  
 Canadian soprano/artistic director Anne Harley is joined by fellow Canadian artists Stacey Fraser, Steve Thachuk, Emily Cecilia LeBel to present an album of exciting commissioned works.



**The Anchoress**  
**David Serkin Ludwig**  
 A one-woman monodrama that explores struggles with faith, alienation, gender, and social power through the imagined person of an anchoress.

This disc, *Rosa Mystica*, not only fits that objective, but it does so with a great deal of reverential eloquence.

The centerpiece – halfway through the album – is Benjamin Britten's ardent setting of Gerald Manley Hopkins' poem *Rosa Mystica* (*Mystical Rose*), an invocation in the 16th-century *Litany of Loreto*, which actually dates back to the *Tanakh* and *Song of Songs* (2:1), and which, when translated, reads: "I am the Rose of Sharon." Paul Spicer and the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Choir interpret the work with shimmering passion.

It is Siva Oke, the recording producer, who makes sure that your edification begins from track one, with the inimitable John Tavener's *Mother of God, here I stand*. Remarkably, each track thereafter is instrumentally and lyrically fresh despite the underlying theme of all the music being the same: that is, dedication to the praise and worship of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The producer has also reflected a keen sense of history and openness for new material in the selection of these *Musical Portraits of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. The Nicholas Ludford (1485–1557) offering, *Ave cujus conceptio*, is the oldest. Meanwhile, from the contemporary era, Carl Rutti's *Ave Maria*, Judith Bingham's *Ave virgo sanctissima* and Cecilia McDowall's *Of a Rose* make their debuts on this impressive recording.

**Raul da Gama**

**Peter Liebertson – Songs of Love and Sorrow; The Six Realms**  
**Gerald Finley; Anssi Karttunen; Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra; Hannu Lintu**  
**Online ODE 1356-2 (naxosdirect.com/search/0761195135624)**



► American composer Peter Liebertson (1946–2011) had a fascinating, bicultural career. A composition student of rigorous American modernists Milton

Babbitt and Charles Wuorinen, at an early age he imbibed the classical music of earlier eras, as well as mid-century jazz and musical theatre in the NYC home of his prominent record-executive father Goddard Liebertson and ballerina mother Vera Zorina.

Starting in the 1970s he embraced the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism which profoundly influenced his compositional approach. Liebertson's mature works successfully fuse those seemingly disparate influences into a cohesive idiosyncratic chromatic style threaded with an appealing lyricism and anchored by inventive orchestration.

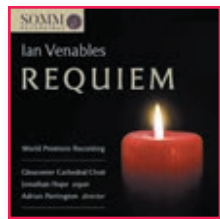
Liebertson composed *The Six Realms* (2000), a dramatic concerto for amplified cello and orchestra, at the request of Yo-Yo Ma. The work's backstory outlines a key Buddhist teaching: differing states of mind shape human

experience. Thus each of the concerto's six continuous sections illustrates a different realm in Buddhist cosmology and aspect of human emotion. The work receives a powerfully emotional rendering on the album by contemporary music specialist, cellist Anssi Karttunen, a close Liebertson friend.

The record's other work features an outstanding performance by Canadian bass-baritone Gerald Finley as soloist in Liebertson's orchestral song cycle *Songs of Love and Sorrow* (2010), among his last works. Set to five sonnets from *Cien sonetos de amor* by Pablo Neruda, the *Songs* are imbued with love for – but also a sense of quiet farewell to – the composer's late wife, Lorraine Hunt Liebertson, ending with a haunting repeated "adios."

**Andrew Timar**

**Ian Venables – Requiem**  
**Choir of Gloucester Cathedral; Adrian Partington**  
**Somm Recordings SOMMCD 0618**  
**(naxosdirect.com/search/sommcd+0618)**



► The requiem Mass is one of the most frequently set texts in all of music, with many of history's greatest composers turning their pens to this ancient burial rite.

Traditional settings date from the medieval era to the present and range from the contemplative (Fauré and Durufle) to the bombastic (Berlioz and Verdi), while a number of 20th- and 21st-century settings incorporate additional texts, such as Britten's *War Requiem* and Howard Goodall's *Eternal Light*.

One of the most recent contributions to the requiem genre is Ian Venables' 2018 *Requiem*, Op.48, which presents a selection of the traditional requiem Mass texts in a contemporary setting. Scored for chorus and organ, Venables composed this work with liturgical performance in mind; although this might seem to be a restrictive limitation when compared to the immense orchestrations of the great musical requiems, Venables uses the timbres and textures of both the organ and choir to produce a range of effects that reflect the drama, terror and peacefulness present in the text. This attentive and effective synthesis of words and music should come as no surprise, as Venables is a respected and highly experienced art song composer who has also written a range of instrumental and choral works.

Venables' *Requiem* is characterized by a mixture of textures, woven together throughout the duration of the work to produce varying results. One such distinguishing feature is the use of modality, which often erupts into bright, open quartal chords that produce a luminescence not otherwise attainable in the major/minor system. While tuning is always of paramount importance

for any performing group, it becomes even more so when non-traditional harmonies are used, and the Gloucester Cathedral Choir executes every such passage with precision and accuracy, breathing life into this mass for the dead.

**Matthew Whitfield**

**Voices of the Pearl Volume 3**  
**Anne Harley; Stacey Fraser; James Hayden; Various artists**  
**Voices of the Pearl (voicesofthepearl.org/albums)**



► The ambitious Voices of the Pearl project commissions, performs and records works by international living composers, who set texts by and about females from

diverse traditions throughout history, illuminating their lives, struggles and beliefs. Volume Three features five works based on Buddhist, Chinese and other Asian texts, performed by Canadian/California-based sopranos Anne Harley (who is also artistic director) and Stacey Fraser, with American instrumentalists and singers.

Canadian composer Emilie Cecilia LeBel's *You Moving Stars* (2017) is based on early Therigāthā (Verses of the Elder Nuns) poetry collection by and about female disciples of the historical Buddha from about the fifth century BCE. Performed by Harley and electric guitarist Steve Thachuk, it is sparsely orchestrated yet attention-grabbing, from the opening long-held guitar drone, sudden high soprano entry, wide-interval-pitched melody, and brief almost unison vocal and guitar sections. The two performers create a sacred, thought provoking sound.

Chinary Ung's *Still Life After Death* (1995) follows a living Soul, sung by Fraser, on her ritualistic end-of-life journey. Scored for full ensemble and performed by the terrific Brightwork newmusic, the repeated detached notes, loud crashes and almost contrapuntal flute, violin and clarinet backdrops support the soprano's emotional wide-ranging part until the deep-calming, short-Buddhist-phrase-chanting, bass-baritone, James Hayden, relaxes the Soul to echo him until her final fearless ending.

Works by Karola Obermüller, Yii Kah Hoe, and a second Chinary Ung composition complete this amazing recording, illuminating female artists throughout history.

**Tiina Kiik**



**The Anchoress**  
**Hyunah Yu; Mimi Stillman; PRISM**  
**(Saxophone) Quartet; Piffaro, The**  
**Renaissance Band**  
**XAS Records XAS 110 ([prismquartet.com/](http://prismquartet.com/recordings)**  
**recordings)**



► *The Anchoress* is a song cycle in eight movements composed by David Serkin Ludwig with text by Katie Ford. Written for soprano, saxophone quartet, and a Renaissance band, *The Anchoress* explores the medieval mystic tradition of anchorism. As part of a devotional practice to Christian life, an anchoress withdrew from secular society in order to live in extreme deprivation in a bricked-up cell attached to a church (an anchorhold). From her “squint” (a tiny window) to the outside world, Ford imagines a narrative from the most inner thoughts of a medieval anchoress. From that tiny window we are privy to slices of conversations, with herself and others, where the anchoress experiences intense and extreme emotions that range from contemplation and doubt to terror and religious ecstasy.

Ludwig’s striking choice of orchestration in the mixing of ancient and modern instruments moves the listener efficiently through the various narratives by creating sonorities that are both unusual and unique. The solo recorder is particularly efficient as it converses and interrupts the voice, mirroring the meandering mind of the anchoress.

*The Anchoress* is an expansive monologue in which soprano Hyunah Yu makes use of several vocal techniques such as vocalises and *Sprechstimme*. She is expertly supported by Piffaro, the acclaimed Renaissance wind band and the PRISM Quartet. *The Anchoress* received its world premiere in October 2018 by the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society. The disc also features three instrumental

settings, *Three Anchoress Songs*, featuring flutist Mimi Stillman and tenor saxophonist Matthew Levy.

**Sophie Bisson**

## CLASSICAL AND BEYOND

**Corelli's Band – Violin Sonatas**  
**Augusta McKay Lodge; Various Artists**  
**Naxos 8.574239 ([naxosdirect.com/](http://naxosdirect.com/search/747313423972)**  
**search/747313423972)**



► The accomplished young Baroque violinist Augusta McKay Lodge brings her considerable musical elegance and strong personality to bear in this fascinating program of early 18th-century sonatas for violin and continuo. We hear three sonatas by Giovanni Mossi and two by Giovanni Stefano Carbonelli. Both Mossi and Carbonelli were students and/or followers of Arcangelo Corelli and indeed their works owe much to the great master, both in content and structure. The lone Corelli work on the disc is one of his greatest, the *Sonata Op.5, No.3 in C Major*, and the performance is sensational, a great combination of fire, precision and risk-taking. This is playing of great clarity that brings out the harmonic tension, melodic beauty and rhythmic interest in Corelli’s music.

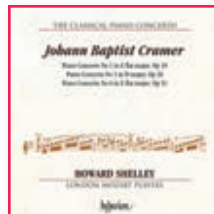
Of the three Mossi sonatas, the two from his early Op.1 collection from 1716 are a real revelation. They’re technically challenging with a refreshing originality. The later 1733 sonata of his which opens the disc is somewhat more square and uninteresting. While obviously talented, Carbonelli seemed to have dabbled in music, possibly studying with Corelli and having known Vivaldi, who named one of his sonatas – *Il Carbonelli* – after him. His only published music – before

he took up work as a supplier of wine to the English court – was a set of sonatas published in 1729. The two represented here are full of interest and great poignancy.

The continuo band is a powerhouse and provides strong support to Lodge, who is clearly emerging as one of the most eloquent and interesting Baroque violinists around.

**Larry Beckwith**

**Johann Baptist Cramer – Piano Concertos 1, 3 & 6**  
**Howard Shelley; London Mozart Players**  
**Hyperion CDA68302**  
**([hyperion-records.co.uk](http://hyperion-records.co.uk))**



► Apart from his piano *Etudes Op.84* – for many years a staple in piano pedagogy – the name Johann Baptist Cramer is not all that well known today. A year

after his birth in Mannheim in 1771, his father – himself a renowned violinist and conductor – moved the family to London to take advantage of the thriving musical life there. The move was clearly a fortuitous one, for over the course of his long lifetime, Cramer earned a reputation as a virtuoso soloist, composer and pedagogue. In light of his sizable output, he is definitely a composer worth re-exploring and who better to do it than the London Mozart Players with Howard Shelley both directing and performing three piano concertos on this Hyperion recording, the sixth in the *Classical Piano* series.

The *Concertos No.1 and 3* in E-flat and D Major respectively, were completed in the 1790s and stylistically straddle the classical and Romantic periods. While both were perhaps written with an eye to demonstrating Cramer’s technical prowess, the musical style is gracious and spirited, further enhanced by Shelley’s technically flawless performance and the LMP’s solid accompaniment.

What we're listening to this month:

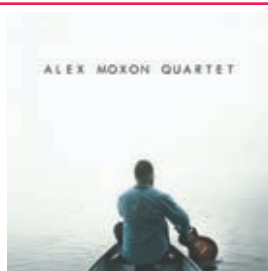
[thewholenote.com/listening](http://thewholenote.com/listening)



### Music for English Horn Alone

**Jacqueline Leclair**

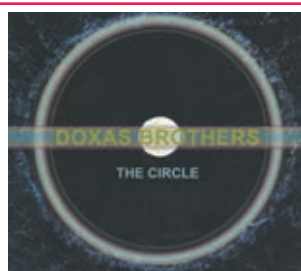
A dynamic collection of solo works for this instrument usually relegated to a coloristic role in the orchestra, by a renowned double reed practitioner.



### Alex Moxon Quartet

**Alex Moxon**

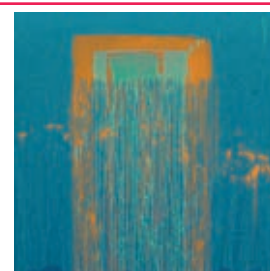
On his debut as a leader, Moxon offers an antidote to gloom and despair, reminding us that the future will be a wonderful place.



### The Circle

**Doxas Brothers**

Tight, angular jazz by a pair of brothers that have rubbed elbows with the top progressive voices in jazz - this is on the money throughout.



### Sunset in the Blue

**Melody Gardot**

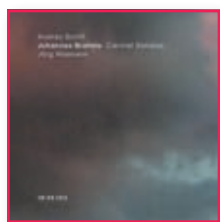
"Sunset In The Blue" is Melody Gardot's latest release since 2018's "Live in Europe". Ambitiously created during the pandemic, the album is both timeless and necessary

The *Concerto No.6* dates from around 1813. By that time, Beethoven had completed his seventh symphony and *Wellington's Victory*. Yet any traces of the new Romantic spirit in this concerto are marginal – clearly Cramer wasn't about to abandon a means of expression that had successfully served his purpose. Once again, Shelley and the LMP comprise a convivial pairing, particularly in the buoyant *Rondo finale* which brings the concerto and the disc to a satisfying conclusion.

So a hearty bravo to Howard Shelley and the LMP for once again shedding light on some fine music that might otherwise have been overlooked. As always, we can look forward to further additions to the series.

**Richard Haskell**

**Johannes Brahms – Clarinet Sonatas**  
**András Schiff; Jörg Widmann**  
**ECM New Series ECM 2621**  
**(emcrecords.com)**



► Few people play the clarinet so well, compose so well and exemplify the title “musician” so well as Jörg Widman. Substitute “piano” for “clarinet,” and

leaving aside composition, the same applies to András Schiff. What a fantastic collaboration this recording of Brahms' *Sonatas for Piano and Clarinet Op.120* turns out to be. The subtitle is accurate: the piano is an equal partner, and often the more dominant. Schiff's articulation and phrasing leave me nodding in wonder and delight. Widman's mastery throughout is unparalleled. The two have collaborated often enough that it's like listening in on a conversation between brilliant friends. Brahms couldn't have asked for a more united and insightful reading.

They open with *Sonata No.2 in E-flat Major*, which makes sense if, like me, you prefer *Sonata No.1 in F Minor*. As wonderful as the performance is, there is nothing that can convince me the second sonata carries as much water as the first, which is more in the composer's *Sturm und Drang* manner. They focus, in the first movement of the F Minor, not so much on angst as resigned sadness. The same mood runs into the second movement adagio, taken at the bottom of the range of possible tempi at the outset, nudged gently forward in the middle section, and relaxed back in Schiff's brief cadenza.

Widman dedicated his *Five Intermezzi* to Schiff: solo pieces whose title and content hearken back to Brahms' late piano pieces. Interposed between the sonatas here, they serve as (mostly) brief enigmas to tease the listener. Think of a clouded mirror. Think of the grumpy ghost of Brahms, still pining, revisiting melancholy.

**Max Christie**

**Moritz Moszkowski – Orchestral Music**  
**Volume Two**  
**Sinfonia Varsovia; Ian Hobson**  
**Naxos Classics TOCC 0557**  
**(naxosdirect.com/search/5060113445575)**



► Fate was surely unkind to the once-celebrated composer and conductor, Moritz Moszkowski (1854–1925): his marriage ended, his teen-aged daughter

died, avant-garde movements rendered his compositions “old-fashioned” and his considerable fortune disappeared when World War I obliterated his investments. After years of failing health, he died an impoverished recluse in Paris.

Until the recent revival of interest in lesser-known Romantic-era repertoire, all that survived in performance from Moszkowski's large output were a few short piano pieces that occasionally appeared as recital encores. Nevertheless, it's hard to believe that his *Deuxième Suite d'Orchestre, Op.47* (1890) is only now receiving its first-ever recording – it's far too good to have been ignored for so long!

