Russell Braun on Louis Riel

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Sun, Apr 2 at 3:00pm*
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Karen Gomyo, violin
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Beethoven: Violin Concerto
Stravinsky: Petrushka (1947)
*Apr 2 at George Weston Recital Hall, Toronto Centre for the Arts

Mahler Symphony 10
Thu, Apr 6 at 8:00pm
Fri, Apr 7 at 7:30pm
Thomas Dausgaard, conductor
Joseph Johnson, cello
Program includes:
Schumann: Cello Concerto
Mahler/Cooke: Symphony No. 10

Mozart & Mendelssohn
Sat, Apr 22 at 7:30pm
Sun, Apr 23 at 3:00pm
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Back in Our Naïve Youth

Back in our naïve youth as a magazine we used to handcuff ourselves by proclaiming one or another month of the year as [some particular genre] month. As in “April is Opera Month”; or “March is New Music Month.”

One problem was, of course, that we failed to inform the hundreds of presenters putting on concerts every month far enough in advance so that they could change their plans to fit with our executive orders.

Another was that, with every passing year, our tidy little rolodex of genres has eroded as rapidly as the memories of those among us who still know what a rolodex is.

But of all the “this month is” edicts and proclamations, the one that still feels intuitively right to me is the next one coming up after this one: thanks to the presence in our upcoming May edition of our 15th annual Choral Canary Pages, there is still an argument to be made for saying that “May is Choral Month” in The WholeNote.

It’s not because all our stories in the May issue will have choral themes. It’s because our Canary Pages are not primarily designed to give audiences information about what choral performances are coming up, but to give you and me as much information as possible about what choices are out there to join, so that we can give ourselves an opportunity to breathe in loud and joyful unison, voicing common hopes and feelings with other people on a regular basis. In a world that conspires in every imaginable way to have us twittering away in querulous, frightened or acrimonious solitude, more than ever, making music together affirms our common humanity.

More than a decade ago I explained in this very spot that the reason we had called it the Canary Pages was drawn from the dark days of coal mining, where caged canaries were strategically deployed in the tunnels to alert miners to the presence of poisonous gases. “As long as the canary is singing, you’re O.K.,” the theory went. “But if the canary croaks, metaphorically anyway, hold your breath and run.”

Aside from some surly Hamiltonian (since moved to Sarnia, I believe) who blasted us for holding up cruelty to animals as something laudable, it’s an image that stands up rather well I think. We can, to a significant extent, gauge the extent to which our arts environment is becoming toxic by whether community-based, collective music-making remain stable because those participating in them are able to remain within those communities.

The erosion from the urban landscape of local venues to listen to live music is getting some attention these days, which is good. But the displacement of the people who work in those spaces, musicians and non-musicians alike, because they can no longer afford to live in the communities they work in, tells us even more about the fragile musical health of our cities.

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The explosion of Canadian artistic creativity that led up to and accompanied the Canadian centennial celebrations in 1967 spawned ripples that continued for years, if not decades. In addition to the more than 2000 artistic infrastructure projects that the federal Centennial Commission created, there were also dozens of original musical works commissioned, by various bodies including CBC Radio, to celebrate the milestone. Some of these have remained in the canon of Canadian classical repertoire, such as Norma Beecroft's *The Living Flame of Love*, Harry Freedman's *Rose Latulippe*,Jacque Hétu's *Woodwind Quintet*, Barbara Pentland's *Suite Borealis*, Murray Schafer's *Requiems for the Party Girl*, and Harry Somers' *Evocations*.

In December 1967 the Canadian Music Centre (CMC) published a comprehensive catalogue of nearly 200 of these new works. RCA Victor collaborated with the CBC's international service, Radio Canada International (RCI), to create a centennial edition LP series, *Music and Musicians of Canada*, which ran to 17 volumes. Other labels, such as Columbia, also released Canadian classical works, although less numerous than the RCA/RCI collaboration.

Harry Somers' and Mavor Moore's opera *Louis Riel* was arguably the crowning achievement among all this creative activity. The opera was produced by the Canadian Opera Company in 1967.
2017-2018 SEASON

Strings
Oct. 19  Quatuor Mosaïques
Nov. 16  Škampa Quartet
Dec. 7   Gryphon Trio
Jan. 11  Brentano Quartet
         with soprano
         Dawn Upshaw
Feb. 1   St. Lawrence
         Quartet
Feb. 22  Apollon Musagète
         Quartet
Mar. 15  Penderecki Quartet
Apr. 12  Schumann Quartet

Piano
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Nov. 28  Philip Chiu
Jan. 23  Stephen Hough
Feb. 6   Alexei Lubimov
Mar. 27  Dénes Várjon

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Good luck with the editing was almost the first thing world-renowned Canadian countertenor Daniel Taylor said to Bryson Winchester, WholeNote podcast recording technician, when we sat down for this particular conversation. And indeed, pinning the mercurial Taylor down to one topic of conversation is a tough task, as his innate musicality takes him deeper into teaching and music directing, along with an intensive concert and recording schedule remarkable for its range, both in terms of geography and repertoire.

As it turned out, we managed to touch on several topics of interest.

Recording: Taylor’s discography is astonishing – at last count he appears on more than 100 recordings in one capacity or another. But we started out talking about a fairly recent disc, one dear to his heart, I’d say, because it yokes so many different aspects of his musical persona to a single purpose. It’s a 2017 JUNO-nominated Sony release, titled 4000 Winter, and features an ensemble, under Taylor’s direction, called the Trinity Choir.

As he explained: “The choir consists, first, of between 10 and 12 Canadian singers, primarily from Ontario and Quebec. Some are students at the University of Toronto, or graduates. We travelled to England, we did a concert tour. And joining us were members of the Tallis Scholars, the Gabrieli Consort and the Monteverdi Choir...three choirs with whom I’ve performed as a soloist, well, for the last 15 years – people I’ve met along the way with a certain way of listening to what I think is beauty.

“It was really experimental. All of our singers hadn’t worked together. The ten of mine had, in one way or another. And the British singers had worked together but not all in one group...I brought them together for a few days of rehearsal and then we started to record. I remember I was quite apprehensive because I just didn’t know if what I imagined could actually happen. Which in my mind was bringing together the sensitivity that some of our North American singers have to a different approach, but one that I thought could be complementary, from the British singers...So there it was, and they began, and I thought, that’s what I thought it could sound like. And it was so beautiful I just felt fortunate.”

It’s when the conversation went from talking about this particular recording to about recording in general, that, as Taylor warned, “Good luck with the editing!”

Topics Covered: Early operatic conducting practices; working as music director on the recent U of T Opera School production of Handel’s Imeneo, directed by Tim Albery, presented with both cast and audience on the cavernous stage of the MacMillan Theatre; the relationship between opera performance and “historical performance practice”; musing about whether his singing career would have a “natural denouement” before going on to say “actually I’m finding now, what’s challenging is balancing when I’m conducting, when I’m singing and when I’m teaching. Because it is almost like three full-time jobs. So I have to have those different hats.”

It’s interesting how often Handel comes up in the conversation. First professional opera experience; first time at the Met; first production in Canada. Interestingly, it was that production of Handel’s Giulio Cesare at the Met that led directly to one of the more enduring Bach-related threads in Taylor’s concert life – his uninterrupted 19-year association with conductor Greg Funfgeld and the Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Bach Festival.

“What’s interesting about the Bethlehem Bach Choir is it is very much a different sort of animal than we’d find in England with the smaller early music ensembles. The Bethlehem Bach Choir is really in that great tradition that Robert Shaw had with the Atlanta Symphony - those big big choruses. What’s inspiring about it is that there’s a sense of worship but also of community. There’s an earnest quality to what they do - and they’re so committed to it. It’s really moving.”

To hear the full conversation with Daniel Taylor, or any of our other podcasts, search for “The WholeNote” in your favourite podcast app, or go to TheWholeNote.com/podcasts.
According to Chaucer, April is the month that with its sweet showers “pierces March’s drought to the root,” causing all kinds of people, music lovers not excepted, to get a bit giddy and take themselves off on all manner of “sundry pilgrimages.” As a lifelong chronic agoraphobe who typically gets on airplanes only for trips revolving around grim duty of one kind or another, I was until last year, a steadfast exception to the Chaucerian rule. But 2016 was different. Not once but twice I noted my nearest exits, turned off all electronic devices and faithfully obeyed the fasten seatbelt sign as I took off into the wide blue yonder for the purpose of attending music festivals in other parts of the world.

I am, therefore, now an expert on the subject of music festivals. So pay attention.

Rule number one: Other than the ones that take place in your hometown and can therefore be ignored unless you have guests, there are only two types of festivals.

One is the kind of festival that is sufficiently compelling in its own right that it causes you to journey some place you never have thought of visiting, even if you had heard of it.

The other is a festival you never heard of but taking place somewhere so special in its own right that you feel compelled to go there at least once in your lifetime. And when you do, you discover that there’s a festival there that tickles your musical fancy, so you go to it because you are already there.

There’s one of each kind in this story: the 2016 first annual Jerusalem Summer Opera Festival falls into the second category; the 110th Annual Bethlehem Bach Festival falls into the first.

The Bethlehem Bach Festival takes place in Bethlehem, PA, nestled in the Lehigh Valley region of Southeaster Pennsylvania, this year on the weekends of May 12-13 and May 19-20. Colonized in the first half of the 18th century by Moravian settlers, Bethlehem became also, in the 1860s (across the river from the old town), the site of Lehigh University, a private school established by businessman Asa Packer. (The church that bears his name, on the Lehigh campus, remains the venue for the performance of the Bach Mass in B Minor that is the climax of each year’s festival.) And between the two halves of the town, along the riverbank is the looming rusting hulk of what was, from the 1880s till the 1990s, the steel mill from which Bethlehem Steel derived its name. Twelve years after the mill was built, in 1898, the Bethlehem Bach Choir came into being. Two years after that it gave the first ever complete North American performance of Bach’s B Minor Mass. Through that whole galvanic century, the choir and the festival have endured through thick and thin, because they bring to the music not just a consistently high standard of musicianship, but a precious intangible – the fact that the music is a living expression of community.

I’ve written before about how my first awareness of the Bethlehem Bach Festival came about because of the non-stop procession of top-flight Canadian soloists to the festival, especially since Greg Funfgeld took on conductorship of the choir in 1983. Countertenor Daniel Taylor, for example, returns for the 19th consecutive year, joined again this year by soprano Agnes Zsigovics (a protégée of Taylor’s at the University of Toronto, and surely a performer to watch) and by Benjamin Butterfield, also a frequent visitor but absent last year. The three US soloists are also regulars: soprano Rosa Lamoreaux, baritone William Sharp and Dashon Burton, bass. One of Funfgeld’s gifts to his performers. Talk to the soloists and they will tell you that as much as anything, the opportunity to renew beloved musical relationships in a consistent context is one of the things that keeps them coming back.

It’s been said that North America (at least from a colonial perspective) has too much geography and not enough history, while the problem in the Middle East is just the reverse. But if one thinks local rather than global, the distinction starts to blur. Walk from the Hotel Bethlehem (built in the 1920s with Bethlehem steel!) through the old Moravian Quarter, across the bridge past the hulk of the steel mill, where signs of civic landscaping and urban renewal are visibly starting to happen on the river edge, up the opposite hill to the Packer Church, and take your place in the audience. There will always be more than one generation of the same family in the choir that looks back at you. And the music, when it starts, will have a healing sound
that is only possible when it is as current as it is timeless.

**Jerusalem Opera Festival:** Last summer’s trip to the Jerusalem Opera Festival had several memorable moments. One was sitting, late at night, on the rooftop licenced patio of the Mamilla Hotel in downtown Jerusalem, after returning from the evening’s main event, a thoroughly enjoyable outdoor performance of *Rigoletto* at the 6000-seat Sultan’s Pool amphitheatre, a few hundred feet down the hill. There’s something infinitely less annoying about amplification and outdoor acoustics when the surroundings are as genuinely imposing. (Although I do remember thinking, as an ambulance barrelled down the hill, klaxon blaring, alongside the amphitheatre, right on cue, that maybe this time Gilda would be saved! The second night’s performance, at the Sultan’s Pool again, titled “Opera Paradiso,” was, to my taste less successful, featuring a range of operatic moments from film, sung and performed live by singers and orchestra while the related movie excerpts flickered silently onscreen.

I found myself wondering if there was perhaps a trap for the festival in trying to attract the same 6000 people two days in a row to the one venue, rather than setting the goal of doing the same show twice in a row to grow the audience, and to lay on other things, large and small, for each audience on their “other” night. A better way to build partnerships in the community, said my small-town brain.

As it happens, this year’s Jerusalem Festival has just been announced, and someone else must have been thinking along the same lines I was. There will be two performances of *Nabucco*, June 21 and 22 at Sultan’s Pool. It will be very interesting to see what else, if anything, operatic or not, gets programmed head to head with those two performances.

My favourite story from the whole visit indicates the size of the challenge ahead. We were in Tel Aviv, home base of the Israeli Opera, at the end of the visit, being shown around the props and costumes room, backstage. Our guide, an opera staff member, was talking frankly about how the two cities were completely different worlds. (“It’s an hour’s drive at a speed of 30 centuries an hour,” someone said.) The NIOC staffer described how her own children, growing up backstage among the props and costumes, had never even been to Jerusalem until they were five or six years old. Holding tight to her hand as they walked through the souks with their dizzying variety of cultural and religious garb, one of the children turned to her, pointing at someone walking by in unfamiliar attire. “Mommy, what costume is that?” the child asked.

The greatest challenge for this particular festival, it seems to me, is that Jerusalem as a city is itself a living opera, on a grander, more viscerally demanding scale than anything the arts can hope to muster. It will be interesting to see how much attention this particular festival can hope to grab moving forward.

David Perlman can be reached at publisher@thewholenote.com.

**Rising to the Challenge of Riel**

While there are several noteworthy operas on offer in April, one looms over them all. This is the COC’s first new production of Harry Somers’ *Louis Riel* since it premiered in 1967. Co-produced by the Canadian Opera Company and the National Arts Centre, the new production will give Canadians the rare opportunity to see what has often been called the greatest Canadian opera ever written.

Written and performed for Canada’s centennial in 1967, *Louis Riel* is being revived for the sesquicentennial this year. Reasons for the scarcity of productions of it are not hard to see. The opera is in three acts and 17 scenes, requires a chorus, a 67-member orchestra and has 39 named roles. Composer Harry Somers and librettist Mavor Moore wanted to create an epic opera on the model of French grand opera and one could say they succeeded only too well.

In an interview in March, director Peter Hinton threw light on how he plans to meet the many challenges that the opera poses. Speaking of his concept for the production, Hinton explained, “What we’ve tried to do is create a setting that can serve each of the locations of the opera but also create a sort of container of imagery that in some ways sets the entire opera at the trial of Louis Riel. So on the one hand the set resembles Fort Garry, an enclosure, the contrast of a colonized building against an incredible landscape of the land, and also a courtroom where the events of history are put on trial and we’re examining the motivations and intentions behind enormous ideas like governments, justice, confederation. So it was very challenging but very exciting because the ideas of the opera are really big, the history is very big, and not surprisingly it’s very contemporary. Yes, it’s a historical story, but it’s one that continues to speak to us today.”

Hinton said that Somers and Moore made an intriguing choice of subject for an opera meant to celebrate Canada’s centennial: “I thought it was very interesting that they chose the history of Louis Riel. And I think that’s a very key kind of distinction because when I first sat down to listen to it I suspected it might be a very pro-Canada, ‘we are one nation,’ idealized kind of history telling. But I was really taken with how critical it is, how it brought forward the problems of Confederation, that it exposed Sir John A. Macdonald and his political motivations for Confederation in a very critical way. And so it poses very contemporary questions about what are we commemorating, what are we celebrating, what, in addition to our history of achievement, [are] our losses, our injustices, what continues to be needed to be worked out and expressed and understood today.”

Thus, Hinton’s concept for the opera as a trial means more than Riel’s trial. Canada and how it was founded are also on trial. In addition, Hinton points out, he is re-examining the opera itself: “In another way we’re sort of putting the opera on trial. Clearly, if the COC were to take on creating a new opera today about Louis Riel, it would have more indigenous and Metis involvement in the creation of it. So even more than the challenges of staging the narrative of Louis Riel, the politics of it have been much more challenging and very, very difficult to reconcile oneself with because opera itself might be characterized as one of the most colonial art forms because its roots are so Eurocentric.”

The solution, as he explains it, was to treat Harry Somers’ and Mavor Moore’s opera as an artifact of its time.

“It reflects very much the aesthetic sensibilities of contemporary music of the 1960s and it has great dramatic strength and power and beauty. It also has many colonial biases. So part of the job here is to do the opera and let its beauty be heard and soar and not be afraid to cast light on its biases; not to pretend the opera is an Indigenous creation.
it is definitely created by two white settler guys— but to try to open up a more inclusive representation in the show.

“And I have to say honestly that [COC General Director] Alexander Neef knew exactly what I was talking about... It took me a long time to make a commitment to be involved because of issues about inclusion and appropriation especially in light of Truth and Reconciliation. I’m very aware of my privilege and my own cultural heritage as a director for the piece. So I really had to think a way through that I could contribute without continuing a legacy of misrepresentation.”

To achieve this, Hinton has re-envisioned the opera’s chorus: “In the original production there was one very large opera chorus who played a variety of roles from members of the Métis Assembly to demonstrators at an Orangemen’s protest in Toronto. And I decided to split up the chorus and identify them culturally. So we in fact have two choruses in this production—one which we are calling the Parliamentary Chorus. This chorus is in modern dress and sing the allocated choral parts in the score but they are removed from the action. They sit above in a gallery not unlike visitors to a house of parliament and comment on the opera, debate the opera, encourage characters within the narrative to act or not. But they do nothing. They have no physical impact on the story or its outcome. They comment.

“In contrast and in equal representation in the show is a 35-member Indigenous chorus who are a physical chorus and we’re calling them the Land Assembly. They physically embody the world in which the narrative Riel is enacted and are directly involved in all of the action but are not given a voice. So in many respects the opera is one about silence, about who speaks on behalf of whom, and who gets a voice and who doesn’t. And so what I’m very hopeful about is that our Land Assembly brings a very strong Indigenous representation of bodies on stage and has an impact of reminding the audience as they see this story enacted that land is also about people. And the opera is also very much people and groups and where does someone stand as an individual, what do they represent. That’s one aspect of the show that will be very different from the way it was done 50 years ago.”

The COC has cast Indigenous men
and women to make up the Land Assembly. In addition new characters have been added to the opera to present a more informed history of the Métis and Indigenous people. The previously unattributed opening vocal line is now delivered by a character known as The Folksinger, to be sung by Jani Lauzon, a singer of Métis heritage.

The new role of The Activist, to be played by Cole Alvis of Métis-Irish/English heritage, will deliver the Land Acknowledgement as the opera unfolds, setting the tone for interpreting the action playing out on stage.

A separate group of 30 artists will play the 39 named characters in the opera with baritone Russell Braun as the title character. Among these are Joanna Burt, a Métis/Saugeen Ojibway artist, who sings Sara Riel, Cree actor and playwright Billy Merasty as the Plains Cree chief Poundmaker and Cree bass-baritone Everett Morrison as Cree war chief Wandering Spirit.

Justin Many Fingers, a singer, actor and dancer from the Kainai Blackfoot Reserve in southern Alberta, will perform two dance sequences titled “Buffalo Hunt,” in the last scene of Act II, intended as a reenactment of a Métis buffalo hunt.

Asked if, despite the opera’s biases, it is still a work worth being revived, Hinton answered, “Definitely. I think it’s a magnificent work of art. And it’s really important that we revive it and examine it. It was the first opera written by Canadians with a Canadian story produced at the Canadian Opera Company and so it’s a very interesting thing to take a look at what was created 50 years ago, where we have come

in that time and how this piece sits within the repertoire of the works the COC does. I think it’s a really important complement to that. And I think the work is very powerful and very strong, but it requires context.

“We have to look at Louis Riel as one of the first civil activists. He’s right up there to me with Martin Luther King and Malcolm X in the states. He was an incredibly progressive person for his time. So looking at the history again in operatic terms is incredible and the show has enormous, enormous power and range, from satire in the way that Macdonald and Cartier and their political manoeuvres are expressed, to deep tragedy of someone who gave his entire life for justice for the people and maybe expressed it best in losing it. There’s a tragedy in that. It’s a magnificent work in that regard, so all of the efforts of this production are to bring that genius to light in it and to see how we can see that with the knowledge we have today. Producing the work is not just a chance to look but also to guide us forward.”

Louis Riel runs for seven performances from April 20 to May 13 at the Four Seasons Centre in Toronto and on June 15 and 17 at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa.

Christopher Hoile is a Toronto-based writer on opera and theatre. He can be contacted at opera@thewholenote.com.
Natalie Dessay with Philippe Cassard
TUESDAY MAY 2, 8PM KOERNER HALL
Tickets start at only $40
With French soprano Natalie Dessay “every vocal phrase is impelled by the emotion and dramatic intention of the moment.” (The New York Times) She and pianist Philippe Cassard will perform a program called “Women’s Portraits,” featuring works by Mozart, Schubert, Chausson, Debussy, and more.

Presented in association with Alliance Française de Toronto and the Consulat Général de France à Toronto.

The Montrose Trio & Friends
FRIDAY, APRIL 28, 8PM KOERNER HALL Tickets start at only $40
A Canadian chamber music all-star evening featuring pianist Jon Kimura Parker, violinist Martin Beaver, and cellist Clive Greensmith playing Brahms’s Piano Trio No. 1 and joined by special guests to perform Tchaikovsky’s Souvenir de Florence and Brahms’s Alto Songs.

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Les Violons du Roy with Philippe Jaroussky
THURSDAY, APRIL 13, 8PM KOERNER HALL
Tickets start at only $40
Québec City’s Les Violons du Roy, conducted by Mathieu Lussier, and extraordinary French countertenor Philippe Jaroussky perform a program of Baroque works by Händel, Bach, Fux, and Graun.

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Dan Zanes with Claudia Eliaza: A Family Concert
SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 1PM KOERNER HALL
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A former member of rock band the Del Fuegos, Dan Zanes’s music is where sea shanties, English music hall, North American and West Indian folk music, play party songs, the spirit of early rock-and-roll, and soulful originals collide.

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THURSDAY, MAY 4, 8PM KOERNER HALL
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THE GLOBE AND MAIL
Russell Braun dropped by our studio on March 2, just back in town after his umpteenth Mendelssohn Elijah in Ottawa (around two and a half decades after a prescient Robert Cooper first picked him out of a University of Toronto student lineup to perform the role).

“No-one in their 20s should do it,” he says now, with a laugh. Unsurprisingly for those who know him, with rehearsals for Louis Riel due to start March 19, he wasn’t exactly planning to rest up. Both of his sons, he told me, are heavily involved in baseball so he’s heading off the next day on a side trip to their respective spring-training camps in Florida, “en route” to London for a March 13 performance of Senza Sangue (Without Blood), a one-act opera by Peter Eötvös, based on a novella of the same name by Alessandro Baricco. His character in Senza is in his 70s, he informed us.

“In the last few years,” he mused, “my operatic career has transformed a little bit from playing basically passionate adolescents to richly, fully developed adults.”

The upcoming role in Louis Riel, by contrast, requires him to play a character who goes from his late 20s to his late 30s. But Riel is no typical 30-year-old, and Braun has been immersing himself in preparation for the role for a couple of years now.

“I like to really do 90 percent of the work on my own with the opera, whether it’s Mozart or Debussy or Somers or Eötvös. I love the interaction between the score and the piano; luckily I can play the piano well enough to really establish a relationship with the score before I open my mouth.

“This particular score is rhythmically very, very challenging. Very often if you are a competent musician you can read through a score, and then on second, third, fourth reading master more and more. The Louis Riel score…it almost requires a mathematical analytical approach before you can even open your mouth and utter a word…whenever a composer notates in a particular way I ask myself why. You know, whether it’s Bach, which is almost devoid of notation sometimes, or Hugo Wolf, which is extremely specifically notated, or Massenet, a French composer, also very specifically notated in terms of interpretation… I always ask myself ‘What is it that this composer compels me to do?’”

In the case of Somers, he says, “The end result that I think he wants is to eventually find a natural flow of quasi-recitative and speech again, and it’s very, very busily notated but you can reach a level of saturation quite quickly unless you have this goal in mind - that basically the result [he desires] is a natural rhythmic flow of speech: now, it looks on the score like it’s a septuplet on a triplet that has a dotted eighth and a sixteenth note underneath the triplet, within the septuplet which is actually a five-sixteenth bar [laughs]. But with difficult music the effort it takes to learn it pays off in the understanding of it.”

Interestingly, too, at the time we spoke he hadn’t permitted himself to view or listen to the one available recording of the work, featuring Bernard Turgeon as Riel, and a cast of performers who have inhabited Braun’s world, as teachers, mentors and family friends, some for as long as he can remember.

For him, there are no shortcuts to finding his character. “I need to make my own mistakes,” he says.

To hear the full conversation with Russell Braun, or any of our other podcasts, search for “The WholeNote” in your favourite podcast app, or go to TheWholeNote.com/podcasts.
In professions that are physically and mentally challenging as well as competitive, there’s no experience quite as disappointing as discovering that you’re second best. Back in 1995, a team of psychologists observed and ranked the emotions displayed by Olympic athletes right when the final results in their events were announced, and then again when they were standing on the podium. What they found was not only that the bronze medal winners seemed significantly happier than the silver medallists, but that winning a silver actually caused negative emotions in the athletes who won them. Instead of celebrating an achievement – and how many people even know who are the second best in the entire world at something? – they expressed both sadness and contempt, and harshly critiqued their own performance, listing their mistakes and replaying the event in their heads, wishing they had acted differently in order to win gold.

The career of Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643-1704) is an excellent example of the frustrations of being almost the greatest. Despite a professional lifetime of artistic patronage in some of the best courts in 17th-century France, a mid-career collaboration with Molière, an appointment as maître de musique for the Jesuit order in France, and a lifetime composing music with over 500 compositions to his name, he was still a (distant) second, career-wise, to the greatest French composer of the period, Jean-Baptiste Lully. It’s important to keep two things in mind about being second-best to Lully: one, that it doesn’t mean Charpentier, or any of his other contemporaries, was any less of a composer, and in many cases Charpentier was arguably better. Two, that being anything other than the best composer in Louis XIV’s France came with significant creative limitations on what composers were allowed to write. Lully, one must bear in mind, was not simply interested in writing better music than everyone else. He was also determined to be the richest and the most influential and, to the best of his ability, the only composer in France, and the centralization of French cultural and political life around Versailles made sure he could maintain an artistic monopoly.

The result for Charpentier was that he couldn’t legally produce an opera, or indeed any other piece of music, with more than two singers and six instrumentalists, without the express written permission of Lully. Although working for the prominent House of Guise meant that Charpentier could somewhat circumvent this, he still had to wait until he was 50 years old before he could get an opera produced at court after Lully finally died in 1687.

The opera in question was Médée (Medea) and although Charpentier had to wait most of his life to get a chance to write something like it, the wait was well worth it for the French court. Listening to Médée, the listener can tell right away that Charpentier was able to perfectly imitate the style developed by the old Italian monopolist and, although the opera only ran for a few months, Médée was critically received.
well-received by contemporary audiences.

This month, Opera Atelier is reviving the crowning achievement of a composer whose career never did justice to his compositional talent. Medea is running April 22 to 29 at the Elgin Theatre and Opera Atelier, with its exceptional roster of singers, opulent staging and crack pit orchestra (Tafelmusik), will certainly make this rare performance of a composer who never got to be the best a must-see.

We like to think we’ve come a long way, culturally, since Louis XIV and his privilèges royaux, but the distance between first and second place in Canada still seems like a wide gulf. A perfect example of this is Les Violons du Roy who, from a vantage point within the Toronto early music scene, never seem to enjoy the popularity and success of Tafelmusik.

I’m not sure the lack of coverage is entirely fair to the Quebec City-based group, as it’s certainly not lacking for talent. They’ve been led in the past by Bernard Labadie, Jonathan Cohen and Mathieu Lussier, all of whom have led full careers and made significant contributions to the early music field. The group’s members are all perfectly competent players and have enjoyed a lifetime of experience playing orchestral, solo and chamber music in Quebec. The group itself is one of Canadian early music’s stalwarts, having been in operation since 1984 (just five years after Tafelmusik) and now has some 35 recordings to its name. If there’s any reason this group is being held back, I have no idea what it is.

This month, you’ll be able to see for yourself what makes Les Violons du Roy worth hearing, as they’ll be coming to play Koerner Hall April 13 in a program that includes Bach, Handel, Fux and Graun. Lussier will be leading the group and, to sweeten the deal, the orchestra will be joined by the great countertenor Philippe Jaroussky who, far from being just a voice, has a versatility that lets him sing a wide range of repertoire from Monteverdi to Fauré. I will be very interested to hear what this soloist and this group are capable of when they collaborate.

Music-making has probably been a family business since about as long as there have been professional musicians. Although the history of music pedagogy is full of brilliant teachers and outstanding pupils, it’s difficult to overcome the problem of what the student does when the lesson ends and he goes home to (one hopes) practise, and a good deal of the numerous performance issues that arise from a typical piece of music can be resolved much more quickly in having an older, more experienced musician on hand at home to help.

The Bach family is an obvious example of such dynasty, but there are plenty of musicians who also parented a younger generation of great performers. Tafelmusik explores the theme of musical families in their concert this month, “Bach: Keeping It in the Family,” which features one great early music father-daughter duo, Alfredo and Cecilia Bernardini. Dad is a well-known baroque oboist, and daughter Cecilia is a baroque violinist who is beginning to shine as a soloist. They’ll both be coming to Toronto to show off their talents in a program that includes the JS Bach Concerto for Violin in E Major BWV 1042 and the CPE Bach Oboe Concerto in E Flat Major Wq. 162, as well as a sinfonia by Bach’s eldest son Wilhelm Friedmann and a Telemann orchestral suite. This is a pair of soloists who can handle virtuosic works with ease, and Tafelmusik always sounds great when there’s a guest director to give a new perspective on performance practice. Check this concert out April 5 through 9 at Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre.

If you’d prefer a concert of chamber music this month to a full-scale French opera or orchestral concerts of high Baroque music, consider checking out “Fork in The Road,” I Furiosi’s concert on April 21 at Calvin Presbyterian Church. It’s somewhat unclear what the group is up to, but no matter: I Furiosi can always be counted on to put on an exciting concert with great performers, and this concert will highlight some seldom-heard composers, including Jean Baptiste Senaille, Giuseppe Tartini and Louis Bourgeois.

David Podgorski is a Toronto-based harpsichordist, music teacher and a founding member of Rezonce. He can be contacted at earlymusic@thewholenote.com.

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PODCASTING at THE WHOLENOTE

Jenny Parr: 17.03.06

Toronto-based “lifelong theatre person” Jennifer (Jenny) Parr works as a director, fight director, stage manager and coach, and is equally crazy about movies and musicals.

So reads the little bio on our website at the end of her recent online concert report for The WholeNote on the Toronto opening night of the new musical Sousatzka.

It was the “fight director” angle that provided the spark for this conversation taking place at this particular point in time, but by the end of our chat I’d say we’d at least touched on all the aspects of her life alluded to in that little bio.

Parr has been Opera Atelier’s fight director for as long as I can remember, and the April 2017 production of Charpentier’s Medea has fight scenes that are the most complex and elaborate of any in the company’s repertoire.

Here’s a taste of the conversation: “I think of this as one of the big ‘fight’ operas, which for me is of course the most fun. I love working with Opera Atelier. The first one we did was Perséée in 2000. Médée (Medea) was the second, in 2002. The nice thing was we already had some dancers I had trained two years earlier for Perséée who could come with a little bit of expertise…how to hold a sword, how to act with a sword. And we had a big workshop that first time, experimenting with the choreography. Coming back to it has been wonderful. It’s been a long time.

There are two big sections. Early on in the opera in Act One there’s a big section of display at the court, the power of the court and the quality of the army, so the dancers do a lot of what we term display fighting, as if they’re fighting invisible opponents…single rapier; rapier and dagger; rapier and cape, which is a great historical fighting style I have always wanted to do, and I got to invent a fight for this… “And then later on in the opera (hopefully I’m not giving away the story)...the king Creon has gathered together a group of assassins to capture and kill Medea – she is of course a witch, a very powerful sorceress – she puts a spell on these assassins and they turn on each other. There’s a long sequence of the soldiers fighting each other. Single fighters, two against one, a big almost ballet-meets-sword-fighting combined scene.”

Following the April production Parr will travel, in May, with Opera Atelier and Tafelmusik to where the opera was born - Versailles. “I went when the company did Perséée and wanted to be there this time as well, because it’s a slightly different space. The biggest change is that the stage is raked...so just as a safety concern I want to be there as they go through the fights. The drops are slightly different distances so that affects the space you have for a fight. So I always want to be the one that makes the changes if changes need to be made.”

From being bitten by the theatre bug (“My dad was an actor so I grew up with that in the blood and all the way through school”), to how she got her name, to being introduced to the “gentleman’s art of defence” at Trinity College, to the particular intricacies of scoring fights to pre-existing music (rather than the more usual film techniques of scoring music to fight scenes after the fact), to recent (and future) directing projects revolving around all-female productions of classical theatre, Parr’s is a diverse and ever-evolving musical and theatrical skill set, and it comes through nicely in this little chat.

To hear the full conversation with Jenny Parr, or any of our other podcasts, search for “The WholeNote” in your favourite podcast app, or go to TheWholeNote.com/podcasts.
The New Orford String Quartet, founded in July 2009, takes its name from the trailblazing Orford String Quartet whose 26-year career ended in 1991. The New Orford’s pedigree is impressive: violinists Jonathan Crow and Andrew Wan, respectively concertmasters of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal; Eric Nowlin, principal viola of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra; and Brian Manker, the OSM’s principal cello. Their concert April 23, the finale of Mooredale Concerts’ current season, is the quartet’s third appearance with Mooredale since 2012.

Terry Robbins wrote about their latest CD of Brahms’ two Op.51 Quartets in his February 2016 Strings Attached column for The WholeNote: “Just about all of the Brahmsian qualities you would want to hear are present: these are warm, passionate, nuanced, beautifully judged and balanced performances, full of that almost autumnal, nostalgic introspection so typical of the composer and with a lovely dynamic range.”

Notwithstanding the JUNO nomination (Classical Album of the Year: Solo or Chamber Ensemble) for that Brahms String Quartets CD, which includes the A Minor Op.51 No.2 that they will perform April 23, the highlight of the afternoon will be the opportunity to hear Schubert’s Quintet in C Major D956 which represents the peak of chamber music writing. I asked Mooredale Concerts’ artistic director, Adrian Fung (also the cellist of the Afiara String Quartet, who will be playing the Cello II part in the concert), when he first heard Schubert’s Quintet in C. He said it was a recording with the Cleveland Quartet and Yo-Yo Ma. Fung was about 10 or 11, shortly after he had begun the cello. “It was transcendent,” he said. “And only later did I realize how few recordings (and performances!) respect the true dynamic markings in the first movement (where the two-cello theme is intended within a pianissimo dynamic).”

“I was moved by the sheer complexity and scope of intention,” he told me. “It is incredible how each of the two cellos enables the other to let go of a supporting bass line and soar as a melody. In string quartets, when the cello soars, usually the viola needs to step in as best as it can to provide resonance below. In this work, there is an incredible spectrum of sound because of the equal balance of two violins, one viola, and two cellos. One would think there would be more cello quintets!”

His favourite configuration for performances of the work, he says, is “an established quartet playing with a guest cellist. There is so much poetry in how a group’s existing cellist plays a welcoming role – musically – to a ‘brother/sister’ joining for this masterwork. I love how in the second movement, Cello II gets such a spotlight playing a recurring, transcendent, low bass line that is at once melismatic and a deep pondering of life’s meaning.”

Fung first heard the piece live when he was about 15 or so (and a student at different chamber music festivals), performed by various faculty musicians coming together to give the work a reading. His relationship to it has continued to evolve: “From first as a listener, to having played both Cello I and Cello II parts with my own quartet (Afiara) and as a guest with other quartets, the work has opened up several unexpected riches with each performance. I have had the privilege of welcoming incredible guest cellists in my role in Afiara, learning especially from the late Marc Johnson of the Vermeer Quartet, my mentor Joel Krosnick of the Juilliard String Quartet, Denis Brott of the first Orford Quartet and Bonnie Hampton. In turn, I have enjoyed playing the work with the Alexander and Cecilia String Quartets, among others... The Schubert is truly something to behold, with so many layers becoming more apparent with each visit. One of my favourite performances of it was with my Afiara and Shauna Rolston.”

As for me, I first heard Schubert’s Quintet as a teenager, taken to the Eaton Auditorium by an aunt and uncle one fall afternoon. It was played by the Quintetto Boccherini and presented by the Women’s Musical Club of Toronto. I had never before been so moved by a piece of chamber music. Many years and many diverse recordings since,

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**Music in the Afternoon:** The Women’s Musical Club of Toronto’s current season comes to a vigorous conclusion with two very different concerts. The first, on April 6, features the Toronto debut of the Aizuri String Quartet, described by WMCT’s artistic director Simon Fryer in his season announcement as “four girls in residence at the Curtis Institute,” in a program of “how young composers grappled with the past.” It’s comprised of early Beethoven (Op.18 No.6), American Caroline Shaw’s *Blueprint* (2016), Webern’s late–Romantic *Langsamter Satz* and Mendelssohn’s String Quartet No.2 in A Minor Op.13, written in 1827, just months after Beethoven’s last quartet when Mendelssohn was just 18.

Then, on May 4 it’s Charles Richard-Hamelin’s turn to shine. The WMCT can be justifiably proud of their prescience in awarding pianist Richard-Hamelin their Career Development Award in April 2015. Only a few months later he became the silver medalist and laureate of the Krystian Zimerman award for the best sonata at the International Chopin Piano Competition. Take advantage of his first Toronto full-fledged solo recital since then, to hear this 27-year-old Canadian whose pianism exhibits the musicianship and maturity of a more seasoned artist. His program includes an early Schubert sonata, Chopin’s captivating *Impromptus* and Scriabin’s Op.8 and 9, works which owe much to Chopin.

**Lucas Debargue and the TSO.** The Tchaikovsky 2015 Competition keeps on giving. In the last year Show One has presented three of its prizewinners at Koerner Hall: a unique joint recital of runner-up Lukas Geniušas and Moscow Music Critics Association prizewinner Lucas Debargue last spring was followed by the Tchaikovsky Competition first-place finisher, a polished and secure Dmitry Masleev, in March 2017. Meanwhile on December 7, 2016, the TSO and a soulful Geniusus performed Tchaikovsky’s *Piano Concerto No.1*. Now, Debargue will join Andrey Boreyko and the orchestra for a performance of Liszt’s poetic *Piano Concerto No.2 in A Major*, April 12 and 13.

If Debargue’s backstory weren’t true, few would believe it as fiction. He heard the slow movement of Mozart’s *Piano Concerto No.21 K467* when he was ten, fell under its spell and into the world of music. He played a friend’s upright piano by ear before beginning lessons at 11 with his first teacher, Madame Meunier, in the northern French town of Compiègne. He credits her with helping him to find his way out of Lukas Geniušas and Moscow Music Critics Association prizewinner Lucas Debargue last spring was followed by the Tchaikovsky Competition first-place finisher, a polished and secure Dmitry Masleev, in March 2017. Meanwhile on December 7, 2016, the TSO and a soulful Geniusus performed Tchaikovsky’s *Piano Concerto No.1*. Now, Debargue will join Andrey Boreyko and the orchestra for a performance of Liszt’s poetic *Piano Concerto No.2 in A Major*, April 12 and 13.

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**Apr 9:** The Royal Conservatory presents the eminent pianist Louis Lortie performing Chopin’s Études Op.10 and 25 and Preludes Op.28.

**Apr 28:** RCN presents the Montrose Trio (Jon Kimura Parker, piano; Martin Beaver, violin; Clive Greensmith, cello; the latter two are former members of the disbanded Tokyo String Quartet) and friends (Barry Schifff and Erika Rahm, violins; Teng Li and Sharon Wei, violas; Desmond Hoebig, cello; and Allyson McHardy, mezzo-soprano) in a program that includes Brahms’ Piano Trio No.1 and Alto Songs, plus Tchaikovsky’s memorable Souvenir de Florence.

**Apr 12:** The Bata Shoe Museum presents the effervescent Quartetto Gelato.

**Apr 16:** Chamber Music Hamilton brings Quatuor Danel to Southern Ontario, a rare visit to North America for this Belgian-based quartet that is considered by some as the heirs to European quartets such as the Beethoven and Pro Arte, with whose surviving members they studied.

**Apr 17:** The Rosebud String Quartet, featuring COC Orchestra principal violin Keith Hamm (founder and artistic director of the Rosebud Chamber Music Festival in Rosebud, Alberta, his hometown) and COC Orchestra associate concertmaster/National Ballet Orchestra concertmaster Aaron Schwebel, performs Haydn and Schumann in historic Campbell House.

**Apr 21:** Remenyi House of Music presents Russian-born, British-based pianist Amirn Zenaishvili in a recital devoted to the music of Brahms.

**Apr 21:** TSO piccolo Camille Watts and COC/National Ballet Orchestra piccolo Shelley Brown join forces for Gallery 345’s The Art of the Flute, with a little help from their friends Erin Cooper Gay, Aaron Schwebel, Keith Hamm and Britt Riley. **Apr 29:** The Art of the Flute continues with RCN faculty-member Sibylle Marquardt and her friends Fraser Jackson, Monique de Margerie, Paul Pulford and Michael Donovan.

**Apr 21:** In the penultimate concert of Jeffery Concerts’ two-year traversal of the complete Beethoven Quartets, the New Orford String Quartet performs Op.18 No.3 and No.5, and Op.135; Wolf Performance Hall, London.

**Apr 21, 22:** Virtuoso German-Canadian cellist Johannes Moser joins Edwin Outwater and the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony in Dvořák’s grand Cello Concerto in B Minor Op.104, Brahms’ glorious Symphony No.3 in F Major Op.90 completes the program. **May 5, 6:** Soprano Measha Brueggergosman and pianist Stewart Goodyear lend their star power to “Edwin’s Pops” as Outwater leads his orchestra in PDQ Bach’s hilarious take on Beethoven’s Fifth and other musical jokes.

**Apr 22:** Estonian cellist Aare Tammesalu is the soloist for Dvořák’s ever-popular Cello Concerto in B Minor Op.104, the centrepiece of Cathedral Bluffs’ “Annual Fundraising Concert and Silent Auction,” which also features the composer’s beloved Symphony No.9 “From the New World,” led by Norman Reintamm, who also happens to be Tammesalu’s pianistic chamber music partner in Trio Estonia.

**Apr 22, 23:** Honens’ 2015 Laureate Luca Buratto is the soloist in Mozart’s Piano Concerto No.25 in C Major K503; RBC resident conductor Earl Lee also leads the TSO in Mendelssohn’s exuberant Symphony No.4 “Italian.” **Apr 27:** Buratto, whose first disc for Hyperion will be released later this year, gives a solo recital at the Aurora Cultural Centre.

**Apr 23:** Georgian Music presents the Cecilia String Quartet in Schubert’s great “Death and the Maiden” String Quartet; Leopoldo Erice adds his pianism to Franck’s expressive Piano Quintet in F Minor. Nadia Boulangar once said it contains more ppp and ffff markings than any other chamber piece.

**Apr 27:** The Eybler Quartet’s Heliconian Hall recital, which includes classical stalwarts Mozart’s String Quartet in E-flat Major K428 and Haydn’s String Quartet Op.20 No.2 in C major as well as two early quartets by Johann Baptist Vanhal, is also a CD release concert for the group’s new disc of Vanhal’s Quartets Op.6 Nos.1-6.

**Apr 29:** TSO principal horn Neil Deland brings his ravishing sound to Brahms’ Horn Trio with pianist Peter Longworth and Trio Arkel violinist Marie Bérard. The program concludes with Brahms’ Piano Quartet No.2 in A Major Op. 26 with Trio Arkel violinist Teng Li and cellist Winona Zelenka joining Bérard and Longworth.

**Apr 29:** Günter Neuhold conducts the Ontario Philharmonic in an all-Mozart program. Maria Sourjko is the soloist in the ineffable Piano Concerto No.21 K467; Jean Desmarais takes the keyboard in the delightful Piano Concerto No.17 K453. The exhilarating Symphony No.35 in D Major K385 “Haffner” concludes the evening.

**Apr 30:** Amici Chamber Ensemble (Joaquin Valdepeñas, clarinet, David Hetherington, cello, and Serouj Kradjian, piano) is augmented by violinist Jonathan Crow in a program that begins with Arvo Pärt’s heavenly Spiegel im Spiegel and ends with Olivier Messiaen’s ethereal Quartet for the End of Time; in Mazzoleni Hall.

**May 4:** Austrian teenager, violinist Elisso Gogbedashvili, returns to Sinfonia Toronto and conductor Nurhan Arman two years after her first appearance with them when she was just 14. The program includes Mozart’s early Salzburg Symphony K137, Sarasate’s virtuosic Carmen Fantasy and Schubert’s “Death and the Maiden.”

**May 6:** The Haliburton Concert Series presents the inimitable duo of Guy Faw, piano/trumpet, and Nadina Mackie Jackson, bassoon, performing works by Dutilleux, Beethoven, Buhr, Rossini and Paganini.

Paul Ennis is the managing editor of The WholeNote.
First encounters hold a special fascination for many of us. The name of our country for example – so familiar, yet revealing multiple rich layers of transcultural enigmas when you dig deeper – is no exception.

The word **canada** first appears in writing in Jacques Cartier’s 1535-36 travel journals. It’s a transcription of the word **kanatha**, likely meaning “village” in a now-extinct Laurentian language of the St. Lawrence Iroquoians. Cartier used it to describe the region he visited near the contemporary Quebec City. His tag caught on: within ten years **Canada** appears as a toponym printed on a French map.

Tracing the roots of that name back to a discussion between First Nation native and European explorer’s interpretive act of labelling some 482 years ago evokes some of the power of early encounters. It certainly places Canada’s 150th anniversary into a much larger historical frame.

It also serves as a suitable backstory to the celebrations this year of the career of the veteran Toronto composer, music educator and prolific writer John Beckwith, now in his 91st year. He was professionally associated with the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, from 1952, serving as dean 1970-77. Between 1985 and his early retirement in 1990 he served as the first director of its Institute for Canadian Music – and a number of his compositions mine Canadian themes and music performance practices.

He is being honoured this year with multiple retrospectives of his music, including a performance of his *Wendake/Huronia* (2015). Dubbed a “choral documentary” *Wendake/Huronia* is scored for alto, narrator, chorus, early-instrument ensemble and native drums, and is set primarily in 17th-century Canada. It was most recently performed by the Toronto Consort as the second half of the program “Kanatha/Canada: First Encounters” on February 4, at Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre’s Jeanne Lamon Hall.

Beckwith’s six-movement work employing voices and period instruments evokes the pre- and post-contact soundscape of the St. Lawrence Valley beginning with the sounds of snowshoe travel in the winter, and canoeing in the summer.