The 41-minute, six-movement work begins with the solemnly beautiful *Preludio*, in which extended chromatic lyricism builds to a near-Wagnerian climax. The urgent, increasingly furious *Fuga* and syncopated, rocking *Scherzo* suggest Mendelssohn on steroids. The long lines of the lovely *Larghetto* are warmly Romantic, gradually blossoming from tranquil to passionate. The cheerful, graceful *Intermezzo* leads to the *Marcia*, a surging blend of Wagner and Elgar that ends the *Suite* in a proverbial blaze of glory.

Moszkowski's *Troisième Suite d'Orchestre, Op.79* (1908), in four movements lasting 27 minutes, is much lighter and brighter, almost semi-classical in its sunny charm. The robust playing of Sinfonia Varsovia under conductor Ian Hobson adds to this CD's many pleasures. Here's winning proof that there's lots of “good-old-fashioned” music still waiting to be rediscovered and enjoyed!

**Michael Schulman**

**The French Album**  
**Jorge Federico Osorio**  
**Cedille CDR 90000 197 (naxosdirect.com/search/735131919722)**



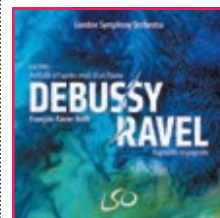
► In a promotional video for Cedille Records' new release, *The French Album* by Jorge Federico Osorio, the pianist himself suggests that Claude Debussy

argued that French music, above all, “must give pleasure.” If these words were taken as marching orders for the great Mexican pianist, then it should be noted that his 2020 album represents a job well done. No doubt, unpacking, and then reassembling, music that spans composers, generations and musical eras (Baroque, Romantic, 20th century) into an expressive and cohesive narrative that moves beyond a simple shared place of origin towards something more profound, is yeoman's work to be sure, but work which Osorio, a concertizing pianist and faculty member at Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing Arts, handles with aplomb, care and musicality. It is difficult to imagine what exactly the aesthetic similarities are within the music of Jean-Philippe Rameau, Emmanuel Chabrier, Gabriel Fauré, Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel, but Osorio manages to connect the repertoire by way of his expressive touch, superior musicality and interpretive mastery. By performing these well-known and hugely popular pieces, such as Ravel's *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, in its originally intended solo piano context – audiences may be more familiar with the composer's 1910 orchestral version – Osorio affords listeners an intimate look into the subtle and deliberate compositional motion of this war horse that, perhaps despite accusations of being overplayed, is magnificent in both conception and interpretation here.

Similarly, French (and European more generally) fascination (exoticization?) with Spanish melodies and rhythms (Chabrier's *Habanera*; Debussy's *La Puerta del Vino* and *La soirée dans Grenade*; and Ravel's *Alborado del gracioso*), moves here beyond a fetishization of otherness. Osorio achieves a coherent musical statement that places the simple, Romantic, and decidedly French, expressionism of Debussy's *Clair de lune*, for example, in conversation with the complexity of those fiery Iberian rhythms, providing a welcome release.

**Andrew Scott**

**Debussy Ravel**  
**London Symphony Orchestra; Francois-Xavier Roth**  
**LSO Live LSO0821D (Isolive.Iso.co.uk)**



► A sonic adventure! This impressive new release features three masterworks of French Impressionism by two of its greatest exponents, Debussy

and Ravel, in superb SACD stereo sound using the latest high-density recording technology and conducted by one of today's most charismatic and enterprising maestros, French conductor Francois-Xavier Roth. He “creates empathetic musicality and flair for colour



and such startling touches that the players look stunned" (London Times); "...there's never anything routine about his approach." (Gramophone)

Ravel's *Rhapsodie espagnole* emerges in pianissimo from total darkness with four descending notes that reoccur in all movements, unifying the work. It then progresses with "cumulative vitality" into sunlight with three dance movements: *Malagueña*, *Habanera* and – exploding in fortissimo – the final movement *Fiera*. To maintain the suspense and gradual crescendo is a real test for the conductor who is showing his lion claws already.

Thanks to medici.tv I actually watched him conducting the *Prélude à l'après midi d'un faune* with the London Symphony and was impressed by his emphasis on the individual players' spontaneity, the wonderful interplay of woodwinds supported by the harps and the horns. The overall arch-shape is very clear: from the meandering, voluptuous solo flute through ever-changing textures into the passionate fortissimo middle part and sinking back into pianissimo as the faun, after being aroused by the elusive nymphs, goes back to slumber.

The real clincher is Debussy's iconic *La mer*. Debussy's immense achievement captures "the majesty and delicacy, fury and stillness, effervescence and power of the sea" and inspires Roth to give an extraordinary performance, careful attention to detail, stunning orchestral effects and an overall epic sweep with a very exciting ending.

**Janos Gardonyi**

## Hindemith – Kammermusik IV - VII Kronberg Academy Soloists; Christoph Eschenbach

Online ODE 1357-2 (naxosdirect.com/search/0761195135723)



► Christoph Eschenbach and the Schleswig-Holstein Festival Orchestra bring us a second volume of pieces that Paul Hindemith chose to lump into one

category: *Kammermusik*. They are all works for smaller ensembles. Most or all require conductor, which is unusual for chamber music; they are complexly orchestrated for bands of varying instrumentation. Here are the latter four in the series. Hindemith was perhaps most easily described as a neo-classical composer, but this reduction definitely omits more than it describes. As an unabashed fan of his music, I'm in a reductive category as well, it sometimes seems. I love the clarity of his ideas and forms, the cleverness of his counterpoint, the freshness of his harmonic language.

*Kammermusik IV* is a violin concerto. Don't look for many clues in his movement titles other than an indication of the type of pace for each, but the second movement is titled "*Nachtstück*" (literally Night Piece); not exactly a nocturne, but still yes, a nocturne. There is expression here, and quirkiness, as in the interlude that seems to depict the chirpings of nocturnal creatures in the forest. The final two movements run together, and the violinist is devilishly good, as are the players in the micro-orchestra. *Kammermusik V* is a *Viola Concerto*, one that Hindemith frequently performed himself. The finale is a *Marche Militaire*, where one might expect a certain ironic humour to play out. It does not disappoint. VI features the viola d'amore, and VII, the organ.

Hindemith was not neo anything except

possibly neo-Hindemith. Fresh, prolific and always inspired, it will be a century before he is accorded the kind of stature given Mozart. Says me.

**Max Christie**

## The Cello in My Life Steuart Pincombe 7 Mountain Records 7MNTN-019 (steuartpincombe.com)



► Cellist Steuart Pincombe's choice of repertoire on this album is both diverse and connected. With exquisite musicianship, and skillful dedication to the

delivery, he takes a deeper delve into the material of each composer and finds a way to link them together, in spite of the nearly 200 years separating them. He has highlighted the "gesture" – the energy and physical motive which begins a sound – and he does it with an attention to detail and authenticity which I found totally absorbing. The nuances of grit, breath and space spanned the entire album, beginning with the Bach *Suite V in C Minor* which flowed with a high volume of intent. The recording is edgy and perfectly flawed with a realism that included delightful burbles from the scordiatura.

Pincombe's interpretations of both the early music and the modern instructions stay clear of both exaggeration and nerdiness. Rather, his energy is felt from a bodily sense deep within and is executed perfectly while still enunciating his passion for the freely gestural energy he programmed. Perhaps during this time of lost public performances I was especially appreciative of the rawness, the energy and the unprocessed feel of the recordings.

Helmut Lachenmann's piece *Pression*, written in 1969, is a long exploration of playing parts of the cello not generally found

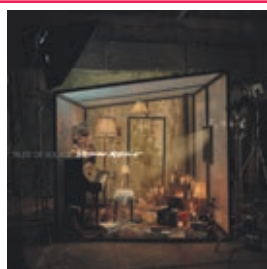
What we're listening to this month:

[thewholenote.com/listening](http://thewholenote.com/listening)



### Urban(e)

**Mike Fahie Jazz Orchestra**  
Reimagining works by seven classical composers (Chopin, Puccini, Stravinsky and more) for jazz orchestra, celebrating the cross-pollination of these two musics.



### Tales of Solace Stephan Moccio

The Canadian composer, producer, arranger, and conductor returns to the piano and his roots in classical composition for this hauntingly beautiful album.



### MISTRÁL

**Tamar Ilana & Ventanas**  
CFMA nominated Tamar Ilana & Ventanas present their newest album, MISTRÁL. Ancient ballads, flamenco grooves, Mediterranean melodies, and original compositions. The sound of Toronto!



### Saqqara Esbe

SAQQARA is the new album from producer, composer and singer, Esbe. A luscious mix of entrancing vocals and electronica on a captivating journey through Egypt.

on an album containing an entire Bach suite, and is simultaneously deeply serious and lighthearted, both darkly gritty and otherworldly shimmering. Pincombe dives deep and invests his whole being in this piece, exploring the depths of the complex instructional score and arriving with a presence also to be credited to the masterful miking of the performance, no doubt a complicated process. Here, he pushes his cello to the wall, and we are the grateful recipients of his dedication. The whole album is sensuous from start to finish but this performance stole my heart.

**Cheryl Ockrant**

### The Messenger

**Hélène Grimaud; Camerata Salzburg  
Deutsche Grammophon 00028948378531  
(deutschegrammophon.com/en/catalogue)**



► Hélène Grimaud opened her recital at Koerner Hall on March 8 with a *Bagatelle* by Ukrainian composer Valentin Silvestrov. It began so quietly that it took a few

moments to realize Grimaud had started playing. On this new recording she plays five equally understated works by Silvestrov, patiently uncovering the layers of mystery which envelop these enchanting works. Yet even in the most restrained passages, she is so deeply expressive that these wistful, melancholy works resonate with life.

Silvestrov wrote two versions of one of his most celebrated works, *The Messenger* for solo piano and for piano with chamber orchestra. It's a treat to have both versions together here. Since *The Messenger* is infused with the spirit of Mozart, placing these two very different composers side by side – though hardly a reach – proves rich in possibilities.

But, surprisingly, the Mozart works that Grimaud has selected, two *Fantasias* and the *Concerto in D Minor*, represent the composer at his most theatrical. In the Mozart (where she uses the cadenzas by Beethoven, since Mozart didn't leave any), Grimaud is at her most exciting – dramatic, sensuous and virtuosic.

In both Mozart and Silvestrov, the fluent Camerata Salzburg captures the most nuanced phrases with sensitive, buoyant support.

Grimaud's recital turned out to be the last live concert I heard before the lockdown. On this disc she dazzles once again, uncovering direct connections between Mozart at his most profound and the otherworldly music of Silvestrov, written more than 200 years later.

**Pamela Margles**

### Tanbou Kache

**Diana Golden; Shawn Chang  
New Focus Recordings FCR279  
(newfocusrecordings.com/catalogue)**



► Haiti, impoverished by unrelenting disasters – hurricanes, earthquakes and depredating exploitation from within and abroad – has

nevertheless maintained an extraordinarily rich artistic heritage; vibrant, joyous, unconquerable. I've been there and experienced it first-hand. So has New York-based cellist Diana Golden, teaching in the art-city of Jacmel. She's also conducted research at Montreal's Société de recherche et de diffusion de la musique haïtienne.

Golden explains that the CD's title, meaning “hidden drums,” refers to the Vodou drums accompanying traditional folk songs. The eight pieces, each lasting between five and 13 minutes, vary stylistically from the neo-Baroque *Petite Suite* for solo cello by Werner Jaegerhuber (1900–1953) to the minimalist meditations of *Femiel*, part of an 80-minute work for electronic instruments by Daniel Bernard Roumain (b.1970).

I particularly enjoyed the distinctively Haitian compositions. The bittersweet *Légende créole* by Justin Élie (1883–1931) incorporates a children's song about hide-and-seek. Affecting, soulful, folkloric melodies fill the *Suite haïtienne* by Frantz Casséus (1915–1993), originally for guitar, here arranged by Julio Racine (b.1945). In Racine's own *Sonate à Cynthia* (2014), two rhythmic *Allegros* bracket the pentatonic motifs of the lyrical *Cantilena*. Carmen Brouard (1909–2005) spent her last 29 years in Montreal where she helped found the Société mentioned above. Her *Duo Sentimental* pits Haitian pentatonics against a twelve-tone row, ending in a harmonious *Amoroso*.

Golden's closely-miked, dark-hued tone and expressive phrasing, aided by Taiwanese-Canadian pianist Shawn Chang, make a strong case for the unfairly neglected music of this unfairly neglected country.

**Michael Schulman**

## MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY

### Land's End Ensemble performs chamber music of Omar Daniel

**Laura Hynes; Land's End Ensemble; Karl Hirzer  
Centrediscs CMCCD 28120  
(cmccanada.org)**



► This welcome Centrediscs CD includes four chamber works by Canadian composer Omar Daniel performed by the Calgary-based Land's End

Ensemble. Daniel has risen steadily in the Canadian composition world with prestigious commissions, awards and university appointments. The music is rigorous, lively and imaginative; his program notes mention influences of Estonian folk music plus Northern and Eastern European composers, as in the exciting *Duo for Violoncello and Piano* (2018). Its finale's title, *Allegro barbaro*, acknowledges Bartók's piano work. The Jules Léger Prize-winning *Zwei Lieder nach Rilke* (1996) for voice and nine-instrument ensemble is another favourite; soprano Laura Hynes' secure, rich voice handles high B splendidly. This note makes a thrilling climax for the setting of Rilke's *Die Engel*, where angels spread their wings and “set winds in motion.”

*Piano Trios Nos. 1* (1999) and *2* (2015) were written for the outstanding Land's End Ensemble core, consisting of John Lowry, violin; Beth Root Sandvoss, cello; and Susanne Ruberg-Gordon, piano. Daniel describes *Trio No. 1* as an “exploration of opposites.” I found it challenging; after a soft mysterious cello opening, the piano bursts in with truly threatening dissonant outbursts. The contrasts continue in alternation between instruments towards the second movement's end, and in the distance travelled between the finale's near-silent opening and loud strings plus upward-rushing piano scales later. In *Trio No. 2* the composer notes a change in direction involving, among other things, the presence of nostalgia, made explicit in the consonances of the last movement.

**Roger Knox**

### Going North

**Luciane Cardassi  
Redshift Records TK480  
(lucianecardassi.com/going-north)**



► The eight pieces that comprise pianist Luciane Cardassi's latest release, *Going North*, are an impressive array of works by Canadian



and Brazilian composers. The album is made up of several unique journeys – each piece providing a place where Cardassi's panorama of expression, and mastery of unusual playing techniques, shine with a world-class radiance.

The varied colours and vocal interjections in Terri Hron's *AhojAhoj* create a clever collection of sonic cross-play. In a piece titled *Wonder*, Emilie Lebel gives us exactly that: a complexity of engaging musical events that bewilder and enchant. Chantale Laplante's *Estudio de um piano* inhabits a world of distant creaks and whispers where a sorrowful beauty permeates a hollowed atmosphere. Punchy dissonances and prickly gestures pierce through rugged landscapes in Darren Miller's *For Will Robbins*.

The hypnotic aura produced in *Converse* (a piece credited to several composers) offers a gentle pathway amid the turf of more abrasive expanses heard on the album. Last on the release, we are left with the mysterious whimsy in Fernando Mattos' *The Boat Sings*, a work that creates an organic time domain of rubbery substances.

The highly skilled interpretive prowess of Cardassi leaves no doubt as to why this pianist has established herself as one of Canada's most important champions of contemporary music. With such an enticing set of performances, I'll be listening many more times, and looking out, eagerly, for the next release from Cardassi.