As for the French and Wendat lyrics, Beckwith partly adapted the words and poetry of Georges Sioui, Wendat Traditional Knowledge Keeper and Coordinator of Aboriginal Studies at the University of Ottawa. Sioui’s contributions appear in the angry *Lamentation*, 1642, as well as in the more optimistic final movement *À l’avenir (To the Future)” reflecting today’s efforts towards reconciliation of aboriginal and settler cultures.”

It’s a remarkably ambitious, socially complex and sensitive work for any composer, let alone one in his tenth decade. Curious about the man, I spoke to broadcaster and composer David Jaeger, a former University of Toronto Beckwith student and later a colleague.

Andrew Timar is a Toronto musician and music writer. He can be contacted at worldmusic@thewholenote.com.
Singing through a Century

WENDALYN BARTLEY

I find it fascinating how particular themes that surface in new music events happening in the city have a way of rolling into each other. In my interview in the March issue of The WholeNote with Owen Pallett, he spoke about how he was bringing a different focus to the TSO’s New Creations Festival by emphasizing music related to gender and Indigenous identities as well as genre diversity. A similar theme of exploring identity is at the heart of Century Song, a music, dance and image-based stage work created by soprano Neema Bickersteth in collaboration with choreographer Kate Alton and theatre director Ross Manson of Volcano Theatre. The piece runs from April 19 to 29 and is presented by Nightwood Theatre.

Using Virginia Woolf’s novel Orlando as an inspiration, Century Song moves through a series of scenes spanning 100 years as it follows the story of a black woman in Canada. The tale is told using the language of the body – both the wordless sounds of the voice and the physical gestures created by the choreography. And the story it tells is one close to Bickersteth’s heart – in fact it is an embodiment of her own personal journey. The work however didn’t start out with this goal in mind, Bickersteth told me during our recent phone interview. Rather it emerged during the development process. The initial question she wanted to explore was whether a classically based singer could both sing and dance as is done in music theatre. Together with Alton, they chose a series of 20th-century compositions for soprano that used only vocal sounds and no text. While rehearsing, it became apparent from the feedback that “I had been putting a persona on top of what I was doing. The music was just a song with no character or text. But I realized I was pretending to be a white woman while singing, something I had always done with classical music due to my university training.”

Bickersteth grew up in Alberta and is a first-generation Canadian born to parents originally from Sierra Leone. She grew up with a love of singing and eventually studied classical voice and opera at UBC. During the rehearsal process when she became aware she was singing as a white woman, she also discovered that this wasn’t conscious, but “something that had entered me from early on. It was a personal issue I needed to take a look at. What are the layers that I don’t even know are there?” These discoveries took the piece into a different direction, becoming the threads that tied the entire work together. The character that emerged “came from within me,” she said.

Each of the selected compositions is staged within a particular location and time period with a focus on highlighting aspects of Canadian black history. This is accomplished through the set design, projected images and costume. Beginning with Rachmaninoff’s Vocalise written in 1915, the setting is Alberta during the second decade of the 20th century. At that time black communities were relegated to the outskirts of town, with the men often forced into leaving home to find work in Edmonton and the women and children struggling to survive. However, Bickersteth says, “there is always a way through,” and her character finds that necessary inner strength.

After WWI, things change, and the character is now a well-dressed jazz singer in Montreal. There is a sense of things being easy and beautiful, communicated through the shimmering colours of Messiaen’s Vocalise-Étude composed in 1933. As the music progresses into an uneasiness, the character begins to raise questions through her sounds and physical movements about whether this new place she has landed is really so great after all. This uneasiness grows darker during the performance of the second Messiaen piece, an excerpt from his 1941 composition Quartet for the End of Time during which Bickersteth becomes a wartime factory worker. The creators adapt a section where the violin and cello lines play in unison into a vocalise, using electronic processing on Bickersteth’s voice to create the doubling effect.

Between each of the composed vocal works, Gregory Oh (piano) and Ben Grossman (percussion) perform structured improvisations on their respective instruments along with various electroacoustic sounds sourced from their laptops. These transitional improvisations were created in collaboration with the composer of Century Song, Reza Jacobs, along with Debashis Sinha, who performed during earlier productions of the piece. The music following the Messiaen piece is explosive in nature, highlighting the character’s internal war coming to terms with things “once believed in, but not anymore. It’s that identity struggle that causes a breakdown.”

This storm leads into calm with the performance of A Flower by John Cage, composed in 1950 and set for voice and percussive piano sounds. The setting is Vancouver, where during the postwar period the small black community was moved to housing projects, making way for the Georgia Street viaduct. Using film footage with a rapid succession of images to create the transition through to the 1970s, the next persona to appear is modelled after Bickersteth’s mother, who juggled being a wife and mother while studying and working at a job. She, like many other women of the 1970s, was determined to do it all and this level of intense activity is aptly portrayed through the performance of Récitation 10 by Georges Aperghis. The musicians pick up the heightened field of action and push it to an extreme tempo while Bickersteth dances her way through to the final work composed specifically for her by Jacobs. During this frenetic transition we see images of different faces wearing clothing from all times and cultures. Bickersteth explains how this ties into her personal journey with the piece: “It’s all me. Am I pretending to be someone else? Who am I, who are you, who do we see each other as? If you see a black woman dressed up in a sari – what does that mean to you?”

The final Vocalise by Jacobs is the musical moment where Bickersteth can finally land within her own voice. “Working from a personal perspective as opposed to a put-on perspective creates a
changing conversation in the musical world to include race and gender has been much slower to emerge than in the visual arts, film and theatre worlds for example. Bickersteth commented on this: “What I love and see happening is the mixing of all art and genres. The more overlapping and connecting that occurs, the more these conversations will happen and changes will be quicker. I’m hopeful too that we can be free to do what we want.”

Emergent Events:

With the month of April marking the end of the academic year comes an abundance of student concerts occurring at all the local universities. I suggest you check out the listings for the full roster, but here are a few highlights: On April 3 at the Don Wright Faculty of Music, Western University a concert by the Contemporary Music studio and on April 4, an “Electroacoustic Music Compositions Concert.” Also on at the University of Toronto, the gamUT: Contemporary Music Ensemble will be performing. Outside the academic world, two concerts from the Music Gallery’s Emergents series presents opportunities to hear the latest from young creators. The concert on April 7 offers performances by Castle If, the electronic composer Jess Forrest who works with a collection of analog synthesizers to create soundworlds inspired by the pioneers of electronic, and Laura Swanley, an innovative improvising vocalist. The May 5 Emergents concert features performances by The Toronto Harp Society, whose mandate is to encourage new works for the harp by Canadian composers, and Toronto’s newest saxophone duo Stereoscope Duo, with Olivia Shortt and Jacob Armstrong. They too share a passion for developing repertoire for their instruments, while also mixing in electronics and collaborations with dancers.

Quick Picks:


Apr 2: Esprit Orchestra. Works by Thomas Ades (England), Arthur Honegger (Switzerland), Alexander Mosolov (Russia), John Adams (USA), Chris Paul Harman (Canada).

Apr 6, 13: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Sesquises by William Rowson (April 6) and Marc Bélanger (April 13).

Apr 7: Canadian Music Centre. Centrediscs CD launch: Worlds Apart by pianist Christina Petrowska Quilico.

Apr 14: Music at Metropolitan. Music for Good Friday. Works by composers Eleanor Daley, Stephanie Martin, Jeff Enns and others, along with Eternal Light – A Requiem by Howard Goodall.

Apr 21: Canadian Music Centre. French ensemble Hanatsu miroir presents works by Canadian, Brazilian, French and Italian composers.


Apr 28: New Music Concerts. “Celebrating John Beckwith.” Works by Beckwith including premieres of two works: Calling and Quintet; John Weinzweig and Stravinsky.


Wendalyn Bartley is a Toronto-based composer and electro-vocal sound artist. sounddreaming@gmail.com.
Much of Brahms stays well apart from pop culture, but one piece is a colossal exception: the third movement of his Third Symphony has had a prolific afterlife no other piece by any Romantic composer can match. Serge Gainsbourg uses the melody for the song Baby Alone in Babylone written for Jane Birkin, and Carlos Santana lifts it for Love of My Life. John Cleese as Basil Fawlty plays it loudly to irritate his wife Sybil in Fawlty Towers (“Brahms’ Third Racket”). In the 1961 romantic drama Goodbye Again, based on Françoise Sagan’s novel Aimez-vous Brahms?, it appears in the score alongside other Brahms and reappears as a jazz song Say No More, It’s Goodbye sung by Diahann Carroll. Both the film and the novel are about an obstacle-ridden love affair between an older woman and a younger man, perhaps a nod to Brahms’ own love life (Clara Schumann was 13 years his senior).

Few have dared tackle the Brahms lieder in pop and singer-songwriter register. The only one who did it in Canada in recent years is pianist and composer Lewis Furey. The Lewis Furey Brahms Lieder project is the result of years of translating, adapting, transposing and arranging lieder, a selection of which he performed last year in concert in Montreal. The only one that made YouTube, Forget You, after Nicht mehr zu dir zu gehen, is an intriguing piece of musical (re-)creation, but it’s probably too complex to be anywhere in the vicinity of pop.

For readers quick off the mark this month, Art of Time Ensemble’s March 31/April 1 “Johannes Brahms: Portrait of a Musical Genius” program bodes well on this score. The always innovative ensemble under artistic director Andrew Burashko may yet turn Brahms into a contemporary pop star, since all the elements seem to be there: an actual pop singer – Sarah Slean – lending her distinct and recognizable voice; Burashko at the piano; and four Brahms’ lieder adapted in English and arranged, fingers crossed, to keep the intricacy of Brahms’ originals while also achieving the easy communicability and immediacy of pop songs. Benjamin Bowman (violin), Jethro Marks (viola) and Rachel Mercer (cello) make up the rest of the performing ensemble. Piano Quartet No.1 Op.25, Violin Sonata No 2 in A Major Op.100 and a selection of piano Intermezzi are also on this all-Brahms program. Will the strings be employed for the lieder too? It remains to be seen.

Slean will sing four reinvented Brahms songs for the occasion. Sommerabend (Summer Evening) Op.85 No.1, to the poem by Heinrich Heine, tells of a quiet walk through the woods and meadows that ends with a secretive glimpse of a wood fairy bathing under the moonlight. Bei dir sind meine Gedanken (My Thoughts Are with You) Op.95 No.2, poem by Friedrich Halm, is a tad more lively: the piano flutters as do the excited and confused thoughts around the beloved, unwilling to leave her side, even if it means their wings will be burned “in the flame of your eyes.” Feldeinsamkeit (Solitude in the Fields) Op.85 No.2, poem by Hermann Allmers, sounds least amendable to pop treatment, but I hope to be proven wrong. It’s a resigned, deceptively brightly coloured, slow-paced meditation on mortality—through a description of nature, of course; a frequent Romantic device. Finally, Wie Melodien zieht es (Like Melodies It Passes) Op.105

Beat by Beat | Art of Song

Pop Goes The Brahms!

LYDIA PEROVIĆ

SYMPHONY II

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No. 1, to the poem by Klaus Groth, is a witty yet still melancholy take on writing poetry and putting the elusive to words. Among the many recorded versions of the song, the *ohne Worte* arrangement for cello and piano by Mischa Maisky and Pavel Gililov is probably the most unusual one around.

These are the four challenges then. Art of Time, Slean and Burashko will take them on at Harbourfront Centre Theatre March 31 and April 1 at 8pm.

**Mezzos:** There’s more Brahms of the traditional kind coming up later in April and early May. Torontonians will be able to hear two mezzos in the same Brahms piece, *Two Songs for Alto, Viola and Piano* on different occasions: Allyson McHardy with the Montrose Trio (April 28 at Koerner Hall) and Maria Soulis with Canadian Sinfonietta (May 6 at Heliconian Hall). Brahms wrote the two songs published as *Zwei Gesänge Op. 91* for two of his friends, mezzo Amalie Schneeweiss and her husband, violinist Joseph Joachim. *Gestillte Sehnsucht* (*Longing at Rest*) is a sort of a secular lullaby for grownups, to words by poet Friedrich Rückert, full of rustling tree leaves and restless desires quieting down. *Geistliches Wiegenlied* or *Cradle Song of the Virgin* (Emanuel Geibel, translating Lope de Vega) borrows from Christian folklore. It opens and closes with a musical citation from a carol, it’s the palms of Bethlehem that swish, and it is Mary who rocks her child and hints at what is to come for him. Good things didn’t befall the real couple in the composing story either: they divorced in acrimony, after Joachim unjustifiably accused Schneeweiss of an affair with an acquaintance. Brahms took her side, and Joachim severed ties with both.

In *Two Songs*, there is a lot of room for the mezzo to show off her spectrum of inflections and her subtle mastery over text (of which there’s a considerable amount) while steering clear of the pitfalls of the saccharine that come with *Wienenglöckchen*. The Canadian Sinfonietta concert with Soulis will feature two other vocal pieces, Jake Heggie’s *Some Times of Day* for mezzo and piano trio and a selection of Mikis Theodorakis’ Greek songs.

**Agostino Steffani:** Chiefly thanks to Cecilia Bartoli’s tireless work in favour of his revival – Donna Leon’s mystery *The Jewels of Paradise* might have played a part in his popularization – Agostino Steffani (1654–1728) is gaining a foothold in the operatic repertoire. On April 28, at Heliconian Hall, as part of their new chamber series Close Encounters, Tafelmusik will make the case for his return to the concert repertoire too.

Diplomat and bishop as well as a composer, Steffani left behind a great many vocal pieces and operas, but only six secular cantatas, considerably fewer than Vivaldi or Scarlatti. *Hai finito di lusignarmi* (lyricist anonymous) is written for high voice, two oboes and continuo. Italian secular cantatas of the era are structured into aria and recitative components, and *Hai finito* unfolds in the A R A R A scheme. Arcadian characters recur in cantatas – Fileno, Tirsi, Dorilla, Elvira – with verse metered at 11 or 7 syllables, the dominant metres of Italian poetry since Petrarch. The lines in arias tend to rhyme in some form, but in what form and how consistently is up to the poet (there are *rime baciate*, *alternate*, *intrecciate* and *incatenate* – words for the types of rhymes themselves sound like poetry). Digging deep into the cantata as a poetic and musical form can lead to some fascinating places. The chapter on the cantata genre in Michael Talbot’s *The Chamber Cantatas of Antonio Vivaldi* is an excellent general

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**The Apostles**

**Saturday, April 29, 7:30 p.m.**
**Sunday, April 30, 3:00 p.m.**
Grace Church on-the-Hill
300 Lonsdale Road, Toronto

**Pax Christi Chorale** with Meredith Hall, Kristzina Szabó, Brett Polegato, Lawrence Wiliford, Daniel Lichti, Michael Uloth, orchestra

*and the* Etobicoke School of the Arts Chamber Choir
You will never again lure me, Steffani’s title in English, is a monologue by a certain Clorindo addressed to Filli by the end of which, alas, he is lured by Filli again. Antonio Lotti’s aria, Vieni pur ferisci implago (Come then wound again) will also be performed in Close Encounters. It is from his cantata Ti sento, o Dio bendato (I Feel Thee, Oh Blind God), and belongs in the same general category of wrestling with Cupid. Its structure is A R A A and the oboe returns as the melody instrument atop the continuo.

Amid some instrumental Zelenka, Telemann and Fasch, the sampling of cantatas concludes somewhat incongruously with a highly religious aria Ich hab mich ihm ergeben (I have given myself over to Him) from Bach’s Cantata 97 In allen meinen Taten. Musically, however, it’s a playful number with woodwinds dialoguing and stealing the show.

Said woodwinds will be manned by John Abberger and Marco Cera (oboes) and Dominic Teresi (bassoon). Charlotte Nediger will be continuo-ing from the harpsichord. Soprano Ellen McAteer sings the three cantatas.

Fête: Toronto vocal ensemble Collectif, co-founded by COC Ensemble Studio soprano Danika Lorèn, presents staged vignettes of art songs based on Verlaine’s poetry cycle, Fêtes galantes (various composers) and Reynaldo Hahn’s Douze Rondelles. Danika Lorèn, Whitney O’Hearn, Jennifer Krabbe, Tom King, Adam Harris and Matthew Dalen perform in the Richard Bradshaw Auditorium on April 18 at noon.

Countertenor Philippe Jaroussky returns to the Koerner Hall in a program of Handel arias from operas Flavio, Siroe, Imeneo, Radamisto and Tolomeo with Les Violons du Roy conducted by the ensemble’s associate conductor Mathieu Lussier. Also on the April program: Fux and Graun.

Lydia Perović is an arts journalist in Toronto. Send her your art-of-song news to artofsong@thewholenote.com.
The Easter season is upon us for April and as usual, the choral community has many fantastic offerings of sacred music to mark the occasion. First, we’ll focus on the Pax Christi Chorale’s Canadian premiere of grand Edward Elgar oratorio, The Apostles. For the non-sacred music inclined, Echo Women’s Choir has a fantastic concert inspired by American singer MILCK’s #ICANTKEEPQUIET campaign. Finally, a host of Quick Picks for the season are included.

**Canadian Premiere of Elgar’s The Apostles**

Edward Elgar died in 1934, aged 76. His work is well known to students of British classical music but he is best known for the eternal graduation hymn – *Land of Hope and Glory*, the end of *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1*. Equally gifted at orchestral and choral composition, often both, his work can usually be described as thick, dense and powerful. It is unusual that one of his grandest and biggest works, *The Apostles*, has never before been performed in Canada. Pax Christi Chorale under maestro Stephanie Martin is taking up the grand work.

Choral lovers here are more familiar with Elgar’s *The Dream of Gerontius*, last performed in fall 2014 with the Amadeus Choir and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Elgar’s *Enigma Variations* makes frequent appearances on orchestral programs. *The Apostles* is the biggest piece he wrote. It requires the forces of six soloists, semichor and double choir on top of large orchestral forces. The personnel demands are one of the reasons why Martin believes the work hasn’t been programmed in Canada before. Pax Christi Chorale is joined by a stellar cast of Canadian talent: Meredith Hall, Kristzina Szabo, Brett Polegato, Lawrence Wiliford, Daniel Lichti, Michael Uloth and the Etobicoke School of the Arts chamber choir alongside an orchestra.

Pax Christi is no stranger to grand oratorios, having performed Elgar’s *The Kingdom* in 2012, and recently taking on Mendelssohn’s *Mendelssohn Choir’s Singsation* on April 18, 2017. Stephanie Martin conducts the two performances of *The Apostles* as her finale after 20 years at the helm of Pax Christi Chorale. She’s thoughtful and insightful about the music, identifying four key leitmotifs out of the many in Elgar’s masterpiece. She describes the work of singing through *The Apostles* as “peeling back the onion skin to reveal the leitmotifs that shape the music.”

Elgar was influenced by Wagner, who used the same compositional technique to inform the narrative of his musical stories. “It almost gives the music a sense of being a collage,” says Martin. “The music changes quickly, tonal messages change very quickly” throughout the music as Elgar delves into this story of Jesus and his followers. Many of the messages are hidden and not clear to a listening audience. Most interestingly, the final words of Christ “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?)” appear not in any sung lines but in a melody through the orchestra, words written above the orchestral line. Martin is superbly capable at leading her choirs through this work and deeply insightful at the hidden messages of the music.

As with the Verdi *Requiem*, the solos and choral lines are not separate and flow in and out of one another throughout *The Apostles*. “The oratorio is not constructed in a conventional way,” Martin says. “The soloists and choirs are integrated.” Usually singing different texts, overlaying each other, the resulting effect can be triumphant and

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**Journeys of the Spirit**

**BRIAN CHANG**

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around Easter and many fall on Good Friday. The offerings are wide and fantastic.

Apr 12, 14: The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir presents “Sacred Music for a Sacred Space.” (I sing tenor in the choir.) Always a highlight of the TMC concert season, two performances are offered this year, a chance to catch some beautiful choral highlights including the transcendent Lux Aeterna based on Elgar’s Enigma Variations, the Allegri Miserere and some not-often performed gems from Healey Willan: How They So Softly Rest, written to commemorate the lives of servicemen lost from Willan’s congregation to World War II and his grand work An Apostrophe to the Heavenly Hosts.

Apr 13, 14, 15, 16: St Anne’s Anglican Church presents “Holy Week and Easter” featuring sections from Schütz’s Johannes-Passion; Handel’s Messiah, and Mozart’s Exsultate Jubilate.

Apr 14: The Toronto Beach Chorale presents “Mozart’s Requiem and More.” Featuring the eternally popular Mozart Requiem, the Chorale is including performed monologues from Peter Shaffer’s play, Amadeus. Salieri’s Te Deum is also on the evening’s program for the evening.

Apr 14: The Grand Philharmonic Choir presents Beethoven’s second most popular choral work, the Missa Solemnis, under the baton of Mark Vuorinen. This incredibly challenging work is a sure treat for choral lovers. Bach’s Mass in B Minor and the Missa Solemnis are hallmarks of the common mass. Pay special attention to the end of the Credo with its exceptionally difficult fugue in “Et vitam venturi saeculi.”

Apr 15: The Niagara Symphony Orchestra is joined by the Faith Chorale Gospel Choir, and the Laura Secord Secondary School Concert Choir in “Too Hot to Handel! – The Gospel Messiah.” This glorious performance will feature blues, gospel, funk, jazz and more, all with familiar melodies we know and love. The original Gospel Messiah was the brainchild of the legendary Marin Alsop who conducted the premiere in 1993.

Apr 19: Edmonton’s Axios Men’s Ensemble visits Toronto’s St. Paul’s Bloor Street to present “Resurrection: Music from the Ukrainian Sacred Choral Tradition.” The feature is Father John Sembrat’s setting of the Resurrectional Divine Liturgy. Axios will be joined by Pro Coro Canada and a host of international friends including Boyan Ensemble of Kyiv (Revutsky Academic Male Capella), the Chorus of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the Homin Municipal Choir of Lviv, and the Vydubychi Church Choir of Kyiv.

Apr 29, 30: Musikay presents Handel’s Messiah in two performances, one in Hamilton, the other in Oakville. The work, normally performed at Christmas, was meant to be performed at Easter according to Handel.

Follow Brian on Twitter @bfchang Send info/media/tips to choralscene@thewholenote.com.
Jazzed About #JazzDay

O R I D A G A N

Who might have guessed – other than Marshall McLuhan – that the world would be literally at our fingertips with the mere click of a touch screen? Imagine it: three of Toronto’s finest at play: Robi Botos commanding the Nord, Mike Downes thumping his bass and drummer Larnell Lewis weaving musical magic last month at Poetry Jazz Café, an intimate venue of 35 seats. Their second set was streamed on Facebook Live, and by the end of the hour, 1000 views were recorded; within a few days that number was 10,000. Actually, you don’t have to imagine it: go to Botos’ Facebook page and enjoy the set!

This newish notion of cultivating online audiences by way of streaming and social media is taking the global jazz community by storm, one day at a time. Back in 2011, thanks to the advocacy of Herbie Hancock, the first annual International Jazz Day – April 30 – was adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization General Conference. Each year since, JazzDay celebrations take place on the last day of April (the month known as Jazz Appreciation Month since 2002) in a host city and around the world. In 2016 alone, JazzDay performances, education programs and media coverage reached more than three billion people.

“Live streaming and social media are tremendously important to International Jazz Day in that they help us connect directly with our audience, which includes both established jazz lovers and those who may be less familiar,” says Will Ramsey of the Thelonious Monk Institute, lead non-profit organization charged with planning, promoting and producing International Jazz Day festivities. “In many instances, Facebook and Twitter have helped us connect with organizers where email and phone calls have not worked. These sorts of tools also provide an unparalleled promotional resource – in just a few minutes, our social media team can engage hundreds of thousands of people with content from an organizer in Accra, or Tokyo, or Kansas City, or Asunción. From the beginning, social media has made the conversation about International Jazz Day extremely dynamic, in a way that befits its multicultural, multinational pedigree.

“Each year, we conduct grassroots outreach to hundreds of organizers in all 195 UNESCO member states. We have a small outreach team based in the US and France that works around the clock, mobilizing jazz clubs, cultural houses, libraries, NGOs, festival organizers, and even jazz musicians and enthusiasts to ensure that International Jazz Day is meaningfully celebrated on every continent (yes, that includes Antarctica). The centrepiece of the April 30 celebration, the All-Star Global Concert, is made available via live webcast each year from the Global Host City. This is a great tool because it makes it easy for people around the world to participate in Jazz Day – we often encourage them to screen the concert, which includes performances by over two dozen renowned jazz musicians from around the world, as a simple but powerful way to join the celebration.”

Notably, every nation in the world is invited to take part in JazzDay, including a free listing on their website jazzday.com where one can browse events from Albania to Zanzibar. Ramsey reflects on this point further:

“It is also worth mentioning that many of our partners live in difficult circumstances, including conflict zones, areas undergoing economic difficulties and areas with limited infrastructure. Many organizers, however, including in places like Niger, Mali, Myanmar, Iran and Iraq, have thanked us for thinking of them and recognizing them as someone worthy of partnership. They tell us that no one ever approaches them from the outside with this kind of initiative – they get plenty of calls for interviews to talk about poverty, conflict and war, but never about including them in a global celebration.

“A manager of a music cafe in Niger, for example, thanked us profusely for not forgetting about his people and the artists in his country, saying that when there is so much strife and poverty, people forget that the human spirit needs music, culture and beauty just as much as food and water. He said that even when there is no food, there will always be music. He said he fights everyday to keep culture alive despite the odds and that international support and recognition from us gives him credibility on the ground to keep fighting.

“There is a sense, then, in which International Jazz Day is fulfilling not just a cultural, but a humanitarian mission. Another example that sticks out in my mind: we have an organizer in Nepal, a music school dedicated to jazz called the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, who organizes an event every year. In 2015, just five days before Jazz Day, a massive earthquake struck Nepal – the worst in over 70 years. It was a terrible tragedy and they of course could not carry out their planned celebration on April 30. A few days later, however, the conservatory contacted us and let us know that they still wanted to hold an event. It was tremendously important to them to continue making music and demonstrate their resilience in the face of disaster. We helped connect them with an international artist who made a marathon trip from the US to Kathmandu in June. He conducted clinics and master-classes with their students and even played in their official Jazz Day concert. It was the kind of powerful story that really shows the impact of International Jazz Day each year beyond just the numbers.”

Scroll down to Canada on jazzday.com and you’ll see that Toronto is part of the action too. On April 30 over brunch at Jazz Bistro, Steven Taetz and Joanna Majoko will celebrate Ella Fitzgerald’s 100th birthday with Ewen Farncombe at the piano, Soren Nissen on bass and Eric West on drums.

The centenary of Ella Fitzgerald’s birth can be tracked online at EllaAt100. Some additional Ella celebrations you should know about: on April 24th, Heather Bambrick will salute Ella live on JAZZ.FM91 with Barbra Lica and Tia Brazda. On the First Lady of Song’s actual birthday, Tuesday, April 25: Billy Newton-Davis sings at Poetry Jazz Café; Kahya Ramu sings at The Rex; and yours truly at the Elizabeth Beeton Theatre.

Monk: As much as I love Ella, 1917 was also the birth year of Thelonious Monk, equally prolific as a composer, pianist and groundbreaking thinker in jazz. The delightfully nutty genius of modern music gets a bit of a spotlight this month, and not only because of the connection between JazzDay and the Thelonious Monk Institute. Here in Toronto we have a very cool ongoing tribute to Monk in what is known as Monk’s Music, one of many side projects for vibraphonist/marimba/composer Michael Davidson. On account of his musical dexterity, the infuriatingly talented Davidson is highly in demand for studio sessions, leads his own septet and is involved in several other projects.

“Monk’s Music began as a joint endeavour,” Davidson explains, “with drummer Dan Gaucher and myself on vibraphone around seven years ago. We both shared a collective love for the music of Thelonious Monk and approached the Tranzac Club about a regular performance slot. Dan and I felt that Monk’s music was underperformed and
wanted to take an opportunity to present it regularly with a varied cast of musicians.

“The Tranzac agreed and we began playing the first and third Sundays of every month from 5 to 7pm. We would invite many different musicians to play with us and enjoyed exploring the music with shifting ensembles each time. After a few years Dan moved back to the West Coast and I continued the series. Over the years, since I have internalized much of Monk’s music, I try and breathe new life into it in each performance while respecting the vast and engaging body of work he has created.

“In the last two years it has settled into a trio formation with occasional guests, featuring drummer Nico Dann and double bassist Jim Sexton. We do free but true interpretations of more obscure Monk tunes like Coming on the Hudson, Introspection, Jackie-ing, Ugly Beauty, Off Minor, and well-known tunes like Pannonica or Criss-Cross. I continue to play his music because it has endless potential for expansion once you learn his harmonic language. It is a music of juxtapositions which makes it wonderfully rewarding and surprising to interpret. It is still not played nearly as much as I think is warranted.

“It has also branched out to another venue in Toronto, the Emmet Ray. We perform the second and fourth Sundays of each month from 6 to 8pm. This evolution marks its transformation into a weekly gig celebrating the harmonically rich, infectiously quirky, dexterously witty, melodic playground of Thelonious Monk.”

There you have it! Happy Jazz Appreciation Month to all loyal WholeNote readers and year-round live music appreciators.

Ori Dagan is a Toronto-based jazz musician, writer and educator who can be reached at oridagan.com.

(left) Thelonious Monk, Minton’s Playhouse, New York, ca. September 1947; (right) Michael Davidson
Arguably one of the most exciting features of Toronto’s musical geography today is how our metropolis has emerged as a kind of globally flavoured creative seedbed. Over the past few decades potentially viable music hybrids of myriad kinds have been created and encouraged to flourish. I’ve touched on many in this column over the years.

This inclusive scene is abetted by the presence of many of the world’s musics actively performed by musicians of the first rank. In this column last month, for example, I focused on music-making within the Persian community, which is thriving in the greater Toronto area.

In addition to performers, the GTA music scene is also supported by numerous audiences which have developed an appetite for tasting, mixing and merging of sonic genres from disparate worlds. Yet another essential element supporting this development includes a social-political infrastructure comprising community organizations, governments, venues and media which generally view hybrids favourably.

Inclusivity and diversity were adopted as part of the core philosophical platform of the current Canadian government. Recognizing that this approach is not necessarily the norm in other societies, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has repeatedly articulated its outlines, particularly in his foreign speeches. “Diversity is Canada’s strength,” he said in London, UK, in 2015. “Canada has learned how to be strong not in spite of our differences, but because of them…that capacity will be at the heart of both our success and of what we offer the world.”

Let’s examine how Canada’s appreciation of the value of diversity—reflected and transformed by (both immigrant and Canadian-born) musicians through the process of artistic hybridization—is reflected in and shaped by several April concerts in Toronto.

### Small World Music: Asian Music Series

Small World Music’s 15th Annual Asian Music Series, running April 1 to May 20, is a case in point. About half of the events are staged at SWM’s own intimate Centre at the Artscape Youngplace.

The 14-concert series came about through networking with partner presenters such as the Aga Khan Museum, Batuki Music Society and Raag Mala, in addition to support by various arts councils and levels of government. Its private sector sponsor is TD Bank.

The program brings together “emerging artists with internationally renowned figures, engaging communities around the GTA...embracing the scope of music from across the Asian cultural landscape—from India to Japan, via China, Pakistan and Iran...”

In order to assist audiences in navigating the two-month series, SWM groups concerts into what it calls Explorer Bundles. They are cannily shaping audience experiences thematically, as well as across genre and culture of origin. Allowing audiences to “take advantage of Small World’s place at the heart of the city’s global music scene,” the bundling of “Asian Music Experiences” is presented through discounted three-concert packages with the following evocative and user-friendly titles: Rhythm, Soul, Heritage and Motion.

The **Asian Music Series Rhythm Explorer Bundle** commences with the Haniya Aslam Trio on April 1. Aslam is a star in her native Pakistan, having co-led the country’s first all-female band Zeb and Haniya. Their groundbreaking 2008 hit album *Chup! (Silence!)* topped the charts for months. Now a Toronto resident, singer-guitarist Aslam fluidly combines pop, folk-rock, alt, blues and jazz with vernacular songs she learned in her native Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Lyrics in Urdu, Pashto, Dari and Turkish, and thematically bold subject matter, thicken the regional-transnational tensions in her songs, yet at the same time give them unusual potency. Continuing her advocacy of transnational culture in her music, she’s joined by leading Toronto world musicians Naghmeh Farahmand (percussion), Peter Lutek (winds) and Waleed Abdulhamid (bass).

The Rhythm Explorer Bundle continues April 16 with *Upanishads*, Toronto musician Debashis Sinha’s new solo project which explores ancient sacred text...
present “Tabla and Taiko: Two Ancient Traditions Meet” at the Toronto Centre for the Arts. The promotional material states the concert is to serve as a “cross-cultural music collaboration of Indian and Japanese percussive traditions with the goal of bringing communities together.” It promises to be a textbook demonstration of how the evolutionary processes of artistic hybridization can be developed over years and successfully presented.

I’ve written before about how both Toronto-based ensembles have significantly contributed to the Canadian world music scene since the 1990s. In pursuing their groups’ artistic vision they have both succeeded in raising the profiles of received Indian and Japanese musics. In this concert they join hands and drums, featuring compositions by the two ensembles’ artistic directors, Ritesh Das and Kiyoshi Nagata. Each is creating works that maintain their home traditions’ integrity while also searching to integrate the other group’s inherent strengths. I spoke to each AD to better understand their collaborative approach.

“I wrote Sare Panch, in a rhythmic cycle of five and a half beats,” said Das. “I then modified and fine-tuned it in rehearsal so it would work with the extreme dynamic range of the taiko ensemble. I’m also looking forward to performing a piece by Aki Takahashi in 14 beats, as well as a work where I play solo tabla and Kiyoshi plays the chappa, a Japanese cymbal.”

How would he characterize the common denominators between the two quite different groups? “We both share values of respect, discipline and knowledge,” Das replied without pause.

Kiyoshi Nagata added: “I agree we share those values. [On the other hand] I always tell Ritesh it’s not our similarities but our differences that complement one another! For example taiko is loud, tabla is quiet; taiko is primal, tabla intricate and technical. It’s those kinds of juxtapositions which offer rich new sonic and artistic possibilities.

“In addition, both our ensembles work within the oral tradition,” continued Nagata. “Not being bound by notation makes it easier to communicate, I find. As we like to recite to one another: ‘Once you say it, you can play it!’ It’s quite liberating to be able to internalize music in order to express yourself. You could reduce the process to memorization, internalization and finally expression. After all, the goal of taiko practice is that the body becomes the extension of the rhythm.”

Finally Nagata added “Collaborations like this are pretty hard to come by. Toronto is one of the few places where this could happen. There’s a certain convenience in having both groups in the same town. They’re 20 minutes from us, so we can get together any day of the week!”

Aga Khan Museum’s “Entrancement”
As for presenters, they are continually evolving ways to reinterpret aspects of musical inclusivity, diversity and cultural framing to their audiences. The Aga Khan Museum is one such presenter and venue which has actively welcomed the music of the world right from its beginnings in 2014. I spoke to Umair Jaffar, performing arts manager at the AKM about its latest efforts to retag its concert series in order to keep it relevant to its patrons.

“We’ve had series called ‘classical’ and ‘world music’ in the past. Now we’re considering using the word ‘entranced’ however,” said Jaffar. “Trance is a word that aptly describes and connects several of our upcoming performing arts programs.”

It is an idea clearly reflected in the “mesmerizing and mood-altering grooves of Vishwa Mohan Bhatt’s slide guitar” that will be showcased in his April 22 concert presented in partnership with Raag-Mala Toronto and Small World Music’s Asian Music Series. The Grammy Award-winning Bhatt performs exclusively on his bespoke 19-stringed mohan veena. While his instrument borrows as much from the Hawaiian and blues slide lap guitars as from the indigenous Indian veena, the music Bhatt plays on it is strictly Hindustani classical, relying on the performance of raga. Raga itself is a complex concept in classical Indian music akin to melodic mode, possessing the power to ‘colour the mind’ of the performer, as well as to affect the emotions of the listener.

The April crop from the Toronto global seed bed is promising indeed!

Andrew Timar is a Toronto musician and music writer. He can be contacted at worldmusic@thewholenote.com.
Beat by Beat | Bandstand

Bridging Musical Distances

JACK MACQUARRIE

It all began in the spring of 1948 when a small research group at the Bell Telephone Laboratories in Murray Hill, New Jersey, announced the development of a new electronic device called the “transistor,” which they named the “transistor,” initially more of a laboratory curiosity than a practical component of any electronic device. I recall a telephone call five years later in 1953 from a friend. He was an engineer in a research organization in Toronto and had just obtained “management approval” to purchase two transistors to try them out. Over the next few years the transistor became the successor, in most applications, to its much larger power hungry predecessor, the vacuum tube, invented in 1906. It only took till 1956 for the three researchers at Bell Labs to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for their pioneering work.

Now, 69 years after that 1948 announcement, smart phones, home computers, flat-screen TVs, GPS units and other compact electronic systems are homes to countless millions of much smaller transistors. Cable and satellite TV as well as Internet are the norm in most homes in this country. We listen to music on all kinds of devices from large home audio systems to hand-held smart phones. But how has this impacted on the activities that go into making music, especially as a collective social endeavour?

Obviously we are able to research titles and composers to assist in programming, but we may also go to YouTube sites to hear and watch performances of music to determine their suitability for possible performance. It is now common practice with many bands to send email messages to band members with a list of works scheduled for a rehearsal and YouTube sites to visit to get familiar with the music prior to a rehearsal. Some groups also send out recordings of rehearsals for members to review and determine ways to improve.

In fact, I know of one music director (who shall remain nameless) who became sufficiently technically savvy and innovative to electronically monitor the playing accuracy of individual band members and record each individual’s errors. Each member was then presented a personal report with a rating of their errors per minute. I don’t know whether or not that is still happening, but I certainly would have no interest in joining such an ensemble.

The most interesting example of constructive use of this rapidly evolving technology that I have heard of includes long-distance instruction and practice over the Internet. It all began when a woman in Whitehorse in the Yukon decided that she would like to learn to play clarinet. Wynne Krangle was in Toronto visiting her mother and decided to drop in to the Long & McQuade store. After she purchased her clarinet, she asked if they could suggest a clarinet teacher to visit her. The store gave her the name and number of Michele Jacot, conductor of the Wychwood Clarinet Choir. The rest is history. Krangle emailed Jacot. They met by email, arranged to meet in person and managed to squeeze in two lessons before Krangle had to return to Whitehorse. As Jacot says “Wynne was quite the beginner.”

After she returned home they arranged to continue regular lessons using Skype and FaceTime as the primary means of communication until Krangle was able to visit Toronto again. As Jacot put it, “She certainly must have been highly motivated to faithfully practise regularly in her relative isolation.” There just aren’t that many playing opportunities for beginning amateur musicians in Whitehorse. On one of her visits to Toronto Krangle attended one of Jacot’s Wychwood Clarinet Choir concerts. It was then that Jacot suggested that she play every rehearsal. Yes, the idea was for Krangle to “virtually attend”.

During the concert there was Joyce, in her bed almost part of the action, and even able to interact with band members. This was the first request of its kind to the library. It not only let Joyce attend Jack’s memorial concert, but it also brought two retirement communities together. Sadly Joyce passed away a couple of months later on February 17 at age 89.

Coming Events

Not only is 2017 Canada’s sesquicentennial year, but it is also the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. While this was certainly not the only large-scale battle of World War I where Canadian troops fought, it is accorded a special recognition in Canada’s history because this was the first major battle where the entire Canadian force was under Canadian command. Several bands have already presented, or soon will present, some form of special Vimy concert. One of the most imaginative is that of the “100th Anniversary Vimy Trench Dinner and Band Concert” on the evening of April 4 at the Flato Markham Theatre. Organized by the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles Association, the concert is being advertised as “The Mayor’s Vimy Concert.”

The evening will begin at 5:30 with a sit-down dinner of typical foods of that era that would have been served to the men behind the lines. At 7:00 the audience will move into the theatre for the concert by two bands. The first band will be a composite group made up of members from the various regimental reserve bands of the Toronto Garrison. This band will be conducted by Lt. Nick Arrigo, director of music of the 7th Toronto Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery Band. This band will be joined by the Pipes and Drums of York Regional Police.

Periodically, throughout the concert, a narrator will read letters home from men at the front. The concept is very similar to that using FaceTime.

Last summer Jacot suggested a challenge for Krangle. It was for her to learn all 11 pieces of music for the choir’s “Harvest Song” concert in Toronto in November. The idea was to use the scores and tapes from the weekly rehearsals and then come to Toronto to be part of at least two rehearsals and the performance. Krangle arranged to be in Toronto. She played in the final rehearsal before the concert and in the dress rehearsal. In her words, “I did just that and had an amazingly successful time integrating into the choir.” As for the future, she plans to be in Toronto and perform in the “Sounds of Spring” concert scheduled for May 28 at the Church of St. Michael and All Angels.

(While on the subject of the Wychwood Clarinet, like many other groups this sesquicentennial year, the choir is planning for a definite Canadian component for the spring concert. Composer–arranger Fen Watkin has written an arrangement for clarinet choir of selections from the musical Anne of Green Gables. The choir folk intend to add a visual component to their concert as well. They will be showing historical photographs of the Wychwood neighbourhood in Toronto where they perform. Hopefully, there will be pleasant surprises for the audience, not only regarding local history, but also of the history of the choir.)

A very different and very heartening example of the creative use of our rapidly evolving technology has just come to our attention. Many years ago, Jack Savage, a trombone player from Newmarket formed a swing band. Ever since he started the group his wife Joyce was their biggest fan. She never missed a rehearsal or performance. Even after her husband’s death in May 2016 she was still a devoted fan. However, her stars were not in alignment when she learned of a memorial concert for him scheduled for December 7 last year. She had broken her hip and was bedridden at Orchard Villa Long Term Care residence in Pickering. Her son Ken couldn’t see how he might get her to that concert, but was determined to find some solution for her to attend virtually. Then he learned of the Pickering library’s PPL Connect program. This is a part of their digital education program where free Wi-Fi hotspots are available for loan. Ken contacted Saul Perdomo of the library about the possibility of getting the concert to his mother’s bedside.

On the night of the concert at the Alexander Muir Senior’s Residence in Newmarket, Perdomo took an iPad tablet to the concert. At Joyce’s bedside he had located suitable computer equipment. During the concert there was Joyce, in her bed almost part of the action, and even able to interact with band members. This was the first request of its kind to the library. It not only let Joyce attend Jack’s memorial concert, but it also brought two retirement communities together. Sadly Joyce passed away a couple of months later on February 17 at age 89.
performed a few times in recent years by the Toronto New Horizons Band under Dan Kapp. In the New Horizons performances letters from Europe were actual letters home from a man who was later killed in action during WWII. Since this concert is about a battle 100 years ago, there would be little chance of finding suitable letters. For this Vimy concert, the letters will be historically accurate simulated accounts, carefully crafted by a history professor, from a soldier, here called George, his fiancée Sally and his grandson living in the present day. The letters will be read by actors as the band plays appropriate music softly in the background. Information and reservations are available at the Flato Markham Theatre box office: 905-305-7469.

**Allan Calvert**

It is with a heavy heart that I report the passing of Allan Calvert. One of four children born in Ottawa from Irish immigrants who came from Belfast in the 1920s, he moved to Toronto with his mother and three siblings after his father died. At an early age he learned to play various brass instruments and in Salvation Army Bands. Later he became music director and conductor of the Evangel Temple Brass Band in Toronto. I first met Al when we were both on the executive of CBA, Ontario. Al was the very diligent treasurer of that organization for over 25 years.

**Odds and Ends**

Every once and a while someone will come up with a clever title for a piece of music which strikes a chord. The opening number in the latest concert of the Wychwood Clarinet Choir was H2Overture by Jerry Williams. Yes, it was a medley of over 30 themes with reference to water in their titles.

In the past, in this column, I have occasionally ranted about people with smart phones held up so that their bright images are in full view of the audience members behind them. So, it was time to take action. At the last two concerts attended, I took the risk of asking a few users to put their distracting devices away. Rather than any adverse reaction, I received apologies in all cases.

There’s nothing like authenticity when researching costumes for period productions. Being a longtime Gilbert and Sullivan aficionado, I was a bit perplexed to see an advertisement for this year’s Stratford Festival’s production of *HMS Pinafore*. There we see a man dressed as a sailor in the Royal Navy, but wearing the “Dixie cup” hat of the US Navy. Such integration!

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

Saturday April 1

- 2:00: National Ballet of Canada. Genus, Tarantella, Self and Soul, and The Concert. Music by Joby Talbot, Deru, and Chopin; orchestrated by Clare Grundman. Wayne McGregor; choreographer; Jerome Robbins, choreographer. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. 416-345-9595. $39-$265. Also Apr 11(7:30); Mar 30, Apr 1, 2, 22, 23, 29, 30, 3000 (2:00).
- 7:30: Etobicoke Centennial Choir. The Mozart Angels Chorale. Mozart: Requiem; Brahms: How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place; Rutter: The Lord Is My Shepherd; Poulenc: Gloria and Laudamus Te; Durufle: Sanctus and Pie Jesu from Requiem. Shanna Brown, soprano; Erin Ronningen, alto; Lance Keiser, tenor; Lawrence Shirkie, baritone; Carl Steinhauser, piano and organ,umber Valley United Church, 76 Anglesey Blvd., Etobicoke. 416-789-9721. $30.
- 7:30: National Ballet of Canada. Genus, Tarantella, Self and Soul, and The Concert. See Apr 12(00). Also Apr 2(00).
- 7:30: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Programming: Violin Concerto. Choral: Gooney: Are we not drawn onward, we few, drawn onward to (a) new era?: Sesqui for Canada’s 150th; Beethoven: Violin Concerto; Strawinsky: Petrouchka. Karen Gomyo, violin; Robbert Trevino, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-968-3735. $33.75-$105. Also Apr 2(mat) at George Weston Recital Hall.
- 8:00: Angelwalk Theatre. Any Dream Will Do: Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber. Lyric Theatre, Toronto Centre for the Arts, 5040 Yonge St. 1-855-985-2787. $39; $34(artwks); $25(under 30).
- 8:00: Art of Time Ensemble. Johannes Brahms: Portrait of a Musical Genius. Intermezzi for Solo Piano (selected); Piano Quartet No.1 Op.25; Violin Sonata No.2 in A Op.100; Lieder (selected). Benjamin Bowman, violin; Andrew Burashko, piano; Jethro Marks, viola; Rachel Mercer, cello; Sarah Sleas, singer; and others. Harbourfront Centre Theatre, 255 Queens Quay W. 416-973-4000. $25-$96; $25(arts); $15(under 30).
- 8:00: Masterworks of Oakville Chorus and Orchestra. A German Requiem. Brahms. Clohadagh Earls, soprano; Jeremy Ludwig, baritone; full orchestra and choir. St. Matthew’s Catholic Church, 1150 Monks Passage, Oakville. 905-399-9732. $30; $25(artwks); $10(st); free(under 11 with adult). Also Apr 2(mat).
- 8:00: Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra. A Night at the Opera. Strauss: Die Fledermaus Overture; Borodin: Polovetsian Dances; Mozart: Idomeneo; Idomeneo; Puccini: O mio babbino from Gianni Schicchi; Verdi: Overture to La forza del destino. Toronto Choral Society; Ronald Royer, conductor. Salvation Army Scarborough Citadel, 2021 Lawrence Ave. E., Scarborough. 416-429-0001; $30; $25(artwks); $15(st).
- 8:00: Small World Music Centre. Haniya Aslam Trio and Guests. Haniya Aslam, guitar, mandolin and vocals; Waleed Abdulhamied, bass; Naghmeh Farahmar , percussion; Peter Lutek, winds. Small World Music Centre, Artscape Youngplace, 168 Shaw St. 416-536-5439. $30/$20(adv).