**Adam Scime**

**Alexina Louie – Take the Dog Sled  
Evie Mark; Akinisie Sivurapik; Esprit  
Orchestra; Alex Pauk  
Centrediscs CMCCD 28320  
(cmccanada.org)**



► Evie Mark and Akinisie Sivurapik practice and work to preserve traditional Inuit culture in northern Quebec's Nunavik region; they have performed as throat singers

around the world. Alexina Louie is one of Canada's most distinguished composers, and the Toronto-based Esprit Orchestra, conducted by Alex Pauk, champions contemporary music and innovative approaches. As the Centrediscs program notes state: "*Take the Dog Sled* is a celebration of life in the Inuit communities in Canada's far north." Composed for Montreal Symphony musicians in 2008, it consists of eight musical numbers, five of which feature traditional Inuit songs. In throat singing, two women interact closely, facing each other. Louie's scoring for the seven-member instrumental ensemble is lean and transparent, minimalist at times, supporting and adding musical variety to the singing.

*Sharpening the Runners on the Dog Sled* is the first song, appealing and rhythmic as the activity suggests. *Cradle Song* is instrumental, a mother's love for her child expressed simply

then becoming more complex with cross-rhythms and parallel lines. *The Mosquito* is another traditional song, with added staccato, pizzicato, and a buzzing double bass tone; the instrumental *Bug Music* carries forth the humorous possibilities. I especially like the throat singing in *The River*, combining suggestions of flow and fear. The work has succeeded with audiences in many parts of the world, and is suitable for listeners of all ages. It is an achievement for which the contributors indeed deserve congratulations!

**Roger Knox**

**Music for English Horn Alone  
Jacqueline Leclair  
New Focus Recordings FCR272  
(newfocusrecordings.com/catalogue)**



► Jacqueline Leclair's latest album *Music for English Horn Alone* features seven works for solo English horn, four of which – by Hannah Kendall,

Faye-Ellen Silverman, Karola Obermüller and Cecilia Arditto – are spectacular premieres. Leclair, known in the music community as a contemporary music specialist on oboe, brilliantly showcases her flair for new music techniques on the oboe's darker cousin with equally stunning results, making these works an invaluable addition to the repertoire.

From the outset, Leclair's playing is exceptional; the richness of tone and beautiful, subtle articulations are displayed over the entire range. From multiphonics, flutter-tonguing, note-bending and the exploration of the extreme soft dynamic, Leclair charms with her mastery of the English horn.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this thoughtful assortment is its ability to captivate and give rise to autonomic responsiveness to touch and visual and auditory stimulation through its exploration and depiction of the instrument's possibilities and range, whisking the listener from one culture and destination to another without the need to traverse the physical. If one had to describe this collection in a single word, it would be "borderless."

**Melissa Scott**

**Right Now, In a Second  
Transient Canvas  
New Focus Recordings FCR267  
(newfocusrecordings.com/catalogue)**



► The ephemeral nature of sound is exquisitely captured in the poetry of this new music performed by bass clarinetist Amy Advocat and Matt

Sharrock, a percussion colourist heard here on marimba. Experimental music, made with incongruous instrumental pairings, often begs the question: Can sound be toyed with if only to fill the heart and mind with a sense of wonder? Advocat and Sharrock answer in the affirmative, and emphatically at that.

The bass clarinet – among the whole family of single-reed woodwinds – is probably the most diabolically difficult to master. Advocat makes light work of it all with her extraordinary virtuosity, her application of soft dynamics to create atmospheric effect, and by this I don't mean such effects that suggest the lugubrious (something she does on Jonathan Bailey Holland's *Rebounds*), but also something resembling a beautiful gravitas (which is evoked on *resonance imaging* by Crystal Pascucci).

Sharrock's radiant marimba is the perfect foil for the rumblings of the bass clarinet. His crystalline sculpting of notes informs Stefanie Lubowski's composition *Right now, in a second*. Meanwhile he turns his instrument into a kind of living, breathing being, as with glancing blows of mallets on wood he conjures a close dance with the bass clarinetist.

The masterful centrepiece is Clifton Ingram's *Cold column, calving*. This music seems to bow in reverence to the earth's ancient permafrost. As it unfolds, you get a sense of how expressively the musicians tease out the geographical metaphor of this piece with profound grandeur.

**Raul da Gama**

**JAZZ AND IMPROVISED**

**Alex Moxon Quartet  
Alex Moxon Quartet  
Independent (alexmoxon.com)**



► The Ottawa-based guitarist, Alex Moxon, is a musical omnivore, his very personal style of playing clearly informed by an early diet of many styles and idioms of music. Best of

all, Moxon is a shining example of what true musicality means and how it is meant to devolve from composition to performance. This 2020 recording is an exquisite example, from its unassuming title and the whimsical honesty of the cover photograph, the absence of liner notes to explain any gratuitous *raison d'être* for the music and, of course, the music itself.

Not for Moxon are flurries of notes, dramatically rising and falling arpeggios, cerebrally dazzling runs up and down the fretboard. He strips bare the melody of each song that he has interiorized, distills the intended harmonic conception to the essential chords

and rings in the changes to evoke mood and emotion very effectively. His single-note lines are beautifully moulded, the sound of his phrases are exquisitely elliptical. He turns harmony inside out, as on *Piety in Crescent Park*, and his sense of time is flawless. This is evident all over the repertoire of this album.

Another interesting aspect is the sonic space that is created for both the chordal instruments – Moxon's guitar and the piano played with character by Steve Boudreau, especially on the dancing, contrapuntal merry-go-round of *Wood Chop*. Empathetic performances are also shared by rhythm twins, bassist John Geggie and drummer Michel Delage, who also shine in their own right.

**Raul da Gama**

## Change of Plans

**Will Bonness**

**Independent (willbonness.com)**



► As a guitarist by trade, I have always been jealous of the harmonic possibilities available to pianists. Ten fingers and 88 keys, paired with the visual nature of

the keyboard, gives them a unique advantage as orchestrators and arrangers. This is often rebutted by my piano-playing colleagues with things they're jealous of in the guitar and saxophone worlds; easier legato phrasing and longer sustained notes come to mind. Winnipeg pianist Will Bonness' new release, *Change of Plans*, does an excellent job of utilizing the piano's advantages and showcasing his musicianship in a quintet setting, with vocals by Jocelyn Gould and Jon Gordon on saxophone. They are joined by Julian Bradford on bass and Fabio Ragnelli on drums. The resulting album strikes an imperturbable balance between modernity and grounding in the jazz tradition.

It is refreshing to hear this kind of contemporary music being created in Canada. Particularly in Winnipeg, whose long thriving music scene unfairly receives less attention than those of many larger Canadian cities. *Change of Plans'* originals, arrangements of standards and one Smashing Pumpkins cover, all call to mind the cutting edge often associated with New York City. While each of the quartet's members has spent ample time in that scene, this album should receive extra attention for being a Winnipeg one at heart. While so many younger Canadian musicians move abroad, the commitment to community present on this recording makes it unique, and a globally relevant offering of Canadiana.

**Sam Dickinson**

## The Circle

**Doxas Brothers**

**Justin Time JTR 8624-2 (justin-time.com/en/album/631)**



► Tenor saxophonist Chet and drummer Jim Doxas are quite the power duo. Besides the obvious life-long bond that comes with being brothers, they have

the added privilege of considering each other lifelong musical counterparts. Their deeply rooted chemistry really shines through on their debut album as the Doxas Brothers. The welcome additions of pianist Marc Copland and bassist Adrian Vedady also contribute to the family vibe, as they have been associated with the brothers Doxas for years in a variety of contexts. The synergistic result is some of the most intoxicating post-bop you're likely to find this year.

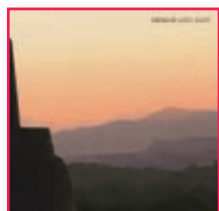
Recorded in its entirety by Jim and Chet's father George Doxas in their family's Montreal studio, the album has an endearing home-made sound quality to it that really adds to the experience. Every aspect is built with TLC, and the level of comfort with which the musicians interact is extremely apparent. Chet carries a majority of the load compositionally, contributing six tunes out of a total of eight. His style is distinctive, while still remaining faithful to his influences, sometimes evoking greats such as pianist Andrew Hill. One of the most admirable characteristics of the music is Chet's acute attention to detail. Each melody manages to leave an impression while still having his own brand of intricacy and nuance. This album is a restrained affair with a rather hushed approach, and the polished interplay within the tight-knit ensemble will leave the listener mesmerized.

**Yoshi Wall**

## Genius Loci East

**Jeannette Lambert; Reg Schwager; Michel Lambert**

**Independent (jeannettelambert.bandcamp.com)**



► A wonderfully eclectic and enlightening musical journey is what we embark on in velvet-voiced Jeannette Lambert's newest release.

Recorded during her travels with brother and guitarist Reg Schwager along with husband and drummer Michel Lambert, the album documents how local cultures affected Lambert's music and fuelled her creativity which blossoms within each track. Perhaps the most unique part of the album, besides lyrical poems

penned by Lambert, is that the entirety of the record is improvisational; the vocalist herself mentioning that she'd bring in the poem she had written only moments before recording. The result is a musical harmony between musicians, an inspirational freshness that can only be brought about by living in the moment.

The influence of time the group spent in Java and Kyoto is evident within each song; it's as if we are able to catch a glimpse into what Lambert experienced day to day; a travel journal that's brought to life through her highly evocative text, Schwager's flowing and meandering guitar melodies in combination with percussionist Lambert's constantly driving and originaive rhythmic grooves. Use of the thumb piano (kalimba) as well as the vocalist's integration of local vocal techniques such as Japanese kobushi, a specific type of warble or vibrato, are applied within several pieces to add that authentic, cultural flavour. In times where we can't physically travel, this record is a brilliant and melodious escape that any jazz fan would thoroughly enjoy.

**Kati Kiillaspea**

## Tribute

**Mark Hynes Trio; Dennis Irwin**

**Cellar Music CM050120 (cellarlive.com/collections)**



► New York City bassist Dennis Irwin, was not only one of the most gifted jazz musicians to ever breathe air, but he was a prince

among men. Talented saxophonist (and friend and colleague of Irwin) Mark Hynes has just released a never-before-heard collection of tracks recorded in 2007 that feature Irwin. They were intended to be part of a much larger project, which sadly never materialized, due to Irwin's untimely death in 2008 – the tragic result of no health insurance. The fundamental trio here features facile and soulful Hynes on tenor, Darrell Green on drums, and of course the late Irwin on bass.

Things kick off with *B's Monk*, a Hynes original, channelling the quirky artistry of the late Thelonious Monk. This track (and the entire CD) is recorded exquisitely, with a perfect acoustic balance between instruments, propelled by the big, fat, commanding sound of Irwin's bass. Hynes' soloing is both compelling and skilled, with ideas flowing out of his horn like lava. *Comes Love* is a standout – a jazz standard strongly associated with Lady Day. Hynes' beautiful tone is delightfully reminiscent of Cannonball Adderly, but his contemporary slant and New York City energy is all his own. Irwin's lyrical solo on this track is a thing of rare beauty, and a fine example of his dedication to excellence.

Included on the recording is a luminous version of the rarely performed Ellington/



Strayhorn composition, *Isfahan*, and the trio renders this sumptuous ballad with layer upon layer of deep emotional content. Other delights include Monk's *Let's Cool One* and the touchingly appropriate closer, Gordon Jenkins' *Goodbye*. A wonderful tribute to an amazing artist.

**Lesley Mitchell-Clarke**

**Artlessly Falling**  
**Mary Halvorson's Code Girl**  
**Firehouse 12 Records FH12-04-01-034**  
**(firehouse12records.com)**



► In recent years, guitarist Mary Halvorson has transitioned from brilliant avant-gardist to a central figure in contemporary jazz. Her first *Code Girl* CD from 2018

– introducing Amirtha Kidambi singing Halvorson's artful, newly minted songs – contributed to that recognition. The project extends to language the edgy intensity – "Atrophied crucibles, charred Russian dolls" – previously signalled by the funhouse-mirror electronics that light up her guitar playing.

Halvorson has a keen sense of some special traditions. Her lyrics carry on the art song, whether it's adapting the *sestina* form employed by 12th-century troubadours in the title track or matching avant-jazz to surrealism in *Bigger Flames*, recalling composer Carla Bley and poet Paul Haines' *Escalator over the Hill*; she's also convinced a longstanding influence, singer-songwriter Robert Wyatt, to bring his wanly artful voice to three of her songs. There's also an insistent contemporaneity, however unpleasant: the words to *Last Minute Smears* are phrases from Brett Kavanaugh's 2018 testimony before the U.S. Senate.

Including Halvorson's almost decade-long partnership with bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Tomas Fujiwara, collectively Thumbscrew, *Code Girl* has all the musical intimacy of a genuine band. It's evident everywhere here but especially in the close tracking and exchanges that Halvorson shares with new band members – trumpeter Adam O'Farrill and saxophonist/vocalist Maria Grand – on *A Nearing*. When Halvorson unleashes her virtuosity and electronics on *Mexican War Streets (Pittsburgh)*, there are few contemporary performers who can match the urgent complexity and authority of her work.

**Stuart Broomer**

**25 Years**  
**Edward Simon**  
**Ridgeway Records RRCD016**  
**(edwardsimon.com/store#/15-Years)**



► Edward Simon is one of the most unique and gifted pianists of his generation. Since landing in New York during the late 1980s, he's been

extremely prolific and has worked with some of the biggest names in jazz. The singular path he's paved for himself and fellow musicians, mixing traditional jazz and Latin-American music, has garnered him kudos and respect from peers and aficionados. However, due to the lack of publicity under which he tends to operate, a significant portion of his 17-album-strong catalogue remains largely unheralded.

It is the fact that many people will enter this new career retrospective unfamiliar with his body of work that gives the concept so much power. Sure, they'll come for Simon's high-profile collaborators such as Mark Turner, Avishai Cohen and the incomparable Brian Blade, but they'll undoubtedly stay for the bandleader himself. Edward Simon is the complete package. As a composer and arranger, he is not only a soulful melo-dist and an adept polylinguist, but he also knows how to maximize the potential of the jazz ensemble. The reassuring tranquility he gets out of his trio on the appropriately titled *Simplicity* works in magnificent contrast to the SFJAZZ Collective's torrential sonic hurricane on the track *Venezuela unida*. As a player, he manages to be equal parts precise and expressive. His solo on *Pere* is a particularly devastating display. If, for whatever reason, you aren't aware of Edward Simon's stunning work, now's as good a time as any to familiarize yourself.

**Yoshi Wall**

**The Ultimate Soul & Jazz Revue**  
**Benjamin Koppel; Randy Brecker; Jacob Christoffersen; Scott Colley; Bernard Purdie**  
**Cowbell/Unit UTR 4959 (unitrecords.com/releases)**



► Renowned Danish saxophonist and composer Benjamin Koppel's latest release is a toe-tapping, upbeat trip into the soul and funk side of

jazz, guaranteed to breathe life into any of the greyest days. Koppel has called together a stellar group of musicians to enliven each track, including greats such as Randy Brecker on trumpet, Jacob Christoffersen on the keys, Scott Colley on bass and Bernard Purdie on drums. The album features both

songs composed by Koppel himself and new versions of classics by artists such as Dizzy Gillespie, Curtis Mayfield and Stevie Wonder. The saxophonist has done a wonderful job of bringing a modern touch and his own unique flavour to well-known tunes, shining a new light on them.

*Them Changes* starts off the record with a captivating groove set up by Colley's pizzicato bass line mingling with Purdie's driving groove, overlaid by Koppel's soaring riffs and Brecker's sonorous horn melodies. A spruced-up and funkier rendering of one of Gillespie's best known songs, *Manteca* is positively addictive with Christoffersen's use of the Fender Rhodes bringing just the right amount of the past into the present. Stevie Wonder's famed tune *Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing* adopts a more jazz-influenced flavour than the original, bringing in a great play on the tune throughout, with Koppel's improvised solo being the cherry on top. A fantastic record as a whole, this would be a worthy addition to any aficionado's collection.

**Kati Kiillaspea**

**Birdland, Neuburg 2011**  
**Cecil Taylor and Tony Oxley**  
**Fundacja Sluchaj FSR 13/2020**  
**(fsrecords.net)**



► A remastered radio broadcast of a two-part improvisation by American pianist Cecil Taylor (1929-2018) and British percussionist Tony Oxley (b.1938)

at an intimate German club performance, *Birdland* offers irrefutable evidence of the mastery of men who had at that point been collaborating for more than two decades.