Sunday April 2

- 10:00am: Michael Johnston Music Studio. 10th Annual Recital and Spring Celebrations. Folk, pop, jazz, classical, blues, rock and world music. Students of all ages sing, play piano, guitar; drums, ukulele, accordion and trumpet. Lula Lounge. 1555 Dundas St. W. 416-588-0307. $20/$18(adv); $15/$12(under 17/adv); free(performers).
- 2:00: National Ballet of Canada. Genus, Tarantella, Self and Soul, and The Concert. See Apr 1.
- 2:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Choral Kaleidoscope. Works by

3:00: Masterworks of Oakville Chorus and Orchestra. A German Requiem. Brahms. Clodagh Earle, soprano; Jeremy Ludwig, baritone; full orchestra and choir. St. Matthew’s Catholic Church, 1150 Monks Passage, Oakville. 905-399-9732. $30; $25(st); $10(st); free (under 11 with adult). Also Apr 1(eve).

3:00: Off Centre Music Salon. A Musical Invasion of Paris: The Mighty Four. Michèle Bogdanowicz, Lucia Cesaroni, Lara Dodds-Eden, Innna Perkis, Boris Zarankin, and others. Trinity-St. Paul’s, Paul’s Centre, 427 Bloor St. W. 416-466-1670. $50; $40(st); $15(young adult); $5(child).

3:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Beethoven: Violin Concerto. Beethoven; Deusussy: Prelude to Afternoon of a Faun; Strawinsky: Petrouchka. Karen Gomyo, violin; Robert Trevino, conductor. George Weston Recital Hall, 5040 Yonge St. 416-598-3375. $44.25-$100.50. Also Apr 17(3:00, Ray Thomson Hall).


4:00: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Percussion Ensemble. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-408-0208. Free.

7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Percussion Ensemble. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-408-0208. Free.


Monday April 3


Tuesday April 4

9:00am: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Annual High School Choral Festival. Local high school choirs and U of T choral faculty; men’s Chorus, Women’s Chamber Choir, members of Young Voices Toronto. MacMillan Theatre. Edward Johnson Building, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-408-0208. Free. Choirs sing from 9:00 to noon and 1:00 to 3:00.


7:30: Avery Raquel. "Without A Little Rain" CD Release Concert. Avery Raquel, vocals; Adrea Farrugia, piano; Ross MacIntyre, bass; Joel Haynes and Jackson Haynes, drums; and others. 3030 Dundas West, 3030 Dundas St. W. 416-769-5736. $15/$20(with CD).


Wednesday April 5


Women’s Musical Club of Toronto
Music in the Afternoon

Thursday, April 6, 1:30 p.m.

Tickets $45
416-923-7052
www.wmct.on.ca

AIZURI QUARTET
violins, viola, cello

NATNAEL DETH CHORALE
Spirituals, Blues, Jazz & Classics

FRI APR 7 - 12 NOON
Brainerd Blyden-Taylor, conductor
Andrew Adair, organ

FREE ADMISSION

ROY THOMSON HALL
20TH ANNUAL FREE NOON HOUR CHOIR & ORGAN CONCERTS

Enjoy an hour of beautiful music performed by outstanding Canadian choirs and organists, spotlighting Roy Thomson Hall’s magnificent Gabriel Kney pipe organ.

NATHANIEL DETH CHORALE Recitals
Spirituals, Blues, Jazz & Classics

APRIL 7, 28 & MAY 5 @ 12:10PM FREE
No recital on Good Friday, April 14

REFLECTIONS
Featuring songs of hope and peace from Canada to New Zealand

APRIL 7, 21, 28 & MAY 5 @ 12:10PM FREE
No recital on Good Friday, April 14

BOSENDORFER IMPERIAL piano featured in many recitals

St. Andrew’s Church
King & Simcoe Streets
standrewstoronto.org

NAGATA SHACHU TORONTO TAIKO TALES

APRIL 7-9, 2 & 8PM
nagatasuchu.com

†8:00: Nagata Shachu. Toronto Taiko Tales. Aki Studio, Daniells Spectrum, 555 Dundas St. E. 416-651-4277. $30; $20/st. Also Apr 8(2:00 and 8:00); Apr 9(2:00).
†8:00: Tafelmusik. Bach: Keeping It in the Family. See Apr 5. Also Apr 7(8:00) and April 9(3:00).
Reflections: Songs of hope and peace.
Whanau: Kuwรอง; Enns: Da Pacem; Orban: Mass #6; JannMohamed/Abu Khader: new work. Guests: Carol Lynn Fujino and Virginia Chen Wells, violins; Winona Zelenka, cello; Stan Klebanoff, trumpet. Rosedale United Church, 159 Roxborough Dr. 416-392-8666 x231. $25; $20(sr/st); $10(child).

7:00: Mississauga Big Band Jazz Ensemble. Big Band Open Mic. Cooksville United Church, 2500 Mimico Ave. Mississauga. 905-270-4755. $20; $10(sr/st).

7:30: Fairlawns’ Avenue United Church. Sing for Joy. Forrest: Jubilate Deo (Canadian premiere); and other sacred music. The Fairlawns’ Choirs, Fairlawns Senior Choir (Rebecca Whelan and Lynn McMurray, soloists); chamber orchestra; Eleanor Daley, conductor. 28 Fairlawns Ave. 416-481-6848. $20.


10:00: pre-performance chat with professors and graduate students.

8:00: Canadian Sinfonietta. Young Artists’ Concert. Happy 150th Birthday, Canada! Pepa: “Highland Cathedral” Bagpipe Overture; Grieg: Holberg Suite. Dan MacMillan, bagpipers; 2nd Annual Young Artist Competition Winners. Tyndale Chapel, 3377 Bayview Ave. 416-223-2286. $35; $30(sr/st); $20(st).

8:00: Jazz Performance and Education Centre (JPEC). Dueling Pianos: Father and Son. Eddie and Quincy Bullen. Carrebean Jazz Collective. Studio Theatre, Toronto Centre for the Arts. 5040 Yonge St., North York. 1-888-985-9878. $35; $20(st).

8:00: Massey Hall. Live at Massey Hall Series: Bill and Joel Plaskett Solidarity Tour. 176 Victoria St. 416-872-4255. $18.94-$39.50.

8:00: Nagata Shachu. Toronto Taiko Tales. See Apr 7. Also Apr 9($22).

8:00: Oakville Symphony Orchestra. Passionate Drama. Tchaikovsky: Symphony No.6; Mozart: Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola; and other works. Scott St. John, viola; Sharon Wei, viola. Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts, 130 Navy St., Oakville. 905-815-2021 or 868-489-7784. $25-$84. Also Apr 8($20).

8:00: Pocket Concerts. Pocket Concert Near Bayview and Blythwood. Poulenc: Sextet for Winds and Piano; Ligeti: Six Bagatelles for Wind Quintet; works by Mozart and Philip Glass. Sarah Jeffrey, oboe; Leslie Allt, flute; Gabriel Radford, horn; Fraser Jackson, bassoon; Michal Heilbrunn, clarinet; Emily Rho, piano. Private Home at corner of Bayview and Blythwood. 647-868-8295. $48; $32(19-35); $15(under 19).


A. Concerts in the GTA


- 4:30: North York Concert Orchestra/Bravo Academy. Kids on Broadway Family Concert. Rafael Luz, conductor. Toronto Centre for the Arts, 5040 Yonge St., North York. 416-628-8195. $25, $20(sr); $18(st). Also 2:00.


- 7:00: Knox Presbyterian Church. Brookes Passion. Handel: Brookes Passion; other works by Bach and Handel; congregational hymns. Choir and soloists of Knox Presbyterian Church; strings and organ; Roger Berge, conductor. 630 Spadina Ave. 416-921-8993. Freewill offering.

- 7:30: Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto. High Flight. Lydia Adams, conductor; Shawn Grenke, conductor and pianist; guest: Dr. Roberta Bondar. Eglington St. George's United Church, 35 Lyton Blvd. 416-446-0188. $45, $40(sr); $35(under 30); $20(st).


- 8:00: St. E. 1-855-872-7669. Free. First-come, first-served. Late seat not available.

B. Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

SACRED MUSIC FOR A SACRED SPACE

Take a moment for calm and reflection and immerse yourself in contemplative music surrounded by the beauty of St. Paul’s Basilica.

Enjoy the powerful experience of music floating down from the loft—Sanders’ Reproaches, Allegri’s stunning Miserere and Pärt’s A Deer’s Cry. After intermission, works by Lotti, Willan, Elgar and Mendelssohn complete the evening.

Wednesday, April 12 at 7:30 pm
Good Friday, April 14 at 7:30 pm
St. Paul’s Basilica – 83 Power Street

Tickets
$35 & $50.
$35 & $45 seniors
$20 VoxTix for patrons 30 and under

New This Year
Seat selection and print-at-home tickets available through RCM Tickets.
Purchase online or call 416.408.0208.

C. LARK Ensemble

with ERICA GOODMAN, harp

APRIL 9, 7:30PM
CORKIN GALLERY, DISTILLERY DISTRICT


D. National Ballet Theatre: Swan Lake

59 Minute Soirée. A variety of lighter music, conversation with the musicians, refreshments and open rehearsal. Willmar Heights Centre, 963 Pharmacy Ave., Scarborough. 416-742-4237. PWYC; $10 suggested. Free parking; wheelchair accessible.

E. Organix Concerts/All Saints Kingsway Anglican Church

Good Friday, April 14 at 7:30 pm
Knox Presbyterian Church; strings and organ; Roger Berge, conductor. 630 Spadina Ave. 416-921-8993. Freewill offering.

F. Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

Good Friday, April 14 at 7:30 pm
Knox Presbyterian Church; strings and organ; Roger Berge, conductor. 630 Spadina Ave. 416-921-8993. Freewill offering.

G. Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

Good Friday, April 14 at 7:30 pm
Knox Presbyterian Church; strings and organ; Roger Berge, conductor. 630 Spadina Ave. 416-921-8993. Freewill offering.

H. Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

Good Friday, April 14 at 7:30 pm
Knox Presbyterian Church; strings and organ; Roger Berge, conductor. 630 Spadina Ave. 416-921-8993. Freewill offering.

I. Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

Good Friday, April 14 at 7:30 pm
Knox Presbyterian Church; strings and organ; Roger Berge, conductor. 630 Spadina Ave. 416-921-8993. Freewill offering.

J. Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

Good Friday, April 14 at 7:30 pm
Knox Presbyterian Church; strings and organ; Roger Berge, conductor. 630 Spadina Ave. 416-921-8993. Freewill offering.

K. Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

Good Friday, April 14 at 7:30 pm
Knox Presbyterian Church; strings and organ; Roger Berge, conductor. 630 Spadina Ave. 416-921-8993. Freewill offering.


- **8:00: Flato Markham Theatre.** Russian National Ballet Theatre: Swan Lake. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. 905-305-7469. $64-$69. Also Apr 11 and 12.

- **8:00: Massey Hall.** Tiarinimeen with Denge Fever. 178 Victoria St. 416-872-4255. $29.50-$89.50.

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**Toronto Symphony Orchestra**

**Les Violons du Roy with Philippe Jaroussky**

**THURS., APR. 13, 8PM KOERNER HALL**

**TICKETS ON SALE NOW! 416.408.0208 WWW.PERFORMANCE.RCMUSIC.CA**


**8:00: Flato Markham Theatre.** Russian National Ballet Theatre: Swan Lake. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. 905-305-7469. $64-$69. Also Apr 11 and 12.

**9:00: Michael Murphy.** Don’t Tell Oscar. Music with rock influence by composers including Oscar Bettison, Harry Stafalakis, David Lang and others. Alumni of the U of T Contemporary Music Ensemble; VCL (Cello Duo) and others. Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, 12 Alexander St. 416-666-8188. $15 or PWYC. Free (U of T music students).

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**Friday April 14**


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**Good Friday Liturgy**

**April 14 at 11am**

Rheinberger: Stabat Mater; Sanders: The Reproaches

**Humbercrest United Point Church, Toronto**

humbercrest.ca

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**Nine Sparrows Arts Foundation/Presents**

**THE GOOD FRIDAY CONCERT**

Music and Readings for a Most Holy Day

**FRIDAY, APRIL 14, 2017, 4PM**

**SPECIAL GUESTS**

Anne Lindsay, Celtic violin
Sharlene Wallace, Celtic harp

**Featuring:**

Lark Popov, piano
Stephen Boda, organ

**The YPC choir**

William Maddox, conductor

The Hedgerow Singers
Eric Robertson, conductor

Colleen Burns
Rev. Dr. Peter Holmes

NORTH YORKminster PARK BAPTist CHurch

1585 Yonge Street | 416-922-1167 | ADMISSION FREE
A. Concerts in the GTA

play Amadeus. Jocelyn Fralic, soprano; Lilian Brooks, mezzo; Ryan Harper, tenor; Matthew Cassils, baritone; orchestra; Kingston Road United Church, 975 Kingston Rd. 416-699-6634. $25; $12(17-18yrs); free under 7.

and Fasch, Conservatory Theatre, Telus Centre, 278 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0209. $93.

Saturday, April 22

1:00: Canadian Children’s Opera Company. Mulligan’s Toy Shop. By Elizabeth Raum. Jun-

ger Divisions of the CCOC; Lynn Janes, con-
ger: Gergely Szokolay, piano; Dean Burry, stage
der: First Unitarian Congrega-
tion, 175 St. Clair Ave. W. 416-366-0457. $20;

1:30: Toronto Chapter of American Harp

Society. Duo Scarprio. Andres: Le jardin des

pas; Akiko: Two Broths; Dietz: Rival of

Mars; Mulhy: Fast Dances; Andres; Parvis-

Parvis, Bernard Andres. Kati Andres and

Kristi Shade, harps. Armour Heights Presby-
terian Church, 105 Wilson Ave. 416-660-7140.

2:30: Mulligan’s Toy Shop. Mohan Veena

with Vishwa Mohan Bhatt. 77 Wynford Dr.

416-646-4677. From $30.

3:00: Toronto Chapter of American Harp

Society. Duo Scarprio. Andres: Le jardin des

pas; Akiko: Two Broths; Dietz: Rival of

Mars; Mulhy: Fast Dances; Andres; Parvis-

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Parvis, Bernard Andres. Kati Andres and

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terian Church, 105 Wilson Ave. 416-660-7140.

2:30: Mulligan’s Toy Shop. Mohan Veena

with Vishwa Mohan Bhatt. 77 Wynford Dr.

416-646-4677. From $30.
Thanks to Dr. Suzuki Gala concert

Celebrating the life and teachings of Dr. Shinichi Suzuki
Sunday April 23, 7pm

Sunday 23rd April at 4 p.m.
Festive Evensong for St. George plus St. George’s Tea and at 5:
THE BEST OF FRIENDS
St. Olave’s Arts Guild with drama, poetry and comedy from Shakespeare, Bronte, L.M. Montgomery and Longfellow; a tribute to Vera Lynn at 100; a dramatic reading of What is a friend? and some glorious violin solos played by Hannah Corbett
St. Olave’s Church
Bloor and Windermere
416-769-5686  stolaves.ca

Thanks to Dr. Suzuki Concert Performances. Gala Concert. Celebrating the life and teachings of Dr. Shinichi Suzuki. Suzuki repertoire and chamber music. Senior violin, viola, cello, flute and piano students from Suzuki schools across the GTA. Plast Concert Hall, 516 The Kingsway, Etobicoke. 647-637-1530. $35(family); $15(10-18); $10(all others).

Tuesday April 25

12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company Vocal Series: A Woman’s Life and Love/Longfellow; Women love - lebend; and other works. Lauren Eberwein, mezzo; Danica Lorén, soprano. Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. 416-365-8231. Free. First-come, first-served. Late seating not available.


7:30: Opera Atelier. Medea. See Apr 22. Also Apr 26, 29 (29/30pm).

8:00: Nightwood Theatre presents a Volcano production. Century Song. See Apr 18. Also Apr 26, 27, 28 (all at 8:00), 29/30 (2:00).

Wednesday April 26


7:30: Canadian Opera Company. Louis Riel. See Apr 20. Also Apr 29 (29/4:30), May 2, 5, 13.

7:30: Opera Atelier. Medea. See Apr 22. Also Apr 29, 29(4:30pm).


8:00: Nightwood Theatre presents a Volcano production. Century Song. See Apr 18. Also Apr 27, 28, 29 (2:00).

8:00: Toronto Operaetta Theatre. The Chocolate Soldier. Oscar Strauss. Jennifer Taverner; Anna Caroline Macdonald, Michael Nyby; Gregory Fenney; Austin Larusson; and Eugenia Dementzis; Peter Tiefenbach, conductor; Guillermo Silva-Marín, stage director. Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. 416-566-7723 or 1-800-708-6754. $29-$49. Also Apr 28 (8:00); 29 and 30(3all 0.00).

Thursday April 27


6:00: Toronto Children’s Chorus. Vocal Academy Recital. Showcase of skills developed under the tutelage of Dr. Darryl Edwards. Toronto Children’s Chorus Vocal Academy members. Calvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave. 416-932-8666 x231. Donations accepted.

7:30: Eybler Quartet. Haydn Contrapunctus. Toronto. Christoph Harms, violin; lett; and other works. Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave. 416-595-9678. $25; $22(st/ad); $15(st ads workers). All proceeds to Toronto Children’s Chorus.

8:00: Aurora Cultural Centre. Great Artist Music Series. Luca Buratto, piano. 22 Church St., St. 905-715-1816. $34; $29(st/ad).

Thewholenote.com

April 1, 2017 - May 7, 2017 | 45
A. Concerts in the GTA

- **8:00:** Nightwood Theatre presents a Volcano production. Century Song. See Apr 18.
- **8:00:** Apr 28, 29(2:00).
- **8:00:** Royal Conservatory of Music. Quiet Please, There's a Lady on Stage: Rosanne Cash. Cash/Leventhal: songs from The River and the Thread. Koerner Hall, Telus Centre, 272 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. $40-$45.

**Friday April 28**

- **11:00am:** Tafelmusik. Close Encounters of the German Kind. Works by Telemann, Zelenka and Fasch. Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave. 416-964-6337. Prices TBA. Introductions by the performers. Also Apr 22(2:00), Conservatory Theatre.
- **12:10:** Music at St. Andrew's. Noontime Recital. Ravel; Satie; Liszt; Après une lec... ture du dante; Poulen: Trois Nocturnes. Lee Stratton, piano. St. Andrew's Church (Toronto), 73 Simcoe St. 416-593-5600 x231. Free.
- **7:30:** Opera Atelier. Medea. See Apr 22. Also Apr 29(4:30pm).

**Saturday April 29**

- **1:00:** Nightwood Theatre presents a Volcano production. Century Song. See Apr 18.
- **2:00:** Toronto Opera. Northern Lights Chorus. Girl Power! Guests: The BUZZ. Lyric Theatre, Toronto Centre for the Arts, 5040 Yonge St. 416-250-3708. $30-$35/$100(VIP); $10(st); free(under 3). Also 7:30. 5:30: reception for VIP ticket holders.
- **2:00:** Toronto Symphony Orchestra. The Hockey Sweater. Roch Carrier, narrator; Christopher Gongos, horn; Abigail Richard-son-Schulte, host; Alain Trudel, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. $20-$50-$125. Also at 4:00.
- **3:00:** Toronto Opera. The Chocolate Soldier. See Apr 26. Also Apr 30(4:00).
- **4:00:** Toronto Symphony Orchestra. The Hockey Sweater. Roch Carrier, narrator; Christopher Gongos, horn; Abigail Richard-son-Schulte, host; Alain Trudel, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. $20-$50-$125. Also at 2:00.
- **4:30:** Canadian Opera Company. Louis Riel. See Apr 20. Also May 5, 13, 20.
- **4:30:** Opera Atelier. Medea. See Apr 22.
- **7:00:** Canadian Children's Opera Company. Commedia. Commedia. Commedia. Selections inspired by the Commedia dell'arte tradition. Members of the Canadian Youth Opera Chorus; Princi-pal Chorus of the COCo, Teri Dunn, music director; Gergely Szokolay, piano; Alex Sideris, writer and stage director; Jackman Studio, Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Opera Centre, 227 Front St. E. 416-366-0467. $20; $15(st); $5(under 6).
- **7:00:** Celebrity Symphony Orchestra. Maestro Rozbicki’s Canada 150 Birthday Gala. This Land Is Your Land: Hockey Night in Cana-da: songs by Celine Dion, Paul Anka, Michael Bublé and others. Viva Trò; Krystian Adam Krzeszowiak; Anna Lasota; Stanislas Vitort; Martina Ortiz-Luis; and others. Church on the Queensway, 1536 The Queensway, Etobicoke. 416-255-0141. $40-$85. Reserved seat-ing event.
- **7:30:** Canadian Men’s Chorus, With Glowing Hearts. Tribute to Canadian music including works by Siret, Daley, Cohen and others. Music Gallery, 197 John St. 519-305-1351. $35/$30(adv); $25(under 30)/$20(adv).
- **7:30:** Jubilee Order of Good Cheer. Con-cert for Canada. Canadian songs from the past 150 years; audience participation. Jubilee-lee Choir; guest soloists. Jubilee United Church, 40 Underhill Dr. 416-447-8846. $10; free(under 13).
- **7:30:** Northern Lights Chorus. Girl Power! Guests: The BUZZ. Lyric Theatre, Toronto Centre for the Arts, 5040 Yonge St. 416-250-3708. $30-$35/$100(VIP); $10(st); free(under 3). 5:30: reception for VIP ticket holders. Also 2:00.

**Thursday April 27**

- **7:00:** St. Andrew’s Church. Celebrity Symphony Orchestra presents a Canada 150 Celebration. Featuring classics, opera, operetta, musicals, Canadian songs from the Canadian Opera Company; works by Novak, Ravel, Messiaen, Dutilleux, Connossi and Donovan. Sibley Marquardt, flute; Fraser Jackson, bassoons; Paul Pulford, cello; Monique de Margerie, piano; Michael Donovan, baritone. 345 Sorauren Ave. 416-822-9781. $25(under 30); $20(st).
- **7:00:** Mississauga Symphony Orchestra. Carmen. Music by Georges Bizet. Beste Kale... mezzo; Carmen; Romulo Delgado, tenor (Don José); Denis Mastromano, conductor. Hammermill Hall, Living Arts Centre, 4141 Living Arts Dr. Mississauga, 905-306-6000. $20-$70.
- **8:00:** Ontario Philharmonic. Masters Ser-ies: For the Love of Mozart! Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 17. Piano Concerto No. 21 “Elvira Madigan.” Haffner Symphony, Jean Desmarais, piano; Maria Sourjko, piano. 10UT Regent Theatre (Oshawa), 50 King St. E., Oshawa. 905-721-3399 x2. From $45; $25(youth).

**TOURS/CONCERTS IN THE GTA**

- **April 28, Trinity St. Paul’s Centre**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>8:00:</strong> New Music Concerts. Celebrating John Beckwith. Beckwith: Calling (premiere); Arowald; Quartz (premiere); Weinzweig: String Quartet No. 3. Strawinsky: In Memoriam Dylan Thomas. Benjamin Butterfield, tenor; William Aide, piano; Accordere String Quartet; New Music Concerts Ensemble; Robert Atken, artistic director. Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, 427 Bloor St. W. 416-961-5934. $35; $25(sr/ arts worker); $10(st).</td>
<td><a href="http://www.NewMusicConcerts.com">www.NewMusicConcerts.com</a></td>
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Friday April 28


Saturday April 29

7:30: Humber Valley Choral Society. Messiah. Joaquín Valdèpeñas, clarinet; Jonathan Crow, violin; David Hetherington, cello; Serouj Kradjian, piano. Mazzoleni Concert Hall, Telus Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. $45; $40(sr); $15(under 31); $10(st).