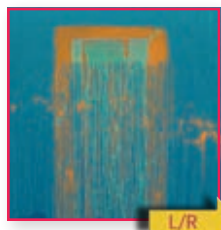
Free music avatar and one of the 20th century's most influential musicians, Taylor's sound world is only off-putting if one is frightened by modern music. Demonstrably dramatic, shaded and fluid, while being spontaneous, every key stroke follows cerebral logic, with each piece possessing as categorical an introduction, elaboration and conclusion as any notated score. Shaking and vibrating the keyboard and pedals in both smooth and rugged fashion, Taylor's instantly identifiable style evolves at various pitches and speeds. Often he adds pressurized extensions to intricately elaborated sequences, detouring along unexpected sonic alleyways, then cannily changing course to avoid meandering into musical dead ends. Meanwhile Oxley's paradigm includes wooden slaps, clanging cymbal and drum plops, each precisely timed so that the pianist's sudden staccato rums or leaps from one register to another never catch him off guard, but are shadowed or amplified and appropriately balanced.

Taylor was 82 at this gig, yet displayed no loss of interpretative power. Paradoxically

in fact, his playing is more adventurous and masterful than on his first LP in 1956. Like a late-career interpretation by Rubinstein or Horowitz, this CD is both defining and definitive.

**Ken Waxman**

**Sunset in the Blue**  
**Melody Gardot**  
**Decca Records (melodygardot.co.uk)**



► Singer/songwriter Melody Gardot has reunited with the Grammy-winning production team from her very successful 2009 release, *My One and Only Thrill*, for a return to her jazzy

roots. With the sensitive guidance of producer Larry Klein and orchestral arrangements by the legendary Vince Mendoza, *Sunset in the Blue* manages to be both intimate and grand at the same time.

The opening track, *If You Love Me*, sets the tone for this collection of originals and standards and originals-that-sound-like-standards, as this brand new song feels as familiar as an old friend.

Actual standards get masterful treatment and don't deviate too far from other well-known covers. *Moon River*, might give you a sense of déjà vu, as the engineer for the track – Al Schmitt – is the same one who recorded Audrey Hepburn's legendary version of the Mancini classic.

Mendoza's arrangements enhance Gardot's subdued delivery while never overwhelming. *C'est Magnifique* is a prime example. The duet, with fado singer António Zambujo, is a sensual tribute to the sea, sung in English, French and Portuguese. At its heart it's a simple song, but the orchestration elevates it to an exquisite piece of ear candy, reminiscent of an idyllic life and love. (For a little virtual escape, check out the accompanying video on YouTube.) About halfway through the album, a lively samba, *Ninguém Ninguém*, is a welcome palate cleanser. Feel free to get up and dance.

Closing out the album is a stripped down version of *I Fall in Love Too Easily*. Anthony Wilson's gorgeous guitar work along with Gardot's somewhat world-weary delivery, is an emblem for these times, allowing us to reflect on where it all went wrong.

**Cathy Riches**

**Urban(e)**  
**Mike Fahie Jazz Orchestra**  
**Greenleaf Music FRE CD 1077**  
**(mikefahie.bandcamp.com)**



► Although the Mike Fahie Jazz Orchestra has been together in New York since 2012, *Urban(e)* is their first album. Fahie, who composed and arranged all

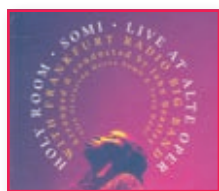
the works along with playing trombone and euphonium, had a fascinating concept of rearranging classical works into a jazz orchestra context.

Of course one can think back to Deodato's *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, or ELP's *Pictures at an Exhibition* to know this concept has been around for a while. But *Urban(e)*'s strength is in Fahie's subtlety where his arrangements are always true to his source material, but sometimes that truth is more metaphoric than harmonic. His extensive liner notes provide great insight into his interpretive process. One highlight is *Prélude, Op.28 No.20* by Frédéric Chopin (whose chords and style anticipate many elements of modern jazz). Chopin's prelude is only 12 bars, but Fahie rearranges it for his orchestra, then doubles the tempo twice and writes a new melody which works into a quietly swinging piano solo from Randy Ingram. Another gem is *Excerpts from The Firebird* which, over its 14 minutes, uses many motifs from Stravinsky's original. The piano mimics the firebird waking up and singing her song, the tempo picks up and as Ingram's scales and arpeggios become livelier the piece moves into an effervescent and lively tenor saxophone solo by Quinsin Nachoff. Midway through we have an introspective section with a beautiful euphonium and tuba duet (Fahie and Jennifer Wharton) where time seems suspended for a moment.

*Urban(e)* is an intelligent and sophisticated collection of jazz works which we can admire on their own, or from the context of their classical origins.

**Ted Parkinson**

**Holy Room – Somi Live At Alte Oper**  
**Somi; Frankfurt Radio Big Band; John Beasley**  
**Salon Africana (somimusic.com)**



► It has been six decades since the rebirth of Afrocentric musical matriarchy shepherded by Miriam "Mother Africa" Makeba in the 1960s. That flame

may have flickered somewhat after her death, but has since been rekindled by such phenomenal artists as Angélique Kidjo and the women of Les Amazones d'Afrique, Rokia Traoré,

Fatoumata Diawara and Sandra Nkaké. Now, with her third – and most spectacular recording – Somi joins this illustrious list of formidable women storytellers.

Somi is adept at traditional storytelling, a gift that African griots, griottes and gnawa healers have brought to music. It is something that reflects both the nurturing characteristic of women and their new, overarching influence as contemporary musicians. Somi reflects this awakening of feminine consciousness powerfully. Her performance in Frankfurt, captured here on the two discs of *Holy Room*, evokes the power of femininity and storytelling at their finest. Working her magic, bolstered by the empathetic playing of guitarist Hervé Samb and pianist Toru Dodo, Somi elevates her artistry to a rarefied realm.

She uses the power of her soaring soprano to dig deep into the meaning of the lyrics of *Kadiatou the Beautiful*, *Like Dakar* and *Ingele*. The bittersweet music of *Alien* and *Lady Revisited* is performed with potent evocativeness. The great German-American contrabassist Hans Glawischign plays a masterful pizzicato introduction to *The Gentry* and the Frankfurt Radio Big Band, under the baton of the celebrated pianist and arranger John Beasley, is superb throughout.

**Raul da Gama**

**An Ayler Xmas Vol. 3 Live in Krakow**  
**Mars Williams Presents**  
**NotTwo MW 996-2 (nottwo.com)**



► At first it may appear that pioneering free jazz saxophonist Albert Ayler (1936-1970) and Christmas music have little in common. But especially after noting the

devotional titles of most of Ayler's repetitively rhythmic compositions, linkage become clearer. Taking this connection to its (il)logical extreme, Chicago saxophonist Mars Williams melds Ayler lines and familiar holiday ditties together with improvisational solos to create sessions that are as amusing as they are avant garde.

Aided by trumpeter Jamie Branch, drummer Klaus Kugel, bassist Mark Tokar and especially the guitar and electronics of Knox Chandler, Williams comes up with unique sonic pastiches. Linear readings of fare like *Jingle Bells* and *The First Noel*, for instance, come in and out of focus while sharing contrapuntal melodies with Ayler's simple hand-clapping tunes. Added are brassy trumpet yelps, altissimo saxophone squeaks and multiphonic honks as well as jiggling and juddering programmed oscillations that seem to come from further out in space than the path of Santa Claus' sleigh.

Not content with only that admixture, the quintet ups the ante on this live December 2018 performance by adding a strain of reggae rhythms underneath the familiar tunes. *Live in Krakow* is a sui generis



disc that's sure to enliven – and puzzle – any holiday gathering with its joyful audacity. Plus where else would you be able to hear a straight recitation of 'Twas the Night before Christmas decorated with baubles of dissonant stop-time whinnies, shakes and honks?

**Ken Waxman**

## POT POURRI

### Tales of Solace Stephan Moccio Decca Records (stephanmoccio.com)



► WholeNote readers may be familiar with Stephan Moccio from his acclaimed work as a world-class songwriter, penning megahits for such artists as Celine Dion, Miley

Cyrus and Avril Lavigne. On this recording, however, Moccio leaves behind his songwriting chair for the piano bench, as he returns to the keyboard and his beloved classical roots, with stunning results.

*Tales of Solace* offers us 16 beautifully crafted and intimate vignettes, each with its own particular sonic and thematic signature, united throughout by Moccio's poetic touch and great command of harmony, timing and space. Vaguely familiar sounding melodic motifs rise to the surface, only to disappear back into the rolling and shifting musical landscape, cinematic, yet intimate in its scope and detail.

Many of the pieces are deeply personal: *Through Oscar's Eyes* is for his son, and features a delicate melody over rolling arpeggiated figures. *La Fille Aux Pouvoirs Magiques* unfolds like a beautiful meditation, an acknowledgement for someone special in his life. All are performed and recorded on his custom-built Yamaha YUS5 piano.

It takes a great deal of patience and deep listening to create this kind of music. Thank you, Stephan Moccio, for one of the finest and most memorable releases of the year – one to treasure.

**Barry Livingston**

### Mistral Tamar Ilana & Ventanas Independent (tamarilana.com)



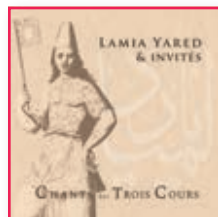
► Tamar Ilana had been dancing and singing in the flamenco/Middle Eastern/Balkan music realm since she was a girl, so although still relatively young, she's

now somewhat of a global-music veteran. She comes by it honestly, as her mother, Dr. Judith Cohen, is a respected ethnomusicologist who Ilana credits with introducing her to many of the styles of music on this lovely album.

*Mistral* is the third release by the Toronto-based group, and Ilana and her Ventanas bandmates cover off a range of instruments and styles. All contribute vocals in an impressive seven different languages. Percussionist Derek Gray does multiple duty on Tibetan singing bowls, cymbals, darbuka, djembe, cajon and good ol' drum kit. Demetri Petsalakis' string mastery shines on oud, lyra and saz. Benjamin Barile's assertive guitar playing is an excellent foil for Ilana's strong, emotive singing. Barile also wrote two rousing flamenco tunes, and Jessica Hana Deutsch contributed several songs – including a lovely instrumental honouring Martin Luther King Jr. – along with versatile violin and viola playing throughout. Bass player Justin Gray co-produced the album and has kept it relatively raw, letting the musicians' talent and passion come through in an authentic way. The lyrics (helpfully translated in the liner notes) reveal themes of longing, loss and love – themes that unite us all, no matter where we're from.

**Cathy Riches**

### Chants des Trois Cours Lamia Yared & Invités Independent (lamiaared.com)



► At its greatest extent the vast Ottoman Empire, centred in present-day Turkey, reached northwest to Hungary, east to Persia, south to the Middle East

and westward along North Africa. As musicians travelled from court to court within the empire they transported, absorbed and ultimately transformed multiple music practices. Over the scope of 15 tracks on *Chants des Trois Cours*, commanding Lebanese-Canadian singer and music director Lamia Yared plus seven virtuoso musician "friends" explore three of the cultures that contributed to the Ottoman musical world. This ambitious album of songs and instrumental repertoire draws from the art music of period Turkish, Arabic and Persian composers and performance traditions.

Among the album's delights are the songs in muwashshah, the musical form from Aleppo, Syria with Arabic-Andalusian poetic roots. *Jalla Man Ansha Jamalak* (A Tribute to Your Beauty), set in maqam Awj Iraq and in the Mrabaa metre of 13 slow beats, is a beautifully performed example.

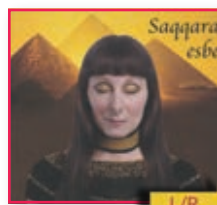
Montreal-based Yared's voice soars above her group of outstanding instrumentalists: Nazih Borish (oud), Reza Abaee (ghaychak), Elham Manouchehri (tar), Joseph

Khoury (riq and bendir) and Ziya Tabassian (tombak). Cellist Noémy Braun and bassist Jérémie Roy ably enrich the album's bottom end. Didem Başar, featured on Turkish kanun, also provided the nuanced and very effective arrangements.

But it is Yared who brings *Chants des Trois Cours* to life. Propelled by her elegant vocalism, linguistic skills and artistic vision, she piques our interest in the rich musical legacy of this multicontinental, multicultural empire. That this impressive achievement was conceived and produced in Montreal is yet another wonder.

**Andrew Timar**

### Saqqara Esbe New Cat Music (esbemusic.uk)



► Esbe does not score the instruments and sounds she needs before recording her music. As she herself puts it, she allows serendipity to take her

on its own particular journey until there is one unified picture. And this CD presents a highly varied picture as Esbe travels from Egypt (hence *Saqqara*, site of Egypt's oldest Step pyramid) through India, Sri Lanka and North Africa.

In fact, modern boundaries count for nothing as Esbe casts her sensuous veil of voice and instrument (and even sound effect) over her listeners, who feel themselves entranced within the lingering and languorous sounds of traditional desert-scapes. And yet the sounds of the desert are not the only ones on Esbe's CD. She employs the Indian tabla, tambourine and various synthetic sounds to create her own *Qawaali Dance*, a tribute to a spirited and demanding dance form. Her fondness for the rich music of India leads to *Eyes of blue*, a lovesong of intense beauty.

*Paint the moon* is perhaps the most distinctive track. It starts with the most lively beat on the CD, before introducing heartfelt lyrics described by Esbe as perhaps a plea by the moon for an end to the natural depletion of the world by humanity.

Esbe's final composition inspired by the desert is *Bedouin Prince*, reflecting the long-standing presence of the Bedouin in North Africa. Its mystic percussion part sets the backdrop for some highly romantic thoughts. In fact, looking at the CD as a whole, those of the romantic persuasion can invite a significant other round, dim the lights and listen to *Saqqara*...

**Michael Schwartz**

# Something in the Air

## Care and Craftsmanship Means that Unusual Sessions are Back in Circulation

KEN WAXMAN

**A**lthough you couldn't guess from major record companies' release schedules, the purpose of a reissue program isn't to repack music that has long been available in different formats. It also doesn't only involve finding unreleased or alternate takes by well-known musicians and sticking them on disc to satisfy completists. Instead, reissues should introduce listeners to important music from the past that has been rarely heard because of distribution system vagaries. This situation has been especially acute when it comes to circulating advanced and/or experimental sounds. Happily, small labels have overcome corporations' collective blind spots, releasing CDs that create more complete pictures of the musical past, no matter the source. The discs here are part of that process.



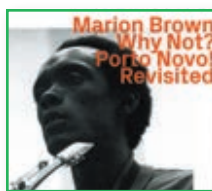
Probably the most important find is **That Time (NotTwo MW 1001-2)**, which captures two tracks each from two iterations of the **London Jazz Composers Orchestra** from 1972 and 1980. Drawn from a period when the LJCO made no professional recordings, the tracks piece together music from radio broadcasts or amateur tapes, sonically rebalanced by a contemporary sound engineer. Although

the personnel of the ensemble shrank from 21 to 19 over the eight years, the key participants are accounted for on both dates. Edifyingly each of the four tracks composed by different LJCO members shows off unique group facets. Pianist Howard Riley's *Appolysian*, for instance, depends on the keyboard clips and clatters engendered by matching Riley's vibrating strokes and expressive pummeling with the scalar and circular waves and judders from the string section, which in this case included violinists Phillip Wachsmann and Tony Oxley (who usually plays drums) and bassists Barry Guy and Peter Kowald. Climax occurs when tremolo pianism blends with and smooths out the horn sections' contributions. Quiet, but with suggestions of metallic minimalist string bowing, trombonist Paul Rutherford's *Quasimode III* derives its grounded strength and constant motion from thicker brass expressions and meticulously shaded low-pitched double bass tones. Concentrated power is only briefly interrupted by a dramatic circular-breathing display by soprano saxophonist Evan Parker. Dating from the first session, trumpeter Kenny Wheeler's *Watts Parker Beckett to me Mr Riley?* stands out as much for capturing the LJCO in mid-evolution as for its Arcadian beauty. Sophisticatedly arranged, the tune gradually introduces more advanced textures as it advances over Oxley and Paul Lytton's martial drum slaps and throbs from bassists Guy, Jeff Clyne and Chris Laurence. It pinpoints the group's transformation though, since the harmonized theme that could come from contemporary TV-show soundtracks is sometimes breached by metal-sharp guitar licks from Derek Bailey, plus stentorian shrieks and split tones from the four trumpeters and six saxophonists.



Rutherford, who plays on all the LJCO tracks and German bassist Kowald, who plays on the 1980 ones, also make major contributions to **Peter Kowald Quintet (Corbett vs Dempsey CD 0070 corbettvsdempsey.com)**, the first session under his own name by Kowald (1944-2002). Recorded in 1972 and never previously on CD, the disc's four group improvisations feature three other

Germans: trombonist Günter Christmann, percussionist Paul Lovens and alto saxophonist Peter van de Locht. The saxophonist, who later gave up music for sculpture, is often the odd man out here, with his reed bites and split-tone extensions stacked up against the massed brass reverberations that are further amplified when Kowald plays tuba and alphon on the brief, final track. Otherwise the music is a close-focused snapshot of European energy music of the time. With Lovens' clattering drum ruffs and cymbal scratches gluing the beat together alongside double bass strokes, the trombonists have free reign to output every manner of slides, slurs, spits and smears. Plunger tones and tongue flutters also help create a fascinating, ever-shifting sound picture. *Pavement Bolognaise*, the standout track, is also the longest. A circus of free jazz sonic explorations, it features the three horn players weaving and wavering intersectional trills and irregular vibrations all at once, as metallic bass string thwacks and drum top chops mute distracting excesses like the saxophonist's screeches in dog-whistle territory. Meanwhile the tune's centre section showcases a calm oasis of double bass techniques backed only by Lovens' metal rim patterning and including Kowald's intricate strokes on all four strings. Variations shake from top to bottom and include thick *sul tasto* rubs and barely there tweaks.



There's also a European component to American alto saxophonist **Marion Brown's Why Not? Porto Novo! Revisited (ezethetics 1106 hathut.com)**, since five of the 13 tracks were recorded in 1967 with Dutch bassist Maarten van Regteren Altena and drummer Han Bennink. The remainder feature Brown with New York cohorts

drummer Rashied Ali, pianist Stanley Cowell and bassist Sironne. Known as a member of the harsh 1960s new thing due to his work with Archie Shepp and John Coltrane, Brown (1931-2010), brought an undercurrent of melody to his tonal explorations. Both tendencies are obvious here with the pianist adding to the lyricism by creating whorls and sequenced asides as he follows the saxophonist's sometimes delicate lead. Playing more conventionally than he would a year later, Brown's 1966 date outputs lines that could be found on mainstream discs and moves along with space for round-robin contributions from all, including a solid double bass pulse and cymbal-and-bass-drum emphasized solos from Ali. Jokily, Brown ends his combined altissimo and melodic solo on *La Sorella* with a quote from the *Choo'n Gum* song and on the extended *Homecoming*, he quotes *Three Blind Mice* and the drummer counters with *Auld Lang Syne*. *Homecoming* is also the most realized tune, jumping from solemn to staccato and back again as the pianist comps and Brown uncorks bugle-call-like variations and biting flutter tonguing before recapping the head. Showing how quickly improvised music evolved, a year later Altena spends more time double and triple stopping narrow arco slices than he does time-keeping, while Bennink not only thumps his drum kit bellily, but begins *Porto Novo* with a protracted turn on tabla. From the top onwards, Brown also adopts a harder tone, squealing out sheets of sound that often sashay above conventional reed pitches. His slurs and squeaks make common cause with double bass strokes and drum rattles. But the saxophonist maintains enough equilibrium to unexpectedly output a lyrical motif in the midst of jagged tone dissertations on the aptly titled *Improvisation*. Of its time and yet timeless, *Porto Novo*, which was the original LP title, manages to successfully incorporate Bennink's faux-raga tapping,



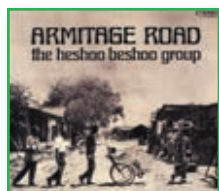
Altena's repeated tremolo pops and the saxophonist's split-tone, bird-like peeps into a swaying Spanish-tinged theme that swings while maintaining avant-garde credibility.



Still, the best argument for maintaining a comprehensive reissue program is to expose new folks to unjustly obscure sounds.

**Armitage Road** by the **Heshoo Beshoo Group** (**We Are Busy Bodies** WABB-063 [wearebusybodies.com](http://wearebusybodies.com)) and **Athamor's Live At The Jazzgalerie Nickelsdorf 1978** (**Black-Monk** BMCD-03 [discogs.com/seller/Black-Monk/](http://discogs.com/seller/Black-Monk/)

**profile**) fit firmly in that category. The first, from 1970, features a South African quintet of alto saxophonist Henry Sithole, tenor saxophonist Stanley Sithole, guitarist Cyril Magubane, bassist Ernest Mothle and drummer Nelson Magwaza that combined local rhythms and snatches of advanced jazz of the time. The other disc highlights an all-Austrian take on committed free jazz bands like Kowald's who were playing elsewhere. The quartet consists of alto saxophonist Harun Ghulam Barabbas, trombonist Joseph Traindl, percussionist Muhammad Malli and pianist Richard Ahmad Pechoc, all of whom are as little known today as are the South African crew members. Not that it affects the music, since, as the discs attest, both bands were more interested in making an original statement than in fame. Somewhat unfinished, as are many live dates, the Nickelsdorf disc tracks how the quintet members worked to put their stamp on the evolving Euro-American free jazz idiom. Choosing to extrapolate individual expression, the quartet uses as its base a mid-range Teutonic march tempo, propelled by chunky drum rolls. Never losing track of the exposition during the 70 minutes of pure improvisation, Barabbas, Traindl and to a lesser extent, Pechoc, work through theme variation upon theme variation in multiple pitches and tempos. Sometimes operating in lockstep, players' strategies can include chromatic reed jumps and plunger trombone wallows along with distinctively directed piano chording. When the horns aren't riffing call and response, one often propels the theme as the other decorates it, and then they switch roles. As they play cat and mouse with the evolving sounds, although Barabbas can exhibit altissimo, Energy Music-style bites and Traindl up-tempo plunger growls, connective lopes are preferred over unbridled looseness. With Malli's press rolls and rumbles holding the bottom, the group meanders to a conclusion leaving a memory of sparks ignited for the applauding audience.



The outlier of this group of discs is **Armitage Road**, where the sounds are closer to emerging soul jazz than more expansive avant garde. Still, this strategy may have been the best way a quintet of all Black players could gig in Apartheid-era South Africa. However, the pseudo-*Abbey Road* cover photo of the band, including wheelchair-bound polio-

stricken Magubane crossing a dusty township street, subtly indicates that country's unequal situation. Magubane wrote most of the tunes and his Steve Cropper via Grant Green-style chording is prominent on all five tracks. Backed by fluid bass work and solid clip-clop drumming, the lilting tunes often depend on twanging guitar riffs and responsive vamps from the Sithole brothers. The gospelish *Amabutho* (Warrior) and concluding *Lazy Bones*, which mix a swing groove with electronic vibrations and some slabs of responsive reed honks, offer the meatiest output. Additionally Magubane's double-stroking solo suggests just how the much the players were holding back. Despite this, the album didn't yield another *Mercy Mercy* or *Grazin' in the Grass*, clearly the musical role models for the band whose name translates as "moving by force." Still, those band members who didn't die young or go into exile – more by-products of the Apartheid system – had extended musical careers, as did most of the players featured on the other CDs. *Armitage Road* has been reissued by a small Toronto company, a reality reflected in the size of the other labels here. The high-quality output also proves once again that musical values and bigness are often antithetical. **O**

# Old Wine, New Bottles

## Fine Old Recordings Re-Released

BRUCE SURTEES

**H**is biography in the enclosed booklet begins, "Henryk Szeryng's (1918-1988) career was unusual." Somewhat of an understatement. Szeryng was born in Żelazowa Wola near Warsaw, Poland into a wealthy Jewish family and his mother began teaching him piano and harmony when he was five years old. Aged seven, he became interested in the violin, taking lessons from Maurice Frenkel, then Carl Flesch in Berlin. He made his debut in Warsaw on January 6, 1933 playing with the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra under George Georgescu performing the Brahms *Violin Concerto*. That concerto became the centrepiece of his repertoire through the years. In Paris, where he had moved with his family, he studied philology, philosophy, prehistory and early history at the Sorbonne. He spoke seven languages perfectly, being fluent in German, English, French, Italian, Portuguese and Dutch, plus he understood all the Slavonic languages. After Poland was attacked in 1939, Szeryng accompanied the Polish Prime Minister in exile to Mexico where he remained until 1954 when Artur Rubinstein encouraged him to begin concertizing again. By 1955, he was already engaged to play concertos with the Sudwestfunk Symphony Orchestra of Baden-Baden under the baton of Hans Rosbaud. Soon he was touring and performing worldwide. In 1960, he was elevated to Mexican Cultural Ambassador in recognition of his humanitarian deeds and popularity and in 1966, living in Paris, was named honorary director of the Conservatory of Music in Mexico City. He came back to Mexico twice a year and travelled worldwide as Mexico's official Cultural Ambassador, a designation of which he was immensely proud. On an engagement in Toronto he visited the Classical Record Shop where we were informed by the record company's PR person who accompanied him that he wished to be addressed as "Mister Ambassador." He spent his last five years in Monaco and died in 1988 in Kassel, Germany.

Szeryng's technique and intonation were impeccable and beyond criticism. His radiant performances were not to be recognized by any identifiable mannerisms. Itzhak Perlman is quoted as stating that "if you hear such a performance and cannot identify the artist, then it is Szeryng." Here are 12 perfect examples of performances as so described by Perlman:



**Henryk Szeryng – The SWR Recordings 1956-1984 (SWR>>CLASSIC SWR19092CD [naxosdirect.com/search/swr19092cd](http://naxosdirect.com/search/swr19092cd))** features 12 concertos with Szeryng and the SWR symphony orchestras for a five-CD set of exemplary performances with various notable conductors. There are two concertos by Bach, BWV1041 and 1042; three by Mozart K216, 219 and 271; also those by Beethoven, Schumann, Lalo

(*Symphonie espagnole*), Brahms, Sibelius, Berg and Szymanowski (No.2 Op.61). From the liner notes: "The recordings were supposed to make the performances sound as concertante as possible without the performers letting themselves get carried away with too much

scrupulous attention to detail." Szeryng made himself perfectly clear: "A work should not be split into countless pieces. If I didn't like a passage, I prefer to repeat the whole movement because recording bit by bit completely destroys the inner suspense." Each of these 12 performances is a perfect example of these ideals.

Their original SWR tapes have been remastered for this perfectly balanced, most attractive collection.



We leave 2020 and the celebrations of **Isaac Stern's** 100th anniversary so well documented by Sony with the 75-CD boxed presentation of their complete catalogue of Stern's commercially recorded performances. To complement that collection, **Doremi** has researched and prepared an edition **Isaac Stern Live** of six 2CD sets of live performances, none of which has

been released in any form. There are rare archival items performed with orchestras and conductors with whom he did not record. Also works he did not record. Conductors with whom he was not commercially associated include Serge Koussevitzky, Charles Munch, Lorin Maazel, Bernard Haitink, Erich Leinsdorf, Raphael Kubelik, Josef Krips and Evgeny Svetlanov. Also, with Leonard Bernstein as pianist.

The first album includes the Tchaikovsky concerto with Koussevitzky and the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra with the 30-year-old Stern, followed by the Mozart *Concerto No.3* with Charles Munch and the Boston Symphony from 1955. Then, from *The Bell Telephone Hour* on December 5, 1955 conducted by, of course, Donald Voorhees, Pugnani's *Largo* and Sarasate's *Caprice Basque, Op.24*. Then, on to the Brooklyn Academy of Music on January 22, 1969 with his permanent accompanist, Alexander Zakin, playing the *Devil's Trill* sonata by Tartini/Kreisler, a sonata each by Beethoven and Prokofiev, then *Four Romantic Pieces* by Dvořák, Suk's *Burlesque* and finally Mozart's *Rondo in C Major, K373*. Before this review becomes a tiring list of repertoire let's just mention that *Volume Two* includes Mozart's *Violin and Piano Sonata K305* with Leonard Bernstein and *Volume Three* opens with the Schubert *Trio No.1, Op.99* played by Stern, Paul Tortelier and Artur Schnabel from the Israel Summer Festival of 1967, followed by four heavy-duty concertos from Moscow and Carnegie Hall. These three volumes are available now, with three more to come in the new year. (**Doremi DHR 8116/7, DHR 8128/9, DHR 8181/2** [naxosdirect.com/search/dhr-8116-7](http://naxosdirect.com/search/dhr-8116-7))



During the 1950s through the 1980s, Belgian violinist **Arthur Grumiaux** (1921-1986) was one of the artists most highly esteemed by his fellows and popular with classical record buyers. His was a pure classical style, aristocratic, with perfect execution and exquisite taste. He recorded, as most readers know, for Philips and his discs are still in demand, as attested to by the listings in Amazon and others. **Volume 2 of Arthur Grumiaux Live**

from **Doremi (DHR8080** [naxosdirect.com/search/dhr-8080](http://naxosdirect.com/search/dhr-8080)) contains four exceptional broadcast performances. From Brussels, Mozart *Violin Concerto No.1 K207*, with the Chamber Orchestra of Belgian Radio conducted by Edgar Doneux (1973). Then three violin and piano sonatas from Munich with accompanist Hans Altmann: from May 11, 1955, Mozart's *Sonata in A Major K526*; from October 2, 1954 Beethoven's *Sonata No.10 in G Major, Op.96*; and finally Brahms' *Sonata in A Major Op.100* from September 14, 1952. Listening to this disc as I write, in fact to all the above, it is very satisfying to hear the artistry of these musicians of a generation-or-two ago, for whom getting the notes right was only just the beginning. I should add that it was said of some great instrumentalists of the past that their occasional wrong notes were better than a lesser player's right ones. Alfred Cortot and Vladimir de Pachmann come to mind who, of course, also recorded before editing was possible.



**Karajan Spectacular** is from **IDIS**, an Italian company that is working on a series of Karajan reissues. I was unaware of these until we were sent **Volume 6 (IDIS6741** [naxosdirect.com/search/idis6741](http://naxosdirect.com/search/idis6741)). On this disc Beethoven's *Egmont* and *Coriolan Overtures* are played by the Philharmonia Orchestra recorded in Kingsway Hall in 1953. Also Wagner, played by the Berlin

Philharmonic in 1957 and 1960 including the overtures to *Der Fliegende Holländer* and *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin Prelude to Act 1* and *Tristan und Isolde Prelude and Liebestod*. To make a comparison I listened to the Philharmonia entries on EMI CDs. Particularly good sound, typical of EMI's best. Then a shock! The IDIS sound is wider, deeper, with more body and certainly more involving. The Philharmonia was a magnificent orchestra and Karajan was at home with them. Same improvement for the Wagner. A recommendation for anyone interested in this repertoire. ●

## ANOTHER FINE VINTAGE

### Giant Steps – 60th Anniversary Edition

**John Coltrane**

**Rhino-Warner Records/Atlantic SD 1311 (amazon.ca/Giant-Steps-60th-Anniversary-Coltrane/dp/B0864JZ9ZL)**



► Few jazz recordings have the historical significance of Coltrane's *Giant Steps*, taking the tenor saxophonist from brilliant sideman to major figure. Recorded within weeks of Miles Davis' 1959 classic *Kind of Blue*, to which Coltrane also contributed, *Giant Steps* was a different vision, its complex harmony a contrast to Davis' spacious modality. If *Kind of Blue* signified sculptural perfection,

*Giant Steps*, its title track still a jazz test piece, signalled hard work, running unfamiliar chord patterns – "Coltrane Changes" – at high velocity. The finished LP took three groups and multiple sessions to achieve the initial release.

This commemorative two-CD (or two-LP) set presents snapshots of the record's history. The first CD presents the original LP in all its glory. Including the flying *Countdown*, the modal *Cousin Mary*, the shimmering, bittersweet *Naima*, it's a work of many moods and genuine mastery.