Sunday April 30

2:00: Canadian Opera Company. Tosca. Puccini. Adrienne Pieczonka and Keri Alkema, sopranos; Lynn Wilson, conductor. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 150 King St. W. 416-363-8231. $35-$235; $22(under 30). English Surtitles™. Also May 4, 6, 7(2:00), 9, 11, 12, 15, 17, 19, 20(3:30).

2:00: Canadian Opera Company. Tosca. Puccini. Adrienne Pieczonka and Keri Alkema, sopranos (Tosca); Paul Curran, director; Keri-Lynn Wilson, conductor. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. 416-363-8231. $35-$235; $22(under 30). English Surtitles™. Also May 4, 6, 7(2:00), 9, 11, 12, 14(2:00), 17, 18, 19, 20(4:30).


Tuesday May 2


7:00: Church of St. Andrew, Scarborough. Metropolitan Silver Band. Featuring classics, marches, great musicals, religious music, popular selections and contemporary works written and arranged for brass band. 2333 Victoria Park Ave., Scarborough. 416-447-1481. $20; $10(st); $5(child). Complimentary post-concert refreshments.

Monday May 1


Sunday May 7

2:00: Toronto Opera Orchestra. The Chocolate Soldier. See Apr 26.


Women’s Musical Club of Toronto
Music in the Afternoon

Thursday, May 4, 1:30pm
Tickets $45
416-923-7052
www.wmct.on.ca

1:30: Women’s Musical Club of Toronto
Music in the Afternoon. Mozart: Fantasy in D Minor K397; Chopin: Four Impromptus, Three Mazurkas; Babadjanian: Elégie; Schuman: Sonata No.1 in F-sharp Minor Op.11; Charles Richard-Hamelin, piano. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park, 416-823-7022. $45.


5:00: Tafelmusik. Mozart Mass in C Minor. Directed by Ivars Taurins and Elisa Citterio, violin. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre
(416) 408-0208

Mozart Mass in C Minor
Directed by Ivars Taurins and Elisa Citterio, violin May 4 – 7 Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre
(416) 408-0208
tafelmusik.org

Friday May 5


7:30: Canadian Opera Company. Louis Riel. See Apr 20. Also May 13.

7:30: Opera by Request. Lohengrin. Music and libretto by Richard Wagner. In concert with piano accommodation. Jason Lamont, tenor (Lohengrin); Stefi Diantchian, soprano (Elsa); Andrew Tees, baritone (Telramund); Kristine Dandavino, mezzo-soprano (Ortrud); Norman Brown, baritone (King Henry); Michael Robert-Broder, baritone (Herald); William Shookhoff, piano and music director. College Street United Church, 452 College St. 416-455-2365. $20.


8:00: Music Gallery. Emergents IV: Harp Society – Stereoscope Duo. 197 John St. 416-204-1080. $12; $8(students).


8:00: Small World Music Centre. Monday. Artscape Youngplace, 180 Shaw St. 416-536-5439. $30/$20(adv). May 05 8:00: Spectrum Music. Portraits de Georgian Bay. Arrangements of Georgian Bay’s compositions by Spectrum composers. Georgian Bay (Kelly Lefaive, violin/viola; Jolee Westman, guitar/viola); Anna Atkinson, violin/viola; Lydia Munchinsky, cello; Tim Drouc, flute; Juan Olivas, clarinet/bass clarinet; Chris Pruden, piano. Alliance Française de Toronto, 24 Spadina Rd. 416-937-6180. $15; $10(students). 8:00: Tafelmusik. Mozart Mass in C Minor. See May 4. Also May 6, 7,13,30. Saturday May 6


1:30: Canadian Opera Company. Tosca. See Apr 30. Also May 7(2:00), 9, 11, 12, 14(2:00), 17, 18, 19, 21(2:00). 4:30: Bel Canto Singers. Love in Any Language. A Celebration of 150 Years. Michael Gomezia, conductor; Jacqueline Mokrzecki, accompanist. Scarborough Bluffs United Church, 3738 Kingston Rd., Scarborough. 416-286-8260. $20. Also 7:30.

IN PEACE CELEBRATION

Thursday May 4


WRITE OFF THE KEYBOARD MAINSTAGE | Thurs, May 4
ADAM SHERKIN, PIANO | stlc.com

8:00: Adam Sherkin, Piano. Write Off the Keyboard. Mozart: Sonata in D K314: Lisez: Notes de Pellegrine Book I $30 Nos.1, 2 & 5; Chopin: Scherzo No.1 in B Minor Op.20; Rachmaninoff: Morceaux de fantasie Op.3 Nos.3 & 4; Somers: Sonata No.1 (Testament of Youth); and works by Sherkin. Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. 416-366-7723. $55; $50(adv); $40(35 and under). Post-show reception.
**Elmer Iseler Singers**

*O Canada! 150th Celebration!*

With Eleanor McCain and her Canadian Songbook CD

**Sat. May 6**

**416-217-0537**

- **7:30:** Elmer Iseler Singers. *O Canada! 150th Celebration!* Launch of Eleanor McCain’s new CD *The Canadian Songbook*. Music from *The Canadian Songbook*; other works by Cable, Daley, Janmohamed, Somers and Healy; and Tanya McCain, soprano; and Hussein Janmohamed, Lydia Adams, conductor. *Trinity* St. Paul’s Centre, 427 Bloor St. W. 416-217-0537. $40; $35(sr); $15(st).

**905.305.SHOW**

**GALA for MENTAL HEALTH**

**DAN HILL, LUBA GY & FRIENDS**

**May 6, 2017**

- **7:30:** Music at Metropolitan. *Marg and Jim Norquay Celebration Concert*. Jordan Scholl, baritone; Lesley Bouza, soprano, Metropolitan United Church (Toronto), 56 Queen St. E. 416-863-0331. $20; $10(under 18) and under.
- **7:30:** Toronto Full of Joy Church. Singing Together 22nd Anniversary Concert. Celebration of Canada’s 150th year of cultural diversity. Coro San Marco; Chinese Canadian Choir of Toronto; La Petite Musique of Toronto; Cantemos; Armonia Choir. Guest: Brenda Chen, piano. 1100 Petrolia Rd. 416-667-0468. $20. Also April 29.
- **8:00:** Acoustic Harvest. In Concert. Kolin Stewart, composer and guitar. St. Nicholas Anglican Church, 1512 Kingston Rd. 416-729-7564. $25/$22(adv).
- **8:00:** Canadian Sinfonietta. *Chamber Music with Voice*. Brahms: Two Songs for Piano, Viola and Voice; Heggie: Some Times of Day for Mezzo and Piano Trio; Theodorakis: A Selection of Greek Songs; John S. Gray: Piano Quartet (world premiere); Schumann: Piano Quartet. Maria Soulis, mezzo; Erika Crinó, piano; Joyce Lai, violin; Ian Clarke, viola; András Weber, cello. Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave. 647-223-2286. $30; $25(sr); $20(st).
- **9:00:** Norquay Celebration Concert. *Friends*. Flato Markham Theatre, 171 Town Centre Blvd., *Markham*. 905-305-7469. $40; $35(sr); $15(st).
- **9:00:** Morgan’s Bay Choral Union. *Spring: Songs from the Heart*. Art songs by Dowland, Fauré, Schubert, Vaughan Williams, R. Strauss and others. Lyndsay Promane, mezzo; Holly Kroeker, piano. Islington United Church, 25 Burnamthorpe Rd. 416-239-1131. PWYC. Food bank donations accepted.
- **9:30:** St. Anne’s Anglican Church. *Canadian Spring Concert*. Canadian music compositions to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation. 270 Gladstone Ave. 416-536-3160. $15; $10(sr/st); free(under 12).
- **9:30:** Tafelmusik. Mozart Mass in C Minor. St. Basilian Catholic Church, 2110 Trafalgar Rd., *Oakville*. 416-234-9994 or 905-337-8646. $25. Also Apr 30 (Etobike).
Sunday April 3


- 8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society. "Shostakovich Quartets 2." Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Quartet. KWCMS Music Room, 57 Young St. W., Waterloo. 519-886-1673. $35 (sr/adv); $20 (st).

Monday April 3

- 8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society. "Shostakovich Quartets 2." KWCMS Music Room, 57 Young St. W., Waterloo. 519-886-1673. $35 (sr/adv); $20 (st).

Tuesday April 4


Wednesday April 5

- 12:00: noon: "Midday Music with Singeru." Daniel Johnston and Music Students from Bear Creek Secondary School, Hi-Way Pentecostal Church, 50 Anne St. N., Barrie. 705-728-1181. $5 (sr/adv); free (st).

Thursday April 6

**Wednesday April 12**


8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society. Guitar Recital. Pujoj: Preludio Tristis; Candombre en mi; Rodigio: Junta al generalife; En los trigosales; Maza: Campanas del alba; Domeniconi: Variations on an Anatolian folk song; Beaureux: Appalachian Colours; Kavanagh: Briny Ocean; Merlin: Suite del Recuerdo. Emma Rush, guitar. KWCMS Music Room, 57 Young St. W., Waterloo. 519-886-1673. $30 ($20 student).

**Thursday April 13**

7:30: Stratford Symphony Orchestra. Celebrating 150 Years. Ridout: Fall Fair; works by Cable and other composers. Trent Severn, Blueberry Bush, Bobcaygeon, Ontario (Stratford), 142 Ontario St., Stratford. 519-271-0990. $40; $10 (student).

**Friday April 14**

7:30: Grand Philharmonic Choir. Beethoven: Missa Solemnis. Leslie Fagan, soprano; Kristzina Szabo, mezzo; Owen McCausland, tenor; Geoffrey Siret, baritone; Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, Mark Vuorinen, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-578-1570. $30-$78; $14 (student and under 30); $5 (child/height of school student).

**Saturday April 15**

2:30 and 7:30: Niagara Symphony Orchestra. Too Hot to Handle! The Gospel Messiah. Sharon Riley and the Faithful Choral Gospel Choir; Laura Second Secondary School Concert Choir; Bradley Thachuk, conductor. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 905-688-0722 or 1-855-515-0722. $28; $64 (student); $34 (student under 18) and under; $14 (student 18-24); $12 (child); $5 (eyeGO).

**Sunday April 16**

2:00: Chamber Music Hamilton. Quatuor Daniel. Tchaikovsky: Andante Cantabile from String Quartet No. 1; Borodin: Nocturne from String Quartet No. 2; Weinberg: Notturno from String Quartet No. 7; Zverev: Scherzo from String Quartet No. 5; Tischchenko: String Quartet No. 1 Op. 8. Art Gallery of Hamilton, 123 King St. W., Hamilton. 905-525-7429. $30; $27 (student); $10 (student).

4:30: Music at St. Thomas. Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of St. Thomas’s Organ Installation. Francine Nguyen-Savaria and Matthieu Lalrille, organ. St. Thomas’s Anglican Church (Belleville), 201 Church St., Belleville. 613-962-3636. PWYC.

**Wednesday April 19**

12:00 noon: Music at St. Andrews. Lenard Whiting, organ and Michael Barth, trumpeter. St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church (Barrie), 47 Owen St., Barrie. 705-726-1181. $5; free (student).


**Friday April 21**

Presented by Bobcaygeon Music Council

**Ensemble Vivant**

**APRIL 21**

TRINITY UNITED CHURCH

Bobcaygeon, Ontario


8:00: Jeffery Concerts. New Oxford String Quartet. Beethoven: Quartet in D Op.18 No.3; Quartet in A Op.18 No.5; Quartet in F Op.135. Wolf Performance Hall, 251 Dundas St., London. 519-672-8800. $35; $30 (student); $15 (student).

8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Dvorák’s Cello Concerto. Rhi Esko Maimets: new commission; Brahms: Symphony No.3 in F; Dvorák: Cello Concerto in B minor. Johannes Moser, cello; Edwin Outwater, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-475-4711 or 1-888-745-4717. $19-$82. Also Apr 21.

**Saturday April 22**


7:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Youth Orchestra Concert 2. Free. KWS Youth Orchestra ensembles. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717. $13; $11 (student).

8:00: Grand Philharmonic Choir. Children’s Choir Spring Sing. Grand Philharmonic Children’s Choir; Andrea deBoer-Jones, conductor. Knox Presbyterian Church (Waterloo), 50 Erb St. W., Waterloo. 519-576-0895. $15.

8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Dvořák’s Cello Concerto. Rhi Esko Maimets: new commission; Brahms: Symphony No.3 in F; Dvořák: Cello Concerto in B minor. Johannes Moser, cello; Edwin Outwater, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-475-4711 or 1-888-745-4717. $19-$82. Also Apr 21.

**Sunday April 23**


**Wednesday April 26**


8:00: Sanderson Centre for the Performing Arts. Trans-Canada Highwaymen. Hit songs, road stories, jokes, secrets and surprises. Moe Berg, Chris Murphy, Craig Northey and Steven Page. 88 Dalhousie St., Brantford. 519-738-8039 or 1-800-265-0710. $55; $20 (student); $5 (eyeGO).

**Friday April 28**

6:00: INNERchamber Concerts. For the Love of Mozart. Factory 163, 163 King St. N., Stratford. 519-271-3140. $42 (student).

**Saturday April 29**

10:30am: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Voyage of Mendelssohn Mouse. Music from different European countries. KWS String Quartet. Waterloo Region Museum, 10 Huron Rd., Kitchener. 519-475-4711 or 1-888-745-4717. $13; $11 (student). 9:30: Pre-concert activities. Post-concert meet the performers. Also Apr 8 (Conrad Centre, Kitchener); 29 (Waterloo).

7:30: Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts, Brock University. Viva Voce! Choral Series: Avanti Chamber Singers – Choral Flora. Covenant Christian Reformed Church, 278 Parnell Ave., St. Catharines. 905-888-5550. $28; $20 (student); $5 (eyeGO). $5 discount on adv tickets at Thorold Music, Booksmart or from members of Avanti Chamber Singers (not applicable to eyeGO).

7:30: Musikay Choir. Messiah; Kira Braun; soprano; Madison Arsenault, alto; Michael P.
The page contains a schedule of events with details such as dates, times, locations, and performers. It includes three sections: Concerts Beyond the GTA, Music Theatre, and Canadian Opera Company. The content is organized in a readable format, with each event's details clearly presented.
based on the books and the film. Lower Ossington Theatre, 100A Ossington Ave. 1-888-224-0622. $54.99-$64.99. Runs to Apr 30. Fri-Sat(7:30pm), Sat(3:00pm). Sun(2:00pm), 4:00pm).

- Lower Ossington Theatre. Little Shop of Horrors. Music by Alan Menken, lyrics and book by Howard Ashman. Lower Ossington Theatre, 100A Ossington Ave. 1-888-224-0622. $54.99-$64.99. Runs to May 14. Fri-Sat(7:30pm), Sat(3:00pm). Sun(2:00pm).

- Lower Ossington Theatre. Sister Act. Music by Alan Menken, lyrics by Glenn Slater, set by Bill and Cheri Steinkellner with Douglas Carter Beane. Randolph Theatre, 736 Bathurst St. 1-888-224-0622. $49.99. Runs to Apr 9. Fri-Sat(7:30pm), Sat(3:00pm), Sun(2:00pm).


- Opera by Request. Lohengrin. Music and libretto by Richard Wagner. In concert with piano accompaniment. Kellie Masalopulos, soprano (Ortrud); Stephanie Forsythe, mezzo-soprano (Elsa); Andrew Tetsis, baritone (Telramund); Kristine Dandavino, mezzo-soprano (Ortrud); Norman Brown, baritone (King Henry); Michael Rob-Broder, baritone (Herald); William Shankoff, piano and music director. College Street United Church, 452 College St. 416-456-2365. Sun(12:00pm, 4:00pm).

- Scarborough Music Theatre. Man of La Mancha. Music by Mitch Leigh, lyrics by Joe Darion, book by Dale Wasserman. Scarborough Village Community Centre, 3600 Kingston Rd. 416-267-9292. $27; $25(sr/st); $23(ch). Opens May 4, 8:00pm. Runs to May 14. Thurs-Sat(8:00pm), Sun(2:00pm).

- Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra. A Night at the Opera. Strauss. Die Fledermaus Overture; Borodin: Polovetsian Dances; Mozart: Voyager’s Chorus from Idomeneo; Puccini: O Mio Babbino from Gianni Schicchi; Verdi: Overture to La Forza Del Distino. Town Hall United Church, 531-1827. $20; $15(ch). Apr 23. Tues-Thur(7:30pm), Fri-Sat(8:00pm).


- National Ballet of Canada. Genius and The Concerto. Music by Jozef Talbot, Deru, and by Frédéric Chopin, orchestrated by Clare Grundman. With Fred Ormond, narrator and Jerome Robbins, choreographer. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. 416-345-9555. $39-$265. Apr 24 to Apr 29. Wed-Sat(7:30pm), Thurs(3:00pm, Sun(2:00pm).

- Nightwood Theatre. Century Song. Created by Neema Bickersteth, Kate Atkinson and Ross Manson. Neema Bickersteth, performer. This exquisite unique show features music by some of the past 100 years’ most avant-garde composers, as well as projections by German’s feltFilm – extraordinary visuals that bring alive major art movements of the 20th century. Galen Centre, 647-341-7390. $20. Apr 24 to Apr 29. Wed-Sat(8:00pm), Sun(3:00pm). Note: Apr 24 at 2:00pm.

- Onstage Ubudge. Little Shop of Horrors. Music by Alan Menken, lyrics and book by Howard Ashman. Upper Broadway Music Hall, 15 Main St. S., Onstageubudge.com. $20. Runs to Apr 8. Fri-Sat(7:30pm), Sat/Sun(2:00pm). Note: Apr 8(6:00pm).

- Opera Atelier. Medea. Music by Marc-Antoine Charpentier, libretto by Thomas Corneille. Peggy Khris Dye, soprano (Medea); Colin Ainsworth, tenor (Jason); and others; Marshall Pynkoski, stage director. Janei- lenjeannesiezing, zing, choreographer; Art- ists of Atelier Ballet; Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra; David Fallis, conductor. Elgin Thea- tre, 189 Yonge St. 1-855-222-2787. $39-$119. Opens Apr 22, 7:30pm. Also Apr 23(3:00pm), Apr 24, 2:00pm.

- Opera by Request. Erroto ed Eurydice. Music by Christoph Willibald Gluck, libretto by Ranieri de Calzabigi. In concert with piano accompaniment. Kellie Masalopulos, soprano (Orfeo); Antonina Ermolenko, soprano (Eurydice); Sharon Tikiryan, soprano (Amor); Stephanie Forsythe, mezzo-soprano (Elsa); Andrew Tetsis, baritone (Telramund); Kristine Dandavino, mezzo-soprano (Ortrud); Norman Brown, baritone (King Henry); Michael Rob-Broder, baritone (Herald); William Shankoff, piano and music director. College Street United Church, 452 College St. 416-456-2365. $20. Apr 22, 7:30pm.


- Toronto Operetta Theatre. The Choc- olate Soldier. Music by Oscar Straus. Jennifer Taverner; Anna MacDonald; Michael Nyby, Peter Tiefenbach, conductor; Guillermo Silva- Marin, stage director. Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. 416-366-7723 or 1-800-708-6754. $29-$49. Opens Apr 26, 8:00pm. Also Apr 28(6:00); 29 and 30(all 3:00).

So Long Seven's Cross-Cultural Chamber Music

BOB BEN

ately, I have been walking around and humming the melody of You Must Believe in Spring, partially because it’s a nice melody, and partially as a reminder – sometimes it’s easy to forget that warmer days are in fact on their way. As we wait for our little corner of the world to thaw, it may help our collective state of mind if we listened to some music that carries in it echoes of warmer places.

Like, for example, South Asia, or West Africa, or the Mediterranean. Such echoes can be found in the lineup of the eclectic So Long Seven, which showcases Neil Hendry on the mandolin and guitar, Tim Posgate on the banjo, Ravi Naimpally on the tabla and the remarkably young (barely out of his teens) William Lamoureux on the violin. With this unusual blend of instruments, and a collective and unmistakable jazz sensibility, So Long Seven’s highly organized, mostly non-hierarchical approach to composition and improvisation constitutes what I would call cross-cultural chamber music.

A year ago – almost to the day, as I write this – the band released their eponymous debut album, a colourful and contemplative work of art, and a formidable effort that will be tough to follow.

Aside from the quality of the music, what captures me about this album is the fact that, from top to bottom, each tune seems to share a goal; this is not just a collection of tracks that will demonstrate the versatility and skill of a band, but a cohesive work that is united by one purpose. What that purpose is, I suppose, up to each individual listener. When the music has no words, it can be tough to pinpoint or articulate these things, even though you may have a strong sense of them. My first instinct would be to call it music to meditate to, but that may be too restrictive since not everyone meditates (and I don’t).

I’ll call it music to think to.

My favourite track by far is the one which opens the album, Torch River Rail Company. The introspective and rhythmically driven melody, which rolls like a train over the five-beat pattern that underlies it, maintains its momentum through these almost arbitrary – though definitely not arbitrary – pauses; as Lamoureux takes his bow off the strings, or as the rhythm section freezes, you can almost hear it continue, and you are not the least bit startled when it comes back in. The melody and accompaniment – separately – continue to weave in and out like that, and it’s fascinating to hear.

You’ll have two opportunities to hear So Long Seven in Southern Ontario this month. If you’re in or around Hamilton, you can catch them at Artword Arbar on April 7; if you live closer to Toronto and you aren’t able to get out to Hamilton, you can catch up with them the very next day, April 8, at the Small World Music Centre, a short walking distance from the corner of Dundas and Ossington.

I’ll level with you on this one, while I’m confident that I’ve seen all the footage of them that exists on the Internet, I’ve never seen So Long Seven live. I have a friend who used to invite me to their shows constantly back when they were known as Oolong 7, but it wasn’t until recently that I started to dive into their recorded music. So if I make it out to Hamilton, I’ll be discovering them right alongside you.

I hope to see you there.