The second disc, with eight rejected versions of key songs, demonstrates the many paths Coltrane could wend through material that stymied his sidemen. Only bassist Paul Chambers appeared consistently. An initial session with pianist Cedar Walton didn't appear at all on the original disc, while pianist Tommy Flanagan and drummer Art Taylor required two sessions to record six of the original tracks. A satisfactory *Naima* was captured seven months later with pianist Wynton Kelly and Jimmy Cobb in a session for a different LP.

Compleatists will want the *Heavyweight Champion*, the seven-CD set released in 1995, with nine false starts and alternates for *Giant Steps* alone, but for most, this set will suffice; a singular step in a great musician's path.

**Stuart Broomer**



# SERGEI KVITKO'S BLUE GRIFFIN

ADAM SHERKIN

**B**oasting over 200 titles to date, **Blue Griffin Recording** celebrated its 20th anniversary on June 1, 2020. Fresh off the heels of a Latin Grammy Award nomination and the unveiling of a new website, label founder Sergei Kvitko recalls the early days when he found his way into a recording studio, before the label's birth in 2000.

He began to offer his recording engineering services to friends and colleagues at Michigan State University, where he was completing a doctoral program in piano performance. Based on an early enthusiastic response, he decided to pursue his talents in audio engineering more thoroughly, setting up a for-profit recording company. His very first client made a complete set of Schumann's piano music and the fire was lit: Kvitko thought "Let's print a few copies and see what happens" and after a modest distribution scheme and favourable reception, it all "snowballed," as a second project was conceived and then a third; another artist came on board and **Blue Griffin (blue-griffin.com)** was born. Now, 20 years later, this latest crop of releases is indicative of how far the label has come.



L/R

One of the newest releases from the label in 2020, **Phoenix Rising (BGR519)**, features dazzling saxophonist **Christopher Creviston**. This disc is a consummate example of the vision and breadth conceived in a Blue Griffin production. Comprised entirely of premiere recordings, Creviston coyly guides the listener through seven different works, five with pianist Hannah Creviston and one with the

Arizona State University Wind Orchestra, conducted by Gary Hill. The musicianship and expertise here is compelling, with the title track – written by composer Stacy Garrop – a solo highlight of the disc. Names of movements pique our listening curiosity further, with evocative phrasing such as *The Pulsar Wind in Taurus*, *The Phantom Dancer* and *Dying in Embers – Reborn in Flames*. Imaginative and rewarding, the album must surely have been a joy to curate, record and produce. No wonder that Kvitko is rather proud of this release – the kind of sexy and slick musical program that is hard for any to resist. The album's cover art (by Hosea Gruber) should also be mentioned: a red emblem set upon black, with flames of a Phoenix. Look closely and two alto saxophones entwine as they spiral up into the bird's wings.

Kvitko considers the cover art and graphic design of his releases carefully. He shies away from developing album art that has a universal look, citing labels such as Deutsche Grammophon that

In 2009 Blue Griffin Recording was brought to our attention by Canadian mezzo-soprano Patricia Green who had released two discs on this small, independent Lansing, Michigan-based label. In April of that year Pamela Margles reviewed both in these pages, *The Ice Age* and *Beyond: Songs by Canadian Composers*, and *Unsleeping: Songs by Living Composers*, on which Green was accompanied by Midori Koga and John Hess respectively. In the decade following we reviewed more than two dozen subsequent Blue Griffin titles, including Green's *La Voix Nue: Songs for Unaccompanied Voice* by Living Composers (R. Murray Schafer, Judith Weir, Hilary Tann, Jonathan Dove, José Evangelista and György Kurtág) in 2013, and fellow Canadians Jerome Summers and Robert Kortgaard's *The Transfigured Nightingale: Music for Clarinet and Piano*, in 2014. After a brief hiatus, earlier this year we received a shipment of new releases dating from 2018 to the present, which provided the impetus for the following article.

David Olds, recordings editor

retain a monothematic design throughout their catalogue. Kvitko aspires, he says, to something more akin to "tapestry" for his records. He appreciates that his releases employ different colours, varying characteristics and visual profiles. For those of his artists who are unsure of what to feature on their record cover, Kvitko offers his seasoned advice and curates this aspect of the product as well. He functions ostensibly as pre-recording curator, producer, audio engineer, post-production and PR manager and photographer. He even has an eye for well-written liner notes, impishly affirming, "Proofread liner notes? I do that too, because well, I catch things!"

By dint of heart and hard work, Kvitko has built a record company renowned for many fine things. He provides a unique experience for the artists with whom he works: refined musical ears, a rich and vibrant quality of recording production and an integrity of engineering that is increasingly hard to come by these days. The label has long had a proclivity for vocal, reed and solo piano projects, not to mention exceptional fondness for uncommon configurations of ensemble. In only 20 years, Blue Griffin has released an admirable catalogue of music from all corners of the repertoire.



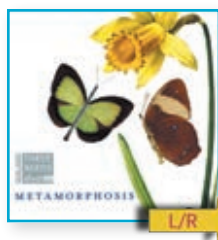
L/R

And he still loves what he does. Always upholding a keen professionalism and high standard of music-making, he nevertheless also knows how to have fun along the way. A jovial romp of a disc that might exemplify this is **Wanderlust (BGR537)**, a recent release showcasing flute works by **David Amram**. "A threading of music of many cultures and peoples," this record is unique in its synthesis of styles, focusing on

Amram's compositional voice. Flutist Karen McLaughlin Large and pianist Amanda Arrington trace a path through Amram's attractive scores, many of which are inspired by jazz. Amram's illustrious career has included film composing (*The Manchurian Candidate*) and time spent as composer-in-residence with the New York Philharmonic. One immediately hears a joy for this music directed from the performers. (They worked closely with Amram on this recording and he plays the Irish Double-D Whistle on one of the tracks!) An idiomat brand of writing for flute is on full display here. The *Allegro con Gioia (For Dizzy Gillespie)* and *Zohar* for solo flute are among the disc's tuneful highlights, not to mention the charming (and keyboard-centric) *Theme and Variations on "Red River Valley."*



The Blue Griffin's Studio The Ballroom



While on the subject of rivers, another newish release of note opens with Peter Lieuwen's *Little Rivers* (2018), a work commissioned by the **Three Reeds Duo**, co-founded by Leah and Paul Forsyth. The record, **Metamorphosis (BGR523)**, spotlights the unique instrumental combination of oboe and saxophone. It lends a delicate, almost serene profile to an entire album devoted to works by contemporary

composers (notwithstanding the title track by Benjamin Britten.). There is skilful execution, bright-eared and flawless in ample measure. Few recording labels would put their faith in a disc such as this one, and the trust has been handsomely repaid.



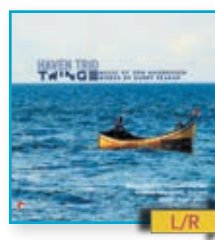
Hard-hitting, avant-garde music also finds voice in the catalogue at Blue Griffin. A sensational new release from the **h2 quartet** came out last year. Titled **Soul Searching (BGR499)**, it headlines this maverick sax quartet in two works by Jeffrey Loeffert, one by Georg Friedrich Haas and a title track by Kerrith Livengood. The mastering here is sublimely balanced and conceived. Layers of expressivity and kaleidoscopic textures

shine through what is certainly demanding repertoire. Despite the technical demands, effortlessness shines through. With the h2 quartet, we immediately feel at home, in safe hands, even amidst irresistible invention. The centrepiece of the record, *Ten Years of Silence* (2012), was composed for the h2 quartet in commemoration of their tenth anniversary as an ensemble. Loeffert clearly knows his tools, commanding utter mastery as he wrangles incredible tonal palettes from the four saxophones, suggesting multiple takes on familiar sonorities and challenging the listener: one imagines hearing instruments other than saxophones. Loeffert acutely understands the idiosyncratic qualities of each saxophone and writes to those strengths. Is it really a saxophone? Or flute or clarinet, even bassoon or trombone? (This is, of course, due in no small part to the virtuosity of the players!) The ten movements have a choose-your-own-adventure aspect to them. Titles such as *Bleak*; *Gruff*; *Barreling*; *Nimble*, and *Cold Sober* offer further glimpses into extra-musical content that hangs in the air.

**All of my friends and clients – my artists – know that I'm very opinionated. But I can be nice and kind enough to know when to keep my opinions to myself as necessary.**

At times intimate, quirky and brazenly emotional, this music speaks verily, born of a serious bout of soul searching. The dedication of the performers is rewarded by the production quality from Blue Griffin and a deft sense of programming. This release is, undoubtedly, a creation to be proud of.

Kvitko relishes such projects – giving platform to lesser-known works and to the performers by whom they are championed. Frequently, artists will cold-call Blue Griffin and propose a recording. If Kvitko likes their ideas, he “goes with the flow” and engages them. He claims to “simply enjoy the process of making things that would [otherwise] not have happened without [him].” Especially with new music – and working with living composers.” He is still irrepressibly appreciative, two decades on, of the whole experience. “I enjoy the process. People find me from all over the place and [we] make recordings. It's really been fun because I do love music and I do love computers, technology, gadgets and gear. It's kind of a perfect world for me.”



Kvitko's “perfect world” extends to his myriad talents as a bone fide photographer and concert pianist in his own right. He has outfitted his historical home in Lansing, Michigan with a top-of-the-line recording studio, providing an inspired, spacious atmosphere for artists when they come to work with him. And he is never fearful of going out on a limb, as witness the curious convergence on a recent disc

featuring the music of **Jon Magnussen** with words by **Barry Bearak Twinge (BGR527)** was recorded by the **Haven Trio**, comprised of soprano, clarinet and piano. The album's fare is a 15-movement work,



“dedicated to the memory of the hundreds of thousands of victims of the December 26, 2004 Tsunami.” The text is adapted from Bearak’s *New York Times Magazine* cover story, *The Day the Sea Came*. (November 27, 2005). The album unfolds in a commingling of spoken text, (narrated by Bearak himself), and instrumental/vocal episodes that elevate the drama of the cover story and develop the narrative arc with striking aplomb. The combination of soprano, clarinet and piano is a most attractive one. The vaulting soundscapes give an urgent depiction of the human drama as it unfolds: an archetypal battle of man vs nature; the coalescence of spoken word (in a kind of reportage style); singing and instrumental interjection bringing home the significance of human loss, set against a backdrop of geological insignificance: “for the earth, it was just a *twinge*.” The results are poignant as they are rare, particularly in a world awash with conservative recordings of traditional works.

Blue Griffin steps up to the plate in such projects, proving that Kvitko is unafraid of the brave and the new. Moreover, he prides himself on knowing when, in turn, to be supportive and opinionated toward his artists: “All of my friends and clients – my artists – know that I’m very opinionated. But I can be nice and kind enough to know when to keep my opinions to myself as necessary. Everybody approaches it differently: some require more guidance and some ask more questions or require more help. And there are others who know exactly what they want. They have a vision in their head.”

Kvitko continues to be widely respected by artists throughout North America and abroad. He acutely understands, to splendid effect, just where his expertise lies and how his plentiful gifts can benefit his collaborators. And there are times when he also returns to his own piano: “I still play concerts and I still make recordings [at the piano] when I can. I do it for myself; I feel like it’s good for my soul.”

Despite Kvitko’s commitment to new music and its proponents, he also keeps up with productions that celebrate music from the traditional canon. A current release from pianist **Peter Miyamoto** includes




the anomalous theme of *progression* in C **Minor Progression (BGR503)**. Solo keyboard works by Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert fill this album, each of them in C Minor (a seemingly artist-imposed mechanism). The profile of this key, heard through the pianistic lens of three masters, offers an unusual slant on what would otherwise be a very usual program. Miyamoto plays exceedingly well, bringing a discerning sense of

style to each of the composers’ works. There is most certainly a gentle sort of revelation here, regarding the nature of C Minor. At the risk of becoming entrapped within monochromatic sound planes, Miyamoto turns such rules – such necessity – to his invention, spurring us to hear well-trodden music anew. Again, here is an example of the perennial craftsmanship that Blue Griffin brings to the game, where care of execution so often intersects with pride of product. Few labels alive and well today can boast such attributes.

During a prideful moment, an otherwise self-effacing Kvitko recalls a conversation he had back in the early days of his label’s founding. A business manager friend asked him what his goals and dreams consisted of: “So what do you want five years from now? Ten years – even 20?” The first words to leave his lips were, “I want to win a Grammy Award.”

“And you know,” he beams through the phone 20 years hence: “One of our latest discs is nominated for a Latin Grammy and we’ll find out next week!” And so it would seem that a *full* Grammy Award is very much within the label’s sights. Here’s to another 20 marvellous musical years at Blue Griffin Recording.

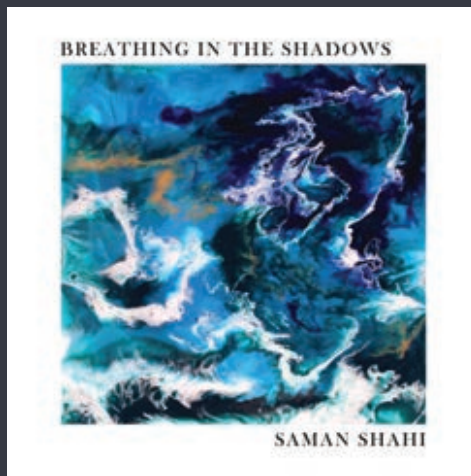
(Interview by phone conducted with Sergei Kvitko with permission.) 

Composer-pianist Adam Sherkin is a regular contributor to *The WholeNote DISCOVERIES* section.



## Saman Shahi

Composer



‘Breathing in the Shadows’ is a collection of pieces that I have grown to embrace as some of my most authentic and honest work.

- Saman Shahi



# Shelter from the storm

The IMAGINE project offers a safe space for artists to develop bold new works

CATHY RICHES

**W**hen it became apparent that the pandemic was not going to be a two-month event and was in fact going to be with us for many months, Tricia Baldwin asked herself, “What can we do to amplify the voices and creativity of artists, students, creators and educators?” As the director of the Isabel Bader Centre for Performing Arts in Kingston, Ontario (known simply as “The Isabel”), Baldwin, and her colleagues, recognized not just a need, but an opportunity. The result is the IMAGINE project.

“This COVID-19 period is an excellent time for artists to immerse themselves in artistic ‘R&D’ to explore new collaborations, styles, concepts and performance practices and come out of the pandemic with enriched artistic voices,” Baldwin told me. With performance demands severely curtailed, many artists have time now to dig into projects and ideas that they might not normally have the energy and brain space to pursue. As well, performing has taken on new dimensions, hastened by the pandemic, with online presentations and streaming increasingly becoming the norm.

**Baldwin and her colleagues** wanted to offer The Isabel, with its state-of-the-art lighting, video and audio equipment – along with the acoustical beauty the hall is renowned for – to artists so they could learn new skills and ways of presenting their works. “We see this as an incubator, not only for new works but for new performance practices and processes,” said Baldwin. “We want to give people a safe space to work in so they can take artistic risks and try out different media.”

When the call for applications went out via [getacceptd.com](http://getacceptd.com), The Isabel was initially planning to offer five or six spots in the program. However, they got such an enthusiastic response from the artistic community, receiving applications from a range of musicians, performers and educators with interesting ideas, that Baldwin approached the Kingston-based Ballytobin Foundation to increase the funding. Ballytobin willingly stepped up, and the result was that The Isabel was able to offer spots to 20 different groups/artists.

“The entire arts world is undertaking a giant metamorphosis during the pandemic, and we are very pleased to support initiatives that prepare artists for the multi-platform world while growing their connections with audiences and presenters with such interesting work,” stated Joan Tobin, founder of the Ballytobin Foundation.

IMAGINE attracted an eclectic range of projects and applicants. We chatted briefly to two of them to get a better sense of things.

**Sadaf Amini** is an Iranian-Canadian musician, specializing in the santur, an instrument typically played in traditional Iranian music. She will be participating in two projects as part of the IMAGINE project; the one dearest to her heart is an elegy to Flight 752 that was shot down by the Iranian government in January 2020, killing

everyone on board.