Bob Ben is The WholeNote’s jazz listings editor. He can be reached at jazz@thewholenote.com.
Grossman’s Tavern
379 Spadina Ave. 416-368-1920
grossmanstavern.com (full schedule)
All shows: PWYC.
All shows: No cover (unless otherwise noted).
April 1, 15 (voice)
Cockburn – featuring Elizabeth Sheppard
April 1, 13
Stan Chang & Erick Bruck.
April 16
Kent & Harry's Sidewalk Revival.
April 17
Every Mon Viel Brathwaite. April 7, 14 Gyles. April 21 J.W.T.
Harlem Restaurant
67 Richmond St. E. 416-368-1920
harlemrestaurant.com (full schedule)
All shows: 7:30-11pm (unless otherwise noted). Call for cover charge info.
Every Mon Neil Brathwaite. April 7, 14 Gyles. April 21 J.W.T.
Hirut Cafe and Restaurant
2050 Danforth Ave. 416-551-7560
Every Sun 3pm Open Mic with Nicola Vaughan PWYC. April 2, 9, 23, 30 7:30pm
Eucalyptus Calypso/Dancehall/Reggae/Bossa Nova ensemble residency. April 7 8pm Wally
Brooker and the Concord Jazz Quintet PWYC.
April 8 12pm Sharron Katz & Friends PWYC, 8pm Ernest Lee & Cotton Traffic PWYC ($10 suggested).
April 4, 18 8pm Finger Style Guitar Association PWYC. April 14 8pm Don Naduriak PWYC. April 28 8pm Hirut Hoot Cabaret 5 year anniversary $5.
Home Smith Bar – See Old Mill, The
Jazz Bistro, The
251 Victoria St. 416-363-5299
jazzbistro.ca
April 1 7pm Stephanie Martin $20. April 3 7pm Stephanie Martin $20. April 4 7pm
Jazz FM Sounds of Italy series with Franco D'Andrea $40. April 6, 7 9pm Eliana Cuevas
Quintet. April 8 8pm Coldjack $20. April 9 7pm Adi Braun $20. April 11, 18 8pm Robert
Scott; 8:30pm Robert Scott (piano) & Genevieve Marentette (voice). April 14, 15 8pm The
Nightporters $15(Fri)/$20(Sat). April 16 7pm Nathan Hiltz Trio. April 19 9pm Aj Bridel $20.
April 20 8:30pm Colin Hunter & The Anthony Terpstra Seventet - Mostly Frank $15. April 21,
22 8:30pm Colin Hunter & The Joe Seyl Quartet $15. April 23 7pm Jim Betts: The Betts Yet Tickets purchased through Smile Theatre. April 25 8pm DUFFMUSIC $10.
April 26 8pm John MacMurchy $15. April 28, 29 8pm The Christopher Simmons Trio $15(Fri)/$20(Sat).
Jazz Room, The
Located in the Huether Hotel, 59 King St. N.,
Waterloo, 226-476-1566
kwijazzroom.com (full schedule)
All shows: 8:30pm-11:30pm unless otherwise indicated. Attendees must be 19+.
White Trio $20. April 22 Kite Trio $16. April 28 Derek Hines Quintet $18. April 29 On Topic
Trio $16.
La Revolution
2848 Dundas St. W. 416-766-0746
larev.webs.com
Every Tue 9pm Duets with Peter Hill and featured guests. Every Fri Les Petits Noveaux. Every Sat 7:30pm Saturday Night Jazz (lineup TBA).
Local Gest, The
424 Parliament St. 416-861-9425
localpub.ca (full schedule)
Every Wed 7:30pm Salsa Loca.
Lula Lounge
1585 Dundas St. W. 416-588-0307
lula.ca (full schedule)
April 1 10:30pm Lula All Stars & DJ Santiago Valasquez $15. April 2 10am Michael John-
ston Music Studio’s 10th Annual Recital & Spring Celebrations $18(adv)/$20(door).
April 4 7pm Salisa Loca $20(adv)/$25(door).
April 6 7:15pm Marvin Gaye & Luther Vandross birthday bash $10(adv)/$15(door).
April 7 7:30pm Lula Music and Arts Centre $15; 10:30pm Yani Borrell & DJ Suave $15.
April 8 10:30pm Manny Cardenas & DJ Santiago Valasquez $15. April 9 10am Michael John-
ston Music Studio’s 10th Annual Recital & Spring Celebrations $18(adv)/$20(door).
April 14 7:30pm Sonia Aymy $15; 10:30pm Papiosco y los Ritmicos and DJ Suave $15. April 15 10:30pm La Borinqueña plus DJ Santiago Valasquez $15.
April 18 7pm Don Mills Collegiate Jazz Night $15/gen)/$10(sr)/$5(st). April 21 7:30pm Ferni Lindzon $15; 10:30pm Café Cubaño & DJ Suave $15. April 22 10:30pm Ricky Franco & The P-Crew Orchestra and DJ Santiago Valasquez $15. April 23 2:45pm Fred Penner $15(adv)/$20(door). April 28 7:30pm Scott Kemp Trio $15.
Manhattans Pizza Bistro & Music Club
951 Gordon St. Guelph 519-767-2440
manhattans.ca (full schedule)
All shows: PWYC.
Every Mon Sandy Macdonald. April 1, 13 Joe Luccetta. April 2 Stan Chang & Erick Bruck.
April 4 Kent & Harry’s Sidewalk Revival. April 5, 25 Brad Halls. April 6 Brad Cheeseman
Trio. April 7, 19 Giggles. April 8 Jazz meets blues. April 9, 23 Grace Peters. April 11,
Miry Café
876 Dundas St. W. 647-607-2032
mayorton.com (full schedule)
Mezzetta Restaurant
681 St. Clair Ave. W. 416-658-5687
mezzettarestaurant.com (full schedule)
All shows: 9pm, $8 (unless otherwise noted).
April 5 Jordan Saul & James Brown (guitars). April 12 Kyle Marshall (cello) & Don Ion-
escu (guitar). April 19 Dave Young (bass), Reg
D. In the Clubs (Mostly Jazz)


Monarch Tavern
12 Clinton St. 416-531-5833 themonarchtavern.com (full schedule)
April 3 7:30pm Martin Loomer & His Orange Devils Orchestra $10.

Morgans on the Danforth
1282 Danforth Ave. 416-461-3020 morgansonthedanforth.com (full schedule)
All shows: 2pm-5pm. No cover.
April 30 Lisa Particelli’s Girls’ Night Out East Jazz Jam.

N’awlins Jazz Bar & Dining
299 King St. W. 416-595-1958 nawlins.ca
All shows: No cover/PWYC.
Every Tue 6:30pm Stacie McCaig. Every Wed 7pm Jim Heimeman Trio. Every Thu 8pm Notin’ but the Blues w/ Joe Bowden (drums) and featured vocalists. Every Fri, Sat 8:30pm N’awlins All Star Band - Every Sun 7pm Brooklynn Blackburn.

Nice Bistro, The
117 Brook St. N., Whitby. 905-668-8839 nicebistro.ca (full schedule)
April 12 Farrucius Latin Duo $39.99 (dinner included).
April 26 Paper Moon $39.99 (dinner included).

Old Mill, The
21 Old Mill Rd. 416-236-2641 oldmilltoronto.com
The Home Smith Bar: No reservations. No cover. $20 food/drink minimum. All shows: 7:30pm-10:30pm.
April 10 1pm Vickery (drums) Trio with Mark Eisenman (piano), Neil Swainson (bass). April 4 In Concert and Conversation with Gene DiNori. April 6 Edmonton’s PJ Perry (sax) Trio with Reg Schwager (guitar), Neil Swainson (bass). April 7 Canadian Jazz Quartet: Frank Wright (vibes), Ted Quinlan (guitar), Pat Collins (bass), Don Vickery (drums), feat. John MacMurchy (sax). April 8 Brian Blain (guitar, voice) Blues Campfire with Bill King (piano), Manitoba Hal (ukulele). April 13 Bruce Cassidy (trumpet, flugelhorn, EVI) Trio with Torn Szczesiak (piano, bass), Reg Schwager (guitar, bass). April 15 Lenny Solomon (violin) Trio with Reg Schwager (guitar), Shelly Berger (bass). April 20 Ron Westray (trbome, flugelhorn) Trio with Chris Banks (bass), Daniel Barnes (drums). April 21 Sharon Smith (voice) Trio with Jordan Klappen (piano), Shelley Miller (bass). April 22 Gord Sheard’s (piano, accordion) ‘Sim Alberto’ Quartet.

Paintbox Bistro
555 Dundas St. E. 416-748-0555 paintboxbistro.ca (full schedule)
All shows: 8pm unless otherwise indicated.

Pilot Tavern, The
22 Cumberland Ave. 416-923-5716 thepilot.ca
All shows: 3:30pm. No cover.
April 10 1pm Smith (trumpet, trombone) Quartet with Lorne Lofsky (guitar), Barry Romberg (drums), Jon Mahanaj (bass). April 9 Bernie Senensky Quartet. April 10 1pm Steve Amirlunt (piano) Quartet with Mike Murley (sax), Pat Collins (bass), Ethan Ardell (drums). April 22 Daniel Barnes (drums) Quartet with William Sperandei (trumpet), Evan Farncombe (piano), Paul Novotny (bass).

Poetry Jazz Café
224 Augusta Ave. 416-599-5299 poetryjazzcafe.com (full schedule)
April 11 7pm O’Regan feat. Alex Pangman $20. April 10 1pm Kensington Market Jazz Festival Surprise Event $20. April 25 7pm Billy Newton-Davis $20.

Reposado Bar & Lounge
136 Ossington Ave. 416-532-6474 reposadobar.com (full schedule)
Every Wed Spa vs. Spy vs. Spy. Every Thu, Fri 10pm Reposadists Quartet: Tim Hamel (trumpet), Jon Meyer (bass), Jeff Halischuck (drums), Roberto Rosenman (guitar).

Reservoir Lounge, The
52 Wellington St. W. 416-955-0887 reserviorlounge.com (full schedule).
All shows: 9:45pm
Every Tue, Sat: Tyler Yarema and his Rhythm. Every Thu The Digs. Every Thu Stacey Kaniuk, Mary McKay. Every Fri Dee Dee and the Dirty Martinis.

Rex Hotel Jazz & Blues Bar, The
194 Queen St. W. 416-598-2475 therex.ca (full schedule)
Call for cover charge info.

April 1 12pm The Sinners Choir; 3:30pm George Lake Big Band; 7pm Tedi Parker Quintet; 9:45pm Gene Smith Quintet.
April 2 12pm Excelsior Dixieland Jazz Band; 3:30pm R.C.M. Student Recitals; 7pm Autohahn; 9:30pm Jonno Lightstone’s Klezmognition.
April 3 6:30pm University of Toronto Student Jazz Ensembles; 9:30pm Brooklyn/Texas’ Ghost Note. April 4 6:30pm TBA; 9:30pm Brooklyn/Texas’ Ghost Note. April 5 6:30pm Justin Gray Trio; 9:30pm New York’s Be Bop Brothers. April 6 6:30pm The A/C Unit; 9:30pm New York’s Be Bop Brothers. April 7 4pm Hoggtown Syncopators; 6:30pm Bughalo Squad; 9:45pm Louis Simiao Group. April 8 12pm The Sinners Choir; 3:30pm Paul Reddick; 7pm Parker Abbott Trio; 9:45pm Dave Young Quartet.

Sally Dog Bar & Grill, The
1980 Queen St. E. 416-849-5064 themargestylo.ca (full schedule)
Every Tue, Wed Jazz Night.

Sauce on the Danforth
1376 Danforth Ave. 416-748-1376 sauceonthe danforth.com
All shows: No cover.
April 1 12pm Jai & The Day Drinkers. April 8 Matt Morgan. April 15 The Wanted. April 22 Howard Willet. April 29 Melanie Peterson.

Seven44
(Formerly Chick n’ Deli/ The People’s Chicken) 744 Mount Pleasant Rd. 416-849-7891 seven44.com (full schedule)
All shows: 7:30pm
Every Mon Big Band night.

Tranzac
292 Brunswick Ave. 416-923-8137 tranzac.org
3:4 shows daily, various styles. Mostly PWYC.
Every Mon 10pm Open Mic Mondays. Every Fri 5pm The Friends of Hugh Oliver (folk).
April 2, 16 5pm Monk’s Music. April 14 10pm Peripheral Vision. April 11 10pm Michael Davidson. April 16 7:30pm Diane Robin. April 29 10pm Ken McDonald. April 25 10pm Nick Fraser Presents. April 28 10pm Ryan Driver.
Lectures, Salons, Symposia

● Apr 9: 2:00: Classical Music Club of Toronto, Mozart Mass in C Minor: A selection of recordings (audio and video) relative to one of the great masterpieces of the choral repertoire. For information and location contact John Sharpe 416-896-2549. $25 (annual membership $40; no charge for first-time visitors. Nominal donation accepted to cover cost of refreshments.

● Apr 12: 7:00: North York Central Library. Opera and Revolution: Rebel without a Chance: How Does Louis Riel Draw the Line between Hero and Anti-hero? Audio-visual presentation by Opera Canada editor Wayne Gooding. Harry Somers’ Louis Riel follows seminal political upheavals in Canadian history immediately after Confederation in 1867; these events helped build the young country but also led to the execution of its titular hero. Don Mills Library, 888 Lawrence Ave. E. To register: 416-395-5710. Free.

● Apr 21: 9:00-7:30pm: 35th Annual Canadian Music Week. Music Cities Summit: The Mastering of a Music City. Exploring the relationship between creative city planning and the role music plays in quality-of-life for city residents, with speakers from municipal governments and music industries from around the world including Toronto, Nashville, Milan, Bogota, Detroit, Brooklyn and beyond. Sheraton Centre, 123 Queen St. W. To register: musiccitysummit.com/register/cmww.net/conferences/music-summit/3-day-music-summit

● Apr 21: 9:00-6:00: University of Toronto Faculty of Music / Munk School of Global Affairs. Hearing Riel. Major interdisciplinary symposium investigating the fraught historical subject matter contained in Harry Somers’ opera Louis Riel and its political implications for today. Speakers include Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin, author John Ralston Saul, Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould, Canadian Opera Company Director Peter Hinét, Métis scholar Adam Gaudry and Indigenous rights lawyer Jean Teillet, great-grand niece of Riel. Innis College Town Hall, 2 Sussex Ave. Free tickets may be reserved in advance, beginning April 4, by visiting coc.ca/HearingRiel or by calling the COC Box Office at 416-363-8231. Limit of one ticket per person.

● Apr 22: 10:30am-12:00 noon: Guitar Society of Toronto. Toronto Guitar Weekend: Train like an athlete – Mental and physical strategies from athletics, adapted for musicians. Lecture by Brent Crawford, DMA Candidate, U of Toronto. Church of St. Peter and St. Simon-the-Apostle, 525 Bloor St. E. 416-964-8289; http:// guitArsocietyoftoronto.com/concert-season/avgweekend $15 or all-event registration $35.


Masterclasses


● Apr 23: 10:00-4:00: Guitar Society of Toronto. Toronto Guitar Weekend: Master Class with The Eden Stell Duo. Church of St. Peter and St. Simon-the-Apostle, 525 Bloor St. E. 416-964-8289; guitaristsocietyoftoronto.com/concert-season/avgweekend $15 or all-event registration $35.

Open Houses


Singalongs, Circles

● Apr 01: 7:00: Toronto Gilbert and Sullivan Society. Join us for a fun evening of music and song. St. Andrew’s United Church, 117 Bloor St. E. 416-763-0832. $5 (non-members).


● Apr 19: 7:30: Toronto Shape Note Singing Community. Monthly Sacred Harp Singing. Everyone is welcome, no experience necessary. There are songbooks to borrow from the performance room, Bloor Street United Church, 300 Bloor St. W. 416-837-8784. PWYC donation. 7:00: Short introductory workshop.

Workshops

● Apr 21, 9:30-11:30 pm: Tkaronto’s Indigen Arts. Exploring Sacred Song in Canada from over 150 years. Featuring First Nation vocal artist, Jeremy Dutcher; featuring classically trained Wolastoqian musician, Jeanne Lamon; Toronto’s Tkaronto. Hosted by Tkaronto founder and noted cultural leader, Karen Burke, co-founder of the Toronto Mass Choir and associate professor of gospel choir and church vocals at York U. For more information and access to the Isadore and Beatrice David Foundation Toronto Guitar Weekend: Master Class with The Eden Stell Duo. Church of St. Peter and St. Simon-the-Apostle, 525 Bloor St. E. 416-964-8289; guitaristsocietyoftoronto.com/concert-season/avgweekend $15 or all-event registration $35.

● Apr 23: 2:00: CAMMAC Toronto Region. Reading for singers and instrumentalists of Berlioz’s Te Deum. On Siegel, conductor. Christ Church Deer Park, 1570 Yonge St. 416-386-0258. $10 (614 members).

● Apr 23: 7:00: Southern Ontario Chapter of the Hymn Society. Exploring Sacred Song in Canada from over 150 years with Margaret Leask. We will sing songs from pre-Confederation to Canadian congregational songs of our time. Islington United Church, 25 Burnhamthorpe Rd. 416-694-6436. Free admission.

Margaret Leask
Sunday, April 23rd, 2017 2:30pm - 4:30pm Islington United Church 25 Burnhamthorpe Road

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How Music Matters

VIVIEN FELLEGI

It’s Glee Club choir day at Toronto’s Baycrest Hospital. The grey-haired seniors, all diagnosed with dementia, are seated in a semi-circle in a room with colourful paintings and a big welcome sign. Most of them sit sedately. Some stare into space.

Dr. Amy Clements-Cortes, music therapist and assistant professor, University of Toronto, strides into the room and begins singing to the accompaniment of the keyboard.

Several clients join in and the group begins to awaken. Some tap their toes. Others clap their hands. A few bob their heads. Their eyes brighten as they focus on their conductor. Some don’t sing, but smile quietly. One man sits open-mouthed and lethargic for a while, but eventually grasps the hand of the staff person sitting next to him and pumps it up and down to the beat.

Clements-Cortes beams at the group. “You’re sounding nice,” she says.

Though she’s impressed with the quality of the singing, she’s also pleased by the ability of the music to temporarily revive her clients, many of whom suffer from Alzheimer’s.

Baycrest clients share the condition with about 376,000 Canadians, according to the Alzheimer Society of Canada. The disorder is projected to afflict 625,000 lives by 2032.

The disease is caused by abnormal protein clusters that build up in the brain and clog the connections between individual nerve cells, says Lee Bartel, professor of music at the University of Toronto. Over time the presence of these gummy blobs disrupt the circuits in the brain, barring structures from communicating.

Loss of memory is the hallmark of Alzheimer’s disease. Autobiographical memory, the recall of life events, is one type of recollection degraded by the disorder, says Ashley Vanstone, PhD candidate in clinical psychology at Queen’s. When patients forget pivotal moments in their lives, they lose pieces of themselves and their very sense of identity is shattered. “You see people slipping away from who they are.”

In a Toronto nursing home, the Villa Colombo, resident Maria Mirabelli sits motionless in her wheelchair. Her eyes are glassy, and she’s chewing on air.

The sentimental Italian song, Mama, comes over the speakers, and Mirabelli focuses, smiling softly and clapping. She starts mouthing the words to the song.

Her son John Mirabelli has seen this transformation before, but never fails to be astonished. “It’s incredible – she doesn’t even know my name,” he says.

The music is also inspiring flashbacks from her past, says activity aide Teresa Cribari. It returns her to the days when she cooked in her kitchen on Sundays while listening to the radio. “I think the music soothes her,” says her son. “It’s great to see her like that.”

Music has the uncanny ability to momentarily reanimate clients by activating their fraying memories, says Vanstone. One famous case involved EN, an Alzheimer patient who spoke in garbled sentences but still recognized familiar songs. Researchers concluded that memory for speech and for music resided in different locations in the brain, and the latter was relatively spared even in advanced dementia.

Scientists have since pointed out several mechanisms accounting for the doggedness of musical memory. To pull a tune out of storage you first need to make sense of it, says Vanstone. Compared to speech, music lends itself well to this task, as the grammar of music is internalized early in life. And, unlike in speech, the components of music are replicated – the melody is reinforced by accompanying chords, which are connected to regular rhythms. That means we’re not dependent on any one conveyor of musical meaning. “If your ability to perceive one mode is shaky, you’ve got lots of others.”

Not only can Alzheimer’s patients often recall melodies, they can also remember their lyrics long after they’ve forgotten where they live. The close association between the brain pathways for melody and lyrics accounts for this surprising feat, says Vanstone. “Melody and lyrics are like two parallel tracks joined by rungs – like a ladder. So the memory for melody can support the memory for lyrics.”

But music’s best stunt is its capacity to rekindle the milestones of our lives. These autobiographical memories include landmarks such as graduations and weddings, and are rich in sentiment. Music relies on these emotions to resurrect the recollections, says Vanstone. “Music is very good at conveying feelings – it builds up and lets go, giving a sense of tension and release,” he says. This ability to tap into our deepest passions helps us to draw out the experience that was laid down with the same fervent backdrop.

Music can also aid in recovering memories through its impact on our body’s physiology, says Ryerson PhD candidate Katlyn Peck. Music can stimulate areas of the brain responsible for releasing the chemical dopamine, which helps reconstruct memories. Retrieving a remembrance requires the brain to function at an optimal level of arousal – neither over-stimulated nor under-activated. Music can soothe anxious patients or activate depressed ones, creating the ideal environment for reminiscence.

While memory loss is hard enough for sufferers of Alzheimer’s, this problem can be compounded by depression. In the initial stages of the disease, clients are aware of their declining function. “They become frustrated with themselves when they recognize their problems,” says Clements-Cortes.

Fortunately, attending live concerts can partially reverse this complication, says Michael Thaut, professor of music at the University of Toronto. He led a study in which patients with Alzheimer’s attended nine monthly concerts along with their significant others. He noted striking changes in their moods over the course of the study. “They went from being frozen and inaccessible to smiling and singing along with the music.”

Back at Baycrest, one man with piercing emerald eyes and matching green pants becomes increasingly animated as the hour progresses. He acts out the songs with dramatic facial expressions and theatrical gestures. His baritone voice belts out Love Me Tender, as he gazes wistfully at Clements-Cortes and points his index finger right at her.

“I enjoy expressing myself,” he says. “Today I was expressing love – I can feel what the songs were saying.”

Music bolster the mood many different ways, says Clements-Cortes. For starters, it provides an alternative method of communication when words have become compromised. As well, music stirs
production of endorphins. “These are the chemicals causing the pleasurable runner’s high,” she says. Rapid music also ratchets up arousal, ramping up breathing and heart rate.

Music also gives us a high akin to the glow of good sex or the lure of gambling. MRI scans have shown that listening to music engages the reward centre of the brain and triggers the discharge of the feel-good chemical, dopamine, says Thaut.

Tunes also counteract the immobility of depression. When people listen to music, the part of the brain responsible for movement becomes activated. Even if they continue sitting, their minds are in flight, says Thaut.

Anxiety is another common consequence of Alzheimer’s, says Thaut. As the disease progresses, patients no longer recognize their surroundings, their loved ones, or even their own memories. These deficits leave them feeling disoriented and can lead to agitation – yelling, resisting a bath, or even hitting loved ones.

Gina Scenna wanders up and down the hallways of Villa Colombo. She appears angry and confused. “She’s trying to look for something but she can’t find it,” says behaviour specialist Anna Abrantes. Abrantes puts on her iPod filled with her favourite Italian songs. Scenna’s expression softens. She grabs Abrantes’ hands and starts dancing, bopping up and down in time to the music. When she tires, she sits down calmly, eyes closed, rapt in reverie.

Inspired by the movie Alive Inside, about the benefits of music on dementia, the Alzheimer Society of Toronto supplies free iPods, loaded with individualized music, to clients with dementia.

Our bodies are soothed by music, says Clements-Cortes. We produce oxytocin when we hear pleasant songs. This substance, known as the “cuddle hormone,” is normally released in the presence of our lovers. “It gives us a feeling of contentment.” Listening to familiar tunes is also comforting and dials down our stress hormone, cortisol.

Music can be particularly reassuring to agitated Alzheimer’s patients, says Thaut. Its ability to stir memories back to life reduces clients’ disorientation. “If a person feels more anchored to themselves and to their environments, that makes them more secure.”

Music benefits the caregivers too, says Vanstone. “It’s tremendously rewarding to see their loved ones spark up a little bit.” As well, significant others don’t need to fear the side effects, including falls, which are an inevitable consequence of antipsychotics used to treat agitation.

The choir sings its final song, Shalom Aleichem (Hebrew for “Peace be upon you”). As the last harmonies soar to the ceiling, Clements-Cortes claps her hands. “Great job, excellent,” she says.

She is thrilled with the way music has temporarily turned back the clock on the singers’ lives. “Using music someone enjoys and has a connection to helps to revive their personality,” she says. “It’s like their old self is back for a little bit.”

The man in the green pants walks up to her at the end of the practice. He probably can’t articulate why he feels so stoked after an hour of singing. But he knows one thing. “I love you a bushel and a peck,” he tells his choir leader, referring to the lyrics of one of the golden oldies. Clements-Cortes is moved. “I’m honoured to work as a music therapist. I love seeing the benefits of music in their lives,” she says.

To obtain an iPod for your loved one, see alz.to/get-help/music-project.