“I was deeply saddened by the news,” said Amini. “And I wanted to do something to commemorate the innocent people who were lost.” The work, being written by renowned composer John Burge for santur and choir, although still in the writing process, is planned to be a seven-movement piece using poetry by the great Iranian poet, Rumi. It will also



Sadaf Amini

## IMAGINE Project: successful applications

- ▶ **The Palenai Duo** (Joy Innis and Adrienne Shannon, piano): audio recording of two works, by Saint-Saëns and Dvořák as part of new multi-media project.
- ▶ **Alex Mundy** (singer, songwriter, storyteller): audio recording of debut album.
- ▶ **DUOver** (Jennifer Routhier, mezzo-soprano, Natasha Fransblow, piano): audio recording of “full length collaborative audio/visual experience album.”
- ▶ **Movement Market Collective** (Kay Kenney Johnson, dancer/choreographer, Rachel Shaen, creator/lighting designer, Josh Lyon, videographer): performance video of a new work.
- ▶ **Isabel String Quartet** (Laura Andriani, Julia McFarlane, Caitlin Boyle and Wolf Tormann): residency/research: conversations and performance streaming of works by Black and Indigenous composers.
- ▶ **Julia Wedman**, Baroque violin; **Brian Solomon**, choreographer; **Mariana Medellin**, Mestizo dancer: residency and performance video.
- ▶ **Sadaf Amini**, santur; **John Burge**, composer; **Darrel Christie/Kingston Chamber Choir**: video streaming for virtual performance of new work.
- ▶ **Emilie Steele & The Deal** (guitar trio): audio/video recording of new song.
- ▶ **Chantal Thompson**, vocal artist (with Rich Bannard, Michael Occhipinti, George Koller, Chris Alfano, Katie Legere): audio recording of new album.



incorporate the flight number 752 into the piece using motifs of seven, five and two notes.

"John Burge and I had already started to collaborate on this project but when COVID hit, everything got put on hold," explained Amini. "So it means a lot to me to be able to now continue with this work and bring it to the world as a memorial to the victims."

In addition to her musical skills, Amini's master's degree in Musical Technology from U of T, and current job as a technician at The Isabel, make her uniquely qualified to speak to the experience of performing in the hall there. "It's a great building—very well-engineered and well-maintained," said Amini. "The acoustics are so good in the hall that groups can perform acoustically without any amplification."

**Julia Wedman**, another of the successful applicants, is a violinist specializing in the Baroque period, who performs with Tafelmusik and other ensembles, as well as as a soloist. The piece she'll be working on with Brian Solomon, an Indigenous choreographer/dancer and Mariana Medellin, a Mestizo dancer, is one part of a three-year work that originated at the Gallery Players in Niagara, called *Songs of Life - Bach on Turtle's Back*.

"Although we've been working on it for a couple of years, this grant is an opportunity to go in deep on a small part of this larger project that we've been exploring," said Wedman. The work is a contemporary take on Bach's violin sonatas and partitas that explores themes of creation and transformation. "Both Brian and I are very open musically and artistically and put a high priority on expressing something meaningful in our art," said Wedman. "These pieces are about a journey from darkness to light – a hero's journey to find a new way forward – and it really relates to what we're all going through at this time."

She, Solomon and Medellin have been given rehearsal time plus a full day in the theatre with access to the technical team and four video cameras.

"I've done some small filming projects, but I've never filmed with a dancer before," explained Wedman. "Plus, I've never been in the position to have input on how the cameras are set up and how things will be shot, so that's new and exciting."

Although making the final video and audio recordings available for public consumption wasn't a criterion for being accepted for the



(L-R) Brian Solomon, Mariana Medellin and Julia Wedman

COLLIN SAVAGE

**These pieces are about a journey from darkness to light – a hero's journey to find a new way forward – and it really relates to what we're all going through at this time. – Julia Wedman**

IMAGINE initiative, The Isabel is planning to make many of the works available online or during their summer festival in 2021. We look forward to seeing the fruits of these labours and new directions and collaborations they've enabled.

As Tricia Baldwin says, "The hardest times are often when the best work happens." 🐼

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

- ▶ **Melos Ensemble, Sadaf Amini**, santur: *cross-cultural audio recording initiative.*
- ▶ **Sheng Cai**, piano: *new album – performer's original transcriptions of Grieg.*
- ▶ **Room Tone** (Helena Hannibal, alto and tenor sax; Eric Liu, guitar): *residency and recording video of jazz busking works.*
- ▶ **Bridge & Wolak** (Michael Bridge, accordions & piano; Kornel Wolak, (clarinet & piano): *new online music mentorship program for high school students.*
- ▶ **Kasador** (Cam Wyatt, Boris Baker, and Stephen Adubofuor), indie rock/pop: *film/recording of four new unreleased songs.*
- ▶ **Ted Evans**, electronic musician: *performance film of original electronic music works.*
- ▶ **The Gertrudes** (Annie Clifford, Greg Tilson, Pete Bowers, Jason Mercer, Matt Rogalsky, and Jason Erb): *videos of five works for 2021 album.*
- ▶ **Michael Capon**, composer, **Gord Love**, script/lyrics: *artist residency/performance video for a new musical for piano and four cast members.*
- ▶ **Moir Demorest** (solo musician): *EP/audio recording of 3 original songs.*
- ▶ **Kelli Trotter** (vocalist, instrumentalist, song writer and dancer) and band: *two performance videos.*
- ▶ **Leonid Nediak**, piano: *performance video: pre-recorded recital for Neapolitan Connection's Virtual Virtuosi Series.*

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# Six Musicians Reflect on the Great Virtual Shift

COLIN STORY

Last month, the Kensington Market Jazz Festival and the Canadian Online Jazz Festival provided concrete examples of virtual engagement on a large scale, showing programmers, audiences and musicians what digital festivals can look like. Musicians, meanwhile, have spent the year grappling with questions of engagement on a deeply personal level.

With live audiences largely inaccessible, being a professional musician in 2020 has also meant being a recording engineer, a videographer and a social media planner. It has meant paying more for an upgraded internet connection, purchasing studio monitors and interfaces, and soundproofing apartment bedrooms. It has meant, in a virtual world, that musicians must contend with an idea of themselves as a brand, a glowing, disembodied presence on the screens and speakers of listeners.

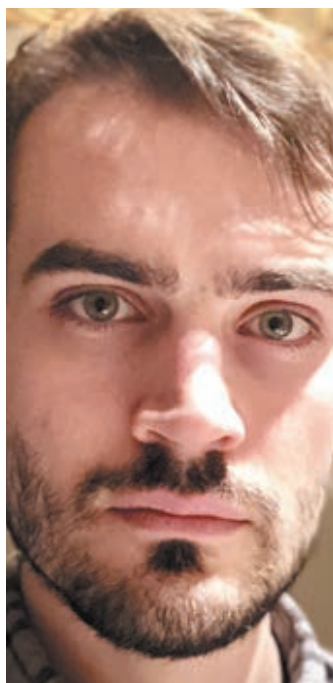
This month, I spoke to six different musicians – saxophonist/vocalist Emily Steinwall, drummer Jon Foster, producer/keyboardist Adrian Hogan, guitarist Rod Rodrigues, drummer Robert Diack and guitarist (and *WholeNote* contributor) Sam Dickinson – about their experiences with the great virtual shift. What follows are extracts from our discussions that involve home recording, livestreaming, brand maintenance and authenticity. Many thanks to these interviewees for their generosity and honesty; all told, I received close to 7,000 words worth of material, enough for several months' worth of coverage at my standard word counts here.

## Recording from Home

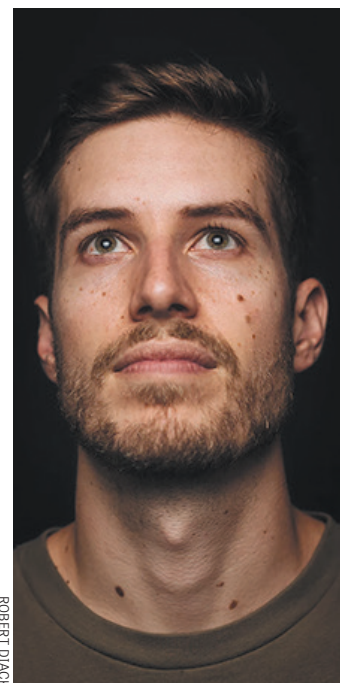
**Robert Diack:** [The recording software] Logic has always been something I've flirted with, but now it is something I work with daily. I spent long hours losing myself to YouTube tutorials and reviews on how to record, produce, mix, edit, and even master music on my own. I have gained a better understanding and am more in control of so many aspects of my sound in ways I haven't ever been before.

**Jon Foster:** I had already developed an understanding of Digital Audio Workstations such as Logic and Ableton; the increased time and energy spent in my home studio meant that I was able to further hone in on finer details of mixing and mastering my own recordings. The combination of more frequent recording, as well as time spent researching various approaches, resulted in a speedier evolution of my recording preferences.

**Adrian Hogan:** As a music producer, I am constantly writing and recording music, so quarantine hasn't had a large effect on my ability or method of doing so. However, due to the lack of in-person sessions, I decided to move my equipment out of my studio space and set it up in my home, as I had only gone to the studio about seven times since the first lockdown in March (compared to four to six days per week before the pandemic).



Robert Diack



Jon Foster

## Social Media – Positives, Negatives and Balance

**Jon Foster:** I realized that [social media] platforms have become the new business card. Having content accessible online meant that musicians, producers and composers could find my work from anywhere in the world and at any time. [Building a social media production process] demanded a great deal of time and energy initially, however, once the system was in place, the process from concept to realization became incredibly efficient. For example, I now record/film multiple videos at a time, bulk editing and preparing files for future uploads. I use a spreadsheet to maintain my content and posting schedule.

**Rod Rodrigues:** The main problem about creating content weekly for social media is that many times, instead of thinking about a new arrangement or practising new songs, we are thinking about what to make for the next video. That can disturb our practise routine, and I have to admit that I caught myself many times thinking about what to do for the next video instead of practising or writing a new song. I try to mix them together: the necessity of creating content with practising a new song or writing a new arrangement for a song for which I can make a video. I think that's a good way to not get trapped in this crazy social media thing.

**Sam Dickinson:** I'm always trying to find a way to engage with social media that feels genuine to me. Folks who take it too seriously make me totally jaded, yet if all I have to do is add a handful of hashtags to quadruple a post's viewership, I know that doesn't instantly turn me into a "sellout" either. My conclusion thus far has been to try and make whatever I post fun enough that I'd do it anyway, while also incorporating tips from friends whom I feel have a healthy relationship with these platforms.

**Because the entire music industry essentially collapsed as a result of COVID, it has caused me to take the "industry" out of my music.**

– Emily Steinwall





Sam Dickinson



Adrian Hogan



Emily Steinwall



Rod Rodrigues

### The Limits of Livestreaming

*Emily Steinwall:* I have refused every offer to create a livestream or be featured on a livestream. I think these are pretty dumb, honestly... no one enjoys the project, truthfully. A livestream is not fun to perform, and not very enjoyable as an audience. Of course, no one believes they will replace live music, but I think they also cause musicians to think about performing differently. It's more about the sleekness of the performance than it is about the connection and energy.

*Adrian Hogan:* I have performed in a few livestream events as well as live off-the-floor video recordings with a few artists this year. I find that the livestreamed events are very much underwhelming, as you don't have that immediate human interaction with the audience that is so crucial to a performance. It feels weird to finish playing a set and looking up only to see a smartphone or laptop staring back at you in silence.

### On Social Media, Authenticity, and 'Content'

*Emily Steinwall:* I started posting DIY videos of a song a day and had a surprising result. At first, I spent more time on my phone. I am addicted to social media, as is everyone else, and posting a video every day gave me more dopamine hits to seek out. But then after a few weeks, I stopped caring. The dopamine felt empty. I post videos where I am in my pyjamas with greasy hair and no makeup, and I genuinely don't feel insecure about it. Because I realized in posting every day how insignificant a social media post is; people may care for a day or two, and then it gets lost to the Web. It was actually quite liberating to get to a point where I was posting so much, and worrying about the posts so little, that I became comfortable sharing something real. Almost every person I have ever met has an experience where they saw a live performance and were so moved by it that they remember it for the rest of their lives. I have never heard anyone say that about anything shared on social media.

*Robert Diack:* As we enter a second lockdown the social media landscape appears to once again be dominated by its usual, whereas in reality, from evictions to preventable and wrongful deaths, people are still in more danger than recent memory can recall, as the pandemic continues to reveal that the most vulnerable in our communities will be, and have been, consistently left bereft. The social media attention seems to be back with the white status quo, whereas six months ago it was devoted to stopping evictions, defunding the police, and the wrongful deaths of Regis Korchinski-Paquet and Breonna Taylor, and

countless many others. I ache when I think of what the shape of my current social media represents in that context.

### Lockdown Lessons for a Post-Quarantine Future

*Emily Steinwall:* Because the entire music industry essentially collapsed as a result of COVID, it has caused me to take the "industry" out of my music. My relationship to music and creation has never been more natural, more stress free and more honest. I am grateful for this new relationship with this art form.

*Sam Dickinson:* Quarantine has definitely affirmed that music is something I love. Of course I knew that on some level (I'm certainly not in it for the money!) but it's been refreshing thinking, "No one would know if I didn't touch the guitar for three weeks," but then compulsively picking it up two hours later because I genuinely want to. 🎸

*Colin Story is a jazz guitarist, writer and teacher based in Toronto. He can be reached at [www.colinstory.com](http://www.colinstory.com) on Instagram and on Twitter.*

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# Antidote to the Winter of Our Discontent

## A 51:48-Minute Playlist

STEVE WALLACE

There's no use sugar-coating it: this coming winter promises to be the darkest in living memory. Mix the harsh weather we Canadians can always expect this time of year with the fact that COVID-19 numbers are on the rise everywhere (Toronto is about to re-enter a modified form of the spring lockdown as I write), and you have a recipe for Bleak on Toast with a side of Dismal.

Normally, we can look forward to Christmas and/or Hanukkah to provide an oasis of celebration in the midst of all the

cold and ice and snow, but with the lockdown measures set to extend at least 28 days from November 23 on, these holidays will be a lot less festive this year. The best we can hope for is to celebrate them with a vengeance next year and in the meantime, thank God the LCBO is still deemed an essential service. As Lambert, Hendricks & Ross once famously sang, "Gimme that wine (Unhand that bottle)." Cheers.

I'm tired of writing about the effects of COVID on musicians and live music and I suspect you are tired of reading about it, too. Let's just say it's been devastating, that many of us have done our best to do a technological end run around the pandemic, and leave it at that. The real question becomes how do we get through the next couple of months with our sanity and spirit intact? I've already recommended alcohol, but that doesn't work for everyone. We're all going to be cooped up inside so we have to learn to enjoy that as best we can. Cooking, baking, reading a good book or watching some classic movies all help; watching the news, not so much. And of course staying in touch with friends and family by phone or email or Zoom is really important. But above all else, I find listening to music helps the most. Since CDs have become almost obsolete, I came to regret having amassed such a huge collection of them, but no longer. I've spent a lot of the past eight months revisiting my collection and it's been time well spent.

So, in the spirit of "bring it on" which helps Canadians withstand the winters, I've decided to offer a menu of songs which address the "joys" of winter – not Christmas or Holiday songs, which we all know – but rather songs which actually have to do with winter itself. If you're reading this online, I've included YouTube links to each in the hope that housebound jazz fans will get some enjoyment out of these gems.

**Snowy Morning Blues** It's snowing as I write this morning, and this stride-piano classic by James P. Johnson always comes to mind. Despite the title it's not a blues, nor is it sad, but rather jaunty and lilting. Johnson recorded it several times throughout his great career but the slower tempo of this first 1927 version only serves to increase its stately, loping grandeur.

**Snowfall** This dreamy pastoral tone poem to winter was Claude Thornhill's theme song and features his elegant, lacy piano set against the luxurious and impressionistic palette of instrumental colours his orchestra always provided.

**Funk in Deep Freeze** There's nothing especially wintery about this Hank Mobley classic, it's relaxed and soulful hard bop all the way, featuring Art Farmer, Horace Silver, Doug Watkins and Art Blakey along with Mobley. But its title perfectly describes our current predicament, as in "we're in a deep funk and it's freezing out."

**Winter of My Discontent** Just as this moody and stark song takes its title from Shakespeare's *Richard III*, I've borrowed its title for this piece. It was written by that great maverick of American songwriting, Alec Wilder, with lyrics by Ben Ross Berenberg. There have been many fine versions of it by various singers including Jackie & Roy, Norma Winstone, and Toronto's Maureen Kennedy, but this 1965 reading by Helen Merrill is by far my favourite. Her "small" and cool approach is perfect for the song. It's from her superb album *The Feeling Is Mutual*, featuring hip arrangements and a great band of Thad Jones, Dick Katz, Jim Hall, Ron Carter and either Pete LaRoca or Arnie Wise on drums.

**(I Love the) Winter Weather** This song was written around 1940 by Ted Shapiro, who, given the title, must have come from somewhere warm like California. It was first recorded in 1941 by Benny Goodman with vocals by Art Lund and a very young Peggy Lee

and I've included that version in the first link. It really swings, but the overall mood and words are almost absurdly cheerful given the subject. I much prefer the instrumental version by pianist Jimmy Rowles in the second link; the slower tempo and rich block voicings lend it a much more subtle and reflective air. It's from one of his best 1950s albums, *Weather In A Jazz Vane*, featuring a septet of West Coast jazz greats: Lee Katzman

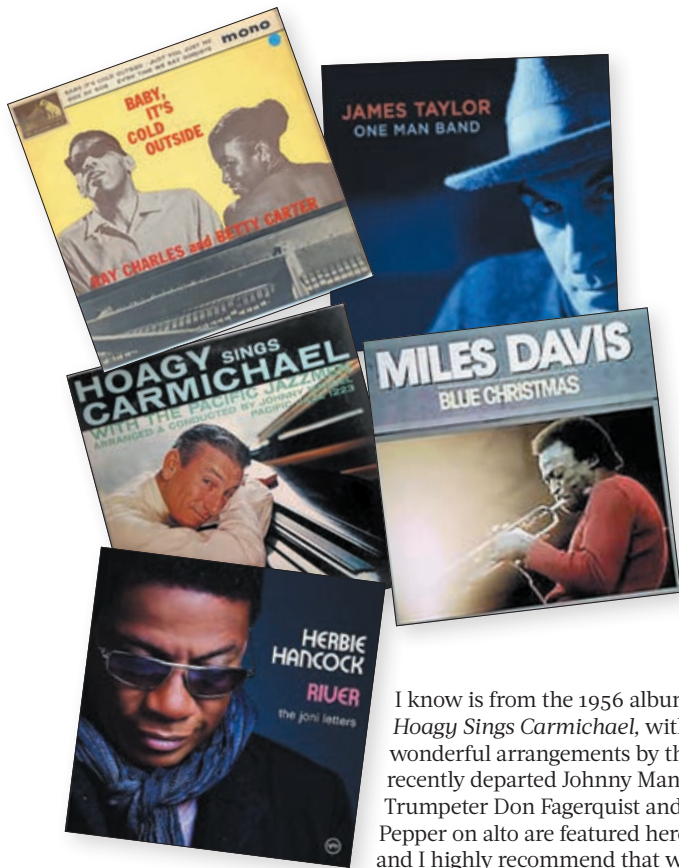
on trumpet, Bob Enevoldsen on tenor and valve trombone, Herb Geller on alto, Bill Holman on baritone, with bassist Monty Budwig and drummer Mel Lewis joining Rowles in the rhythm section.

**Baby, It's Cold Outside** This enduring male-female duet song is a seasonal staple but it was almost dislodged as such a few years ago when some eggheads accused it of enabling or suggesting date rape, and it was actually banned from airplay for a time. Fortunately saner heads eventually prevailed and it is now permissible again to enjoy this song. It's been overdone by countless couplings, but my favourite version is by Ray Charles and Betty Carter from their album of duet songs. My good friend, the late, great drummer Jerry Fuller, first introduced me to this record many years ago and I can't listen to it without thinking of him. It's bittersweet, but mostly sweet. Night night, Jerry.

**Winter Moon** There's nothing quite like the moon in winter; depending on the lunar phase, the cold gives it a crystal-clear corona or some ghostly penumbral shadows. This lesser-known Hoagy Carmichael tune explores the atmosphere both musically and lyrically in sombre and haunting fashion. The best version of it







I know is from the 1956 album *Hoagy Sings Carmichael*, with wonderful arrangements by the recently departed Johnny Mandel. Trumpeter Don Fagerquist and Art Pepper on alto are featured here and I highly recommend that while on YouTube, listeners check out the rest of this record, it's all up there.

**Grey December** This admittedly grim number was written by Frank Campo for a Pacific Jazz album of the same name by Chet Baker, with Bud Shank on flute, Russ Freeman on piano, Corky Hale on harp, Red Mitchell on bass, Bob Neel on drums, and unidentified strings. Baker's spare vocal captures the barren loneliness of winter at its greyest.

**Blue Christmas (To Whom It May Concern)** I promised no Holiday tunes, but this curious one-off outing from 1962 by singer Bob Dorough and Miles Davis is more of an anti-Christmas song, its cynical and downbeat mood eerily apt for this year. It was co-written by Dorough and Davis, and the rest of the band includes Frank Rehak on trombone, Wayne Shorter on tenor, Paul Chambers on bass, Jimmy Cobb on drums and Willie Bobo on percussion. It's kind of silly and Miles completely pooh-pooed it in his autobiography, but I've always dug this nonetheless.

**River** More than ever, Joni Mitchell's achingly evocative line, "I wish I had a river I could skate away on," could speak for all of us in these uncertain times. Who among us has not occasionally thought it would be nice to escape into hibernation for the next few months and wake up when things are better? I know I have. Her original version is classic, but I like this 2007 live rendition by Joni with Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter and company. Her voice has deepened and the slower, more open jazz treatment serves to underscore the poetic nuances and layers of this great song.

**Frozen Man** This wonderful song by James Taylor was inspired by an article which appeared in *National Geographic* about an English sailor whose frozen body was discovered a hundred years after being lost in a shipwreck during an Arctic expedition off the coast of Northern Canada. Taylor puts his own spin on it, fancying the man waking up in a hospital to a completely foreign and modern world, only to realize his own family is long gone. Taylor later realized that this was just another song about his father, who had spent several years at the South Pole as a doctor with the Navy. The title alone makes it easy for us to relate to, and if (as I wishfully speculated earlier) we had managed to hibernate through much of this pandemic and suddenly awoke in the middle of it, imagine how bewilderingly different the world would seem. The studio recording of this is great,

I promised no Holiday tunes, but this curious one-off outing from 1962 by singer Bob Dorough and Miles Davis is more of an anti-Christmas song, its cynical and downbeat mood eerily apt for this year.

but I like the intimacy of this live duo version with the estimable Larry Goldings on piano. "Lord have mercy on the frozen man." And, indeed, on all of us.

It's my hope that listening to these selections will bring some comfort and solace to jazz fans during the "trudgedy" of this season, even though some of them are a little dark in nature – if you can't beat winter, then join it, so to speak. And keep in mind, trawling around on YouTube allows you to sample all sorts of music, not just these tracks. I recommend exploring some of the full records mentioned and other music by these great artists.

To quote Ebenezer Scrooge's housekeeper Mrs. Dilber – immortally played by the great Kathleen Harrison in the 1951 film adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* – "If it ain't out of keeping with the situation," I'd like to wish all *WholeNote* readers a Joyous Holiday Season and a Happy New Year. It has to be better than this one, doesn't it? 🐼

Toronto bassist Steve Wallace writes a blog called "*Steve Wallace jazz, baseball, life and other ephemera*" which can be accessed at [wallacebass.com](http://wallacebass.com). Aside from the topics mentioned, he sometimes writes about movies and food.

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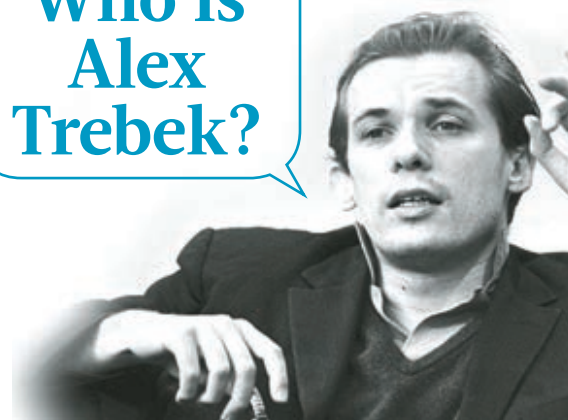


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# REAR VIEW MIRROR

Who Is  
Alex  
Trebek?



DON HUNSTEN

1963

ROBERT HARRIS

It was surprising to me, in all the genuine affection that blossomed in America for the person of Alex Trebek, following his death in early November, that no one seems to have put their finger on what I think is the essential part of his appeal. I wouldn't expect our American cousins to understand this, but I would have thought we up here might have clued in to it.

Because in an America riven by mistrust, suspicion, the worst kind of passion, hatefulness even, Trebek radiated a calm, reassuring, intelligent, steady presence. He was the anti-Trump; he was a model of engaged civility; he was the quintessential Canadian. The true secret of his success.

Those of us Canadians of a certain age knew of Trebek long before he took over from Art Fleming to be the host of a revived *Jeopardy!* in 1984. We had seen him for years on the CBC, hosting the truly great TV quiz show of all time – *Reach for the Top* – jousting and jesting with kids from high schools all over Canada. (How innocent we were in those days.) According to his Wikipedia entry, Trebek was producer Ralph Mellanby's first choice to host *Hockey Night in Canada* in the early 70s. His mustache did him in it seems; the job went to Dave Hodge.

But most of us probably don't remember, or even know, that Trebek and Glenn Gould appeared together in several of the many, many programs that Gould created for CBC Television in the 60s and 70s. OK, to call Trebek a collaborator with Gould may be stretching it a bit – Trebek, along with Bill Hawes and Ken Haslam, and several others, was a staff announcer at the CBC assigned at one time or another to work on the Gould specials. But they did appear together: Trebek introducing Gould playing Beethoven; Trebek quizzing Gould on his distaste for audiences; Trebek inviting us to join Gould next week.

The idea of a staff announcer was a BBC invention, later taken up by Canadian broadcasters. It was based on a supremely democratic notion: that all content was equally accessible to a modern, contemporary audience, or should be, so that the same person who read the news could introduce a program about pop music, or gardening, or a documentary about the mating habits of moose, or Gould talking about Beethoven's "Tempest" sonata. It was all content for a curious audience, it was all content worth transmitting on prime time television on a weekday

evening; it was the definition of modern Canadian civility. It was the atmosphere in which a young Trebek, born into a multicultural family (Ukrainian dad, Franco-Ontarian mom), in Sudbury, with his degree in philosophy from the University of Ottawa, learned about the world, the atmosphere in which the values so admired and honoured by his American audiences were honed.

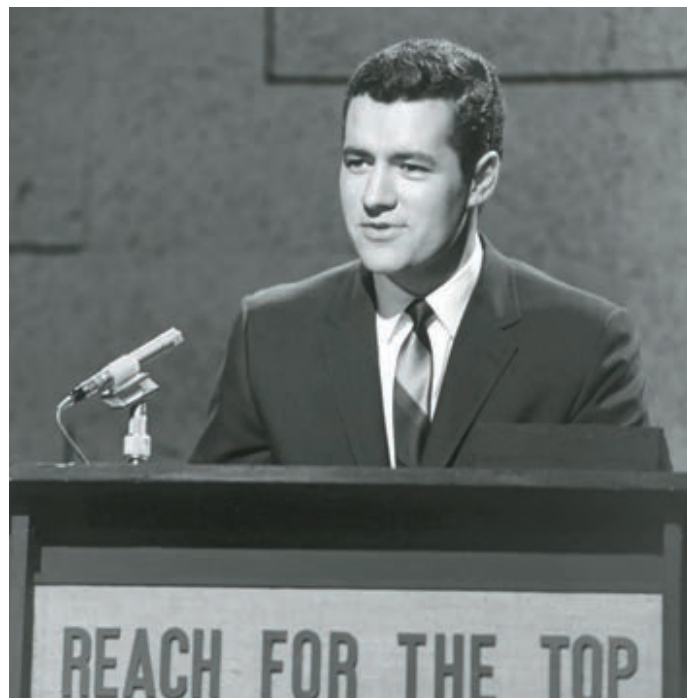
And those Gould programs, which actually ran in one way or another for over 20 years on the CBC, from the mid-50s to the late 70s (released on DVD by SONY Classical in 2011, still shamefully not available on the CBC website) were, and are still, astonishing: Gould playing and talking about Bach, reviewing the legacy of Richard Strauss, playing with Menuhin, performing Scriabin, in character as Theodore Slutz or Karlheinz Klopwiesser, taking part in one of those awkward, scripted interviews made to seem spontaneous that are so painful to listen to today. (Every one of Gould's recorded interviews, including the famous conversations much later with filmmaker Bruno Monsiegeon, were scripted by Gould down to the last um and ah.) These broadcasts were unfailingly interesting, unfailingly egomaniacal, unfailingly erudite, and if you were someone like Trebek, CBC staff announcer in 1966, and assigned to one of these shows, you were expected to be able to, if not hold your own with Gould, at least not embarrass yourself.

The network was based on the notion of a certain universality of interest, a certain belief in the ability of us all to understand and appreciate the world on many levels simultaneously – precisely the values that *Jeopardy!*, of all things, presented to America night after night in its own, modest way – the reason that Trebek was such a perfect fit to be its host. Invented by Merv Griffin (developed from an idea his wife came up with on an airplane as the couple returned to NYC from a visit to her hometown of Ironwood, Michigan) *Jeopardy!* is based on the notion that intelligence matters, that information is valuable for its own sake, not as a weapon to create political realities, and its continuing popularity in the riven America of 2020 is proof that those values have not entirely departed from the world. And Trebek, in his very modest, but sure and unassailable Canadian way, stood for those values. Which is why a game show host, of all things, could legitimately emerge as a powerful cultural icon in the 21st century. We tend to forget here (or our preternatural modesty has blinded us to the fact) that we stand for something real in the world, we Canadians – something that linked a musical genius and a professional announcer, that made Gould and Trebek not as unlikely a pair of cultural models as you might think.





2020



1967

Part of it was an openness to the world, a lack of cultural and intellectual boisterousness that manifested itself in Gould as a thrilling desire to interrogate cultural and musical truths long held to be inviolable, and in Trebek as a simple, but steady, belief in honesty, curiosity and decency. Part of it was an understanding, born of cohabiting a continent with the loudest nation on earth, of the value of silence,

Part of it was an openness to the world, a lack of cultural and intellectual boisterousness that manifested itself in Gould as a thrilling desire to interrogate cultural and musical truths long held to be inviolable, and in Trebek as a simple, but steady, belief in honesty, curiosity and decency.

modesty, and contemplation. Part of it was an understanding that a country so blessed with natural wonders, but cursed with them as well, demanded a certain self-reliance, an understanding that, in the end, it is you yourself who must decide your worth, that you are

accountable, finally, to your own set of values. That's what kept Gould in Canada – the knowledge that the US would have overwhelmed his relatively fragile, but essential sense of self – and that's what allowed Trebek, even though he became an American citizen, to remain very palely Canadian despite years of being scorched by the hot American sun of Los Angeles celebrity.

The CBC, of course, has long abandoned the philosophy of cultural democracy that could link two minds so wildly different as those of the once-in-a-lifetime Gould and the more amenable (which is not to say characterless) Trebek. And, to be fair, the world they temporarily co-inhabited is 50 years distant. But the ability of culture, in all its forms, high and low, Bach fugue and Final Jeopardy query, to provide a source of illumination that shines on us all, despite all our differences, has not entirely disappeared from the world. Glenn Gould blazed that illumination blindingly; Alex Trebek, much more modestly. But both were sources of light in the world. A very Canadian light. **●**

**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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