April’s child was in fact born in March, in 1927. There is something nearly poetic that his 90th birthday is the same year as Canada’s 150th.

“What I would love to see in Canadian music and probably never will, but still hope, is that there would be pieces from the Canadian repertoire that Canadians would feel they possessed, the way they possess the novels of Margaret Laurence or the paintings of AY Jackson.”

– John Beckwith, the self-described “optimistic pessimist” in conversation with Eitan Cornfield – Canadian Composers Portrait: John Beckwith.

Composer, writer, pianist, teacher, administrator, cyclist and consummate Canadian, John Beckwith was born and grew up in Victoria, BC. His father, whose family settled in Nova Scotia in the 1760s, was a lawyer and his mother was a teacher and a school trustee. Beckwith first came to Toronto at the age of 17 on a piano scholarship.
to study with Alberto Guerrero.

An alumna of the University of Toronto Faculty of Music and an instructor there, he was dean from 1970 to 1977, and founder of the U of T Institute for Canadian Music. At a time when the “serious” music in our relatively young country was largely Eurocentric and classical, Beckwith’s composition students were encouraged to additionally explore all the music of North America – aboriginal music and folksongs, hymns and jazz.

Beckwith’s own oeuvre includes opera and lyric theatre, orchestral and chamber music, choral works and many songs for solo voice. These reflect collaborations too numerous to list – but particularly notable among these is his longtime association with the poet and playwright James Reaney. A former reviewer for the Toronto Star and a CBC scriptwriter and programmer in the 1950s and 1960s, Beckwith has written many articles and books on musical topics. In 1987 he was made a Member of the Order of Canada.

Unheard Of: Memoirs of a Canadian Composer (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012) is Beckwith in his own candid, lively and humourous words: detail-rich reading for anyone interested not only in its writer but also in the Canadian music scene of his lifetime. Eitan Cornfield’s documentary Canadian Composer Portraits: John Beckwith (Centrediscs) features Beckwith himself, but also reflects the colourful fabric of his world, including contributions from family, friends and associates.

Suppose a friendly fellow traveller asks what do you do for a living?

When people asked Violet Archer what she did, she would say she wrote music, and the next question always was, “Yes, but I mean what is your occupation?” When Harry Somers told friendly fellow travellers he wrote music, they always asked “What kind?” to which his reply was “Unpopular music.” Would I reply with one of those composer sarcasms? Yes, probably.

Tell us about that childhood photo. I think it depicts my first bike, but that seems unlikely: the first real bike, maybe. The background is a new home my family moved into in the spring of 1936, which means I had just turned nine.

Your absolute earliest memory of music? Absolute? I wish I could make an interesting answer, but I can’t. I’ve read about “earliest specific memories of music” and once composed a work for children’s voices trying to depict the evolution of musical awareness – it’s called Basic Music. My very early memories (from age five or so): playing in a rhythm band in our living room, organized as a neighbourhood project by my mother; singing and dancing with my young sister to the accompaniment of a wind-up Edison phonograph. The half-inch-thick discs included things like the Coronation March from Le prophète (Meyerbeer) and The Whistler and His Dog.

Musicians in your family? Both my parents sang, played the piano and were active in musical organizations; all my children are musical, two of them professionally. Two of my granddaughters are outstandingly musical but it’s early to say whether they will pursue musical careers.

Where did hearing music fit into your life as a child? I listened to radio constantly and uncritically but came to enjoy specially the orchestral concerts of Toscanini and others, and the Saturday broadcasts from the Met Opera. Thanks to my parents, I attended many live concerts and as a child heard many renowned performers – Rubinstein, Elman, Marian Anderson; astonishing to think that Victoria hosted so many in those rich touring years. I took piano lessons from age six, and sang in a church choir from ages 8 to 13; there was not much of a regular music program at school.

What experiences helped to form your appetite for staged works? I was active in theatre and as a teenager won a scholarship to a summer acting course at the Banff School of Fine Arts. One of the teachers said I was talented and could have a career in professional theatre. I also acted in Toronto during student years and came to know a number of theatre personalities of my generation. This background, yes, was influential for the various stage projects I later worked on.

When and how did composing become part of the picture? It just seemed more and more important starting when I was about eight and increasing gradually through my teens.

Did you ever think you would do something else? You must be kidding...

Please read John Beckwith’s entire interview at thewholenote.com

A new Music’s Children contest will appear next month in our May edition.
**Editor’s Corner**

**David Olds**

Composers In My Lens/
Compositeurs dans mon
objectif (Canadian Music
Centre ISBN 978-1-77136-056-2)
presents a photographic journey
through the world of Canadian
music as documented by André
Leduc over the past three decades.
I might be considered too close
to the subject to write about this
book, but on the other hand that is
exactly why I need to tell the story.
I first met my good friend André
in 1986 at an Esprit Orchestra concert
at Jane Mallett Theatre. One of the
most outgoing people I have ever
encountered, he just wandered
up and started talking about the
concert, the music, life and himself.
At that point I had been producing
and hosting Transfigured Night at
CKLN-FM, a program focusing on contemporary music, for a couple of
years and it was a treat to meet someone who shared my love of that
esoteric medium. We became fast friends and for the next five years
while the show ran its course, he was my number one fan. So there is
my full disclosure/due diligence done.

A commercial photographer by trade, André is also a hobbyist with
a passion for taking portraits and, more to the point, action shots of
the composers whose music, he says, changed his life. With no formal
training in music he simply follows his ears. For years he has told me
that I was his inspiration but, as we have delved back into the depths
of memory, it seems his road to Damascas moment actually predated
our meeting by quite some time. While listening to Radio Canada
one day he heard a piece by François Dompierre that struck him like
a bolt of lightning and he was amazed to learn that it was written
by a Canadian composer and, not only that, by someone who was
still alive! Thus began his love of contemporary music and lifelong
quest of “stalking the wild composer” in his hair, which proves what
I’ve told him time and time again: “It’s not MY fault!” Although I do
admire to being his fellow traveller over the past three decades, intro-
ducing him to composers featured on my radio program and later
bringing him on as the photographer for New Music Concerts when I
started there in 1999. But even there André had made his own inroads
and had taken photographs for NMC for several years until a change
of administration had brought that to an end long before my tenure.
We also took road trips together, to Montreal, on one occasion for the
founding of the Canadian Electroacoustic Community where we met
a number of composers that are featured in the book – notably Francis
Dhomont and Robert Normandeau – and another time to meet with
Jean Papineau-Couture, and to Ottawa where we spent an enchanting
afternoon with Violet Archer, but most of our adventures took place
right here in Toronto.

André built a bond with many of the new music societies in town
and the fruits of these relationships are on display in his marvellous
book. The scope of the project spans generations – from composers
born before the First World War: Murray Adaskin, Otto Joachim, John
Weinzeig and Violet Archer; through the 1920s and 1930s: Harry
Freedman, Harry Somers, John Beckwith, Gilles Tremblay, R. Murray
Schafer, Norma Beecroft and Ann Southam; the 1940s and 1950s: John
Rea, Alex Pauk, Alexina Louie, Gary Kulesha and Linda Bouchard; to
those born in the 1960s and 1970s: Omar Daniel, James Rolfe, Allison
Leduc, Cameron, Chris Paul Harman, Brian Current and André Ristic – to name
literally just a few. Each composer is presented in two frames, on
facing pages, some candid and some obviously posed. Highlights for
me include the iconic shot of Jean Papineau-Couture seated in front of
an open orchestral score wearing a cravat and dress jacket adorned with
his Order of Canada pin; Robert Atkin looking ferocious with his
white mane, flute to his mouth and wearing the small, thick-framed
glasses that were his trademark for so many years; Larry Lake loun-
ging, drink in hand, with a big smile on his face wearing an embroidered
shirt and swanky cowboy boots; and Lori Freedman caught in action with
bass clarinet in hand (and mouth) and contrabass clarinet draped over her shoulder. As the saying goes,
“every picture tells a story” and here we are presented with some
intriguing tales of our musical heritage. The book is available from the
CMC website at musiccentre.ca.

Other than two years of piano lessons begun when I was five which
was allowed to abandon after kicking and screaming during daily
practise sessions throughout that period, my classical music studies
did not begin until after high school. I mentioned in the last issue that
I attended the somewhat experimental Thornlea Secondary School in
its initial years and the music teacher there, Charles Lapointe, has had
a lasting influence on me. Although we didn’t have any formal clas-
sical music in the curriculum – the school bands were a folk club,
a mariachi band, a rock group and an electronic music studio – we
were exposed to a broad spectrum of music, from Isaac Hayes’ Hot
Buttered Soul to Honeygzer's Pacific 231. “Charlie” was a cellist and
in my effort to emulate him in the sabbatical year following gradu-
a tion (at least that’s what my mom called it, I thought I was finished
with schooling at that point) I decided to take up that lowest member
of the violin family myself. I did this with cello lessons from Wolfgang
Grunsky and music theory studies through the Royal Conservatory. I
rapidly found that to even partially grasp the basic tenets of composi-
tion I would need to add keyboard to my skill set. I was fortunate that
Thistletown where I grew up was home to a very accomplished piano
teacher, Eliska Albarda, who was sympathetic to my desire to ignore
the syllabus and concentrate on Bach and Bartók, whose music had
become central to my development. Incidentally, her husband, retired
architect Jan Albarda, was an amateur harpsichord maker and when
for a term-end recital one of my pieces was a Bach two-part invention
I had the privilege of performing on an “original” instrument. While
I pursued these formal studies for only a couple of years after high
school, I did find myself going back to Mrs. Albarda some years later
for a bit of remedial study. By this time she had relocated to idyllic
Elora for her final decades – her legacy of a 1913 Rosler grand piano
adorns the Elora Centre for the Arts – and I was living for the summer
in a coach house in Guelph from which I commuted by bicycle for
lessons. To my shame I never returned her copy of Arthur Alexander’s
dition of those two-part inventions published by the Associated
Board of the Royal Schools of Music, but every time I see her hand-
writing on the cover I have fond memories of our times together.
All this is by way of a long-winded introduction to my first CD selection for the month. At the time I was working on my RCM Grade 7 piano, my slightly younger brother Kevin, who was still in high school and had taken up the French horn, was working on one of the Mozart concertos and asked me to accompany him. Although I was simply not up to the challenge, it was an enlightening introduction to these great pieces. I remember my brother going to see Barry Tuckwell performing with the Toronto Symphony and explaining that, with an instrument comprised of 12 feet of coiled tubing, even the best horn players never really know for sure what note will come out. I don’t know if this was a commentary on Tuckwell’s performance or just a general statement. Be that as it may, if the new recording of the Mozart Horn Concertos with Les Violons du Roy (ATMA ADC2 2743) is any indication, Louis-Philippe Marsolais can be fairly confident of his ability to produce the right notes. Touted as Canada’s most active horn soloist, Marsolais is a multiple award-winner with an international solo and chamber career. Since 2009 he has also been principal horn in Yannick Nézet-Séguin’s Orchestre Métropolitain and is a frequent collaborator with Les Violons du Roy. As alluded to above, his intonation is impeccable and his tone is exemplary. This recording includes the three familiar concertos that Mozart completed, all in E-flat (Nos.2-4), plus the two-movement D-Major concerto known as No.1, here in Mozart’s original version completed by modern-day musicologist Robert D. Levin (as opposed to the version by Mozart’s coeval Franz Xaver Stassmayr). Also included is Levin’s edition of the lesser known Rondo Ky7i in E-flat Major. Marsolais provides his own convincing cadenzas in all five works. The disc is completed by the Concerto for Bassoon in B-flat Major K191 featuring the dulcet tone and impressive agility of Mathieu Lussier, who also serves as conductor for the entire project.

I had initially offered this disc to Alison Melville but found myself reneging when I gave it a listen. In the words of my apology to her: It’s my formative years is Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No.1, here in Rachmaninoff’s transcription for solo piano of the St. Matthew Passion directed by Peter Sellars. I kept the companion set, Johann Sebastian Bach: Johannes-Passion (Berliner Philharmoniker Recordings BPHR 140031, 2 DVDs and 1 Blu-ray disc) for myself and I will echo Bruce’s opinion that one should start with the bonus features. In Andy King-Dabbs’ interview with conductor Sir Simon Rattle and stage director Peter Sellars, he asks each about their first encounters with the work. My own was a sort of epiphany. As an aspiring cellist, in my middle years I joined CAMMAC (Canadian Amateur Musicians) one summer and headed off to music camp in Quebec for an intensive week of music making with about 100 other amateurs under the supervision of some very accomplished professionals. (As a matter of fact, one of my chamber music coaches was an arrangement as possible” says Goodyear, “with all of the orchestral elements there – the woodwinds, the brass, so it doesn’t feel like the audience is missing anything – it’s all there.” I would have to say that he succeeds. And when I said just a single instrument, I will note that there is one exception to this: At the outset of the pitched battle between the Nutcracker and the Mouse King we are momentarily startled by the sharp crack of a slapstick which announces the Keystone Kops-like action sequence. All in all, this is an outstanding and exhilarating achievement and I’m sorry it took so long to come to my attention. Insider’s note: Goodyear’s next recording features works by Maurice Ravel (Jeux d’eau, Sonatine, Miroirs, Gaspard de la nuit and Pavane pour une enfant defunte) and will be released by Orchid Classics in May.

Elsewhere in these pages you will find Bruce Surtees’ appreciation of the Berlin Philharmonic’s production of the St. Matthew Passion directed by Peter Sellars. I kept the companion set, Johann Sebastian Bach: Johannes-Passion (Berliner Philharmoniker Recordings BPHR 140031, 2 DVDs and 1 Blu-ray disc) for myself and I will echo Bruce’s opinion that one should start with the bonus features. In Andy King-Dabbs’ interview with conductor Sir Simon Rattle and stage director Peter Sellars, he asks each about their first encounters with the work. My own was a sort of epiphany. As an aspiring cellist, in my middle years I joined CAMMAC (Canadian Amateur Musicians) one summer and headed off to music camp in Quebec for an intensive week of music making with about 100 other amateurs under the supervision of some very accomplished professionals. (As a matter of fact, one of my chamber music coaches was an arrangement as possible” says Goodyear, “with all of the orchestral elements there – the woodwinds, the brass, so it doesn’t feel like the audience is missing anything – it’s all there.” I would have to say that he succeeds. And when I said just a single instrument, I will note that there is one exception to this: At the outset of the pitched battle between the Nutcracker and the Mouse King we are momentarily startled by the sharp crack of a slapstick which announces the Keystone Kops-like action sequence. All in all, this is an outstanding and exhilarating achievement and I’m sorry it took so long to come to my attention. Insider’s note: Goodyear’s next recording features works by Maurice Ravel (Jeux d’eau, Sonatine, Miroirs, Gaspard de la nuit and Pavane pour une enfant defunte) and will be released by Orchid Classics in May.

All these reviews (see ads below) have been enhanced online at TheWholeNote.com/Listening
stringen Attached

Terry Robbins

It’s been quite a while since the terrific 2012 debut CD of Toronto’s Windermere String Quartet, but their second CD release turns out to have been well worth the wait. The ensemble’s name is usually followed by “on period instruments,” but their repertoire has never been restricted to works from the Classical period and their regular concert series frequently features world premières of new works by Canadian composers.

Their sophomore CD, Inner Landscapes (Pipistrelle PIP 1216) follows this same pattern, with Beethoven’s Quartet in F Minor Op.95 and Mendelssohn’s Quartet in A Minor Op.13 acting as bookends to Traces of a Silent Landscape, a 2011 work by Canadian composer Robert Rival that was commissioned by the quartet.

The Beethoven and Mendelssohn works both receive exemplary performances, with intimate and sensitive playing that never lacks strength and power when needed. The Mendelssohn in particular has an achingly beautiful slow movement and a simply dazzling Presto. All the hallmarks of this ensemble’s playing are here: a judicious use of vibrato; delicate nuances; excellent dynamics; finely judged tempos; and an overall balance that always allows the identity of the individual instruments to be clearly felt.

The Rival quartet, which was inspired by a snowshoe trek in Algonquin Park in the dead of winter, is a striking and very effective work, quite modern in style but with clear traditional roots. One gets the immediate impression that the quiet, wispy nature of the music is not only perfectly suited to the particular sounds that these period instruments produce but was also inspired by them, a feeling confirmed by the composer, who says that while composing the work he had in mind “...the subdued, airy quality of gut strings and the sparing use of vibrato, in particular.” The delicate ending of the final Forest’s Lullaby is quite stunning.

Rival also paid tribute to the two works with which his new work would be premiered – and which accompany its CD in a re-creation of that recital – by starting with a slow fugue; both the Beethoven and Mendelssohn quartets incorporate fugues in their slow movements.

What continually impresses me about this ensemble is the way they can convey depth, conviction and an emotional range and intensity without ever overwhelming you with either volume or gesture. It’s very easy to imagine that the Beethoven and Mendelssohn works sounded like this at their premières, but very difficult to imagine that they sounded better.

Recorded at the wonderful St. Anne’s Anglican Church in Toronto’s west end with the always-reliable Norbert Kraft as engineer, the sound is exemplary, catching every delicate nuance in another outstanding CD from the Windermere players. Hopefully we won’t have to wait another five years for their next one.

Concert note: The Windermere Quartet presents “Mozart by Any Other Name” including works by Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, Rossini, Joseph Kraus and Mozart at St. Olave’s Anglican Church on April 2.

violinist Michelle Seto who, I see from the personnel list on the Mozart disc mentioned above, is still a core member of Les Violons du Roy.) Check-in at the camp – a rustic lodge on the edge of Lake MacDonald – was on a Sunday afternoon and our first musical gathering took place that evening. It was my first experience of playing in a large ensemble and I approached it with equal amounts of excitement and trepidation. I had to be quite modern in style but with clear traditional roots. One of the violins to be clearly felt.

All the hallmarks of this ensemble’s playing are here: a judicial use of strength and power when needed. The Mendelssohn in particular has performances, with intimate and sensitive playing that never lacks effect. The effects gradually draw us in and become an inherent part of the drama as it unfolds. All of the vocal soloists are outstanding, but particular mention must be made of Mark Padmore (Evangelist), Christian Gerhaher (Pilate) and Roderick Williams (Jesus) who is blindfolded and in uncomfortable positions through much of the action. It is worthy of note that all the vocalists, soloists and choristers (!) alike sing for the entire two hours from memory, and Rattle conducts without a score. This is a stunning production and I highly recommend it.

Concert note: On April 1 the Guelph Chamber Choir presents the St. John Passion with James McLean (Evangelist), Daniel Lichiti (Jesus), Gordon Burnett (Pilate) and Orchestra Viva under Gerald Neufeld’s direction at the River Run Centre in Guelph. On April 2 it will be presented in Toronto by the Choir of St. Peter and St. Simon-the-Apostle Anglican Church with Lenard Whiting (Evangelist) and members of the Canadian Sinfonietta. Robin Davis conducting.

We welcome your feedback and invite submissions. CDs and comments should be sent to: DISCoveries, WholeNote Media Inc., The Centre for Social Innovation, 503 – 720 Bathurst St. Toronto ON M5S 2R4. We also encourage you to visit our website “thewholenote.com” where you can find enhanced reviews in the Listening Room with audio samples and direct links to performers, composers and record labels.

Dave/Old, DISCoveries Editor
discoveries@thewholenote.com
Given his wonderful playing on the Mozart concerto DVD reviewed here last month, I was delighted to see that this month’s offerings included a new CD of Henning Kraggerud playing Nordic Violin Concertos with Bjarte Engeset conducting the Malmö Symphony Orchestra (Naxos 8.573738). The Violin Concerto Op.28 by Johan Halvorsen is paired with the Violin Concerto Op.33 of Carl Nielsen, with the well-known Romance of Johan Svendsen completing the disc.

The concerto by the Norwegian Halvorsen (1864-1935) has an interesting story. He was an outstanding violinist and a self-taught composer, and his violin concerto was introduced by the 18-year-old Canadian violinist Kathleen Parlow in the Netherlands in 1909. After only a handful of performances by Parlow the work was not played again during Halvorsen’s lifetime. When he retired in 1929 he destroyed several of his manuscripts, his wife stating after his death that she believed the concerto to be among them. But in 2015 the score and parts were discovered in Parlow’s papers in the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Music Library, where they had resided since 1963. Kraggerud gave the first modern performances in Norway last July, making this world premiere commercial recording in Sweden a short while later. It’s a lovely work, full of lyrical themes and redolent of Norwegian folk music, with more than a hint of Hardanger fiddle music. The solo part is technically demanding, but Kraggerud is clearly in his element with a work which will hopefully find a place in the regular repertoire.

The Nielsen concerto, written just a few years after the Halvorsen in 1911, continues to be a work which should be much better known, but hopefully this is changing. Haggerud’s terrific performance here coming not long after Baiba Skride’s equally excellent 2015 recording.

A lovely performance of the Svendsen Romance rounds out an outstanding CD.

If you love the Elgar Cello Concerto then you should really try to hear the new Super Audio CD Elgar & Tchaikovsky from the outstanding cellist Johannes Moser with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande under Andrew Manze (PentaTone PTC 5186 570). Moser is simply superb in the emotional work that essentially marked the end of the 62-year-old Elgar’s compositional activity. Written in 1919, it is essentially a lament for the composer’s Edwardian world that was destroyed by the First World War, and Moser beautifully captures the very soul of the music.

Moser notes that both Elgar and Tchaikovsky were looking back to a brighter past – Elgar to the pre-1914 world and Tchaikovsky to the music of Mozart, using an original theme written in Mozartian style as the basis for his Variations on a Rococo Theme Op.33. It’s the original version that is performed here, and not the modified and altered version by the cellist Wilhelm Fitzenhagen that constituted the original 1877 publication and is still frequently heard in the concert hall. Moser’s performance makes you wonder why anyone would ever want to hear the Fitzenhagen version again.

Three shorter Tchaikovsky works for cello and orchestra complete the CD. The Nocturne from Six Pieces for Piano and the famous Andante cantabile from the String Quartet No.1 were both transcribed by the composer, and the Pezzo capriccioso Op.62 is a lovely original work.

Manze and the orchestra supply great support throughout a simply lovely CD.

There’s more excellent quartet playing on Landscapes, the latest CD from Germany’s Schumann Quartett in a program of works by Haydn, Takemitsu, Bartók and Pärt (Berlin Classics 0300878BC). It’s clear that these are works that the quartet – brothers Erik, Ken and Mark Schumann and Estonian violinist Liisa Randalu – has played and cared about for some time.

Haydn’s String Quartet in B-flat Major Op.76 No.4, the “Sunrise” makes for a lovely opening to the CD, the emerging radiance of the opening particularly well captured. Landscape I by the Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu acknowledges the Schumann’s family roots – their mother is Japanese – and is a somewhat bleak piece with a decidedly meditative stillness about it.

Bartók’s String Quartet No.2 Op.17 is an expressive post-Romantic piece written during the First World War when the composer was forced to take a break from his Hungarian folk-song collecting. The folk-music element is clearly present in a work dominated by an air of melancholy.

The final piece, Fratres, by the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, was prepared with the composer and recorded in July 2016 in a church near the Estonian capital of Tallinn. It’s one of several instrumental versions of this very effective work.

The enigmatic Nigel Kennedy is back with another non-classical CD in My World, a program of his own compositions on the German label Neue Meister (0300878NM). Launched just over a year ago, the Berlin label features “…music by artists and composers who recognize no boundaries between the classical
Blechacz plays the Fantasia and Fugue in A Minor BWV 944, the Italian Concerto in F Major BWV 971 at a sustained speed that hasn’t been matched since Alexis Weissenberg broke the sound barrier with his recording in the mid 1960’s. Still, there is striking clarity throughout the first and third movements that happens on this disc.

The Fantasia and Fugue in A Minor BWV 944 offers an unbelievably long and complex fugal subject that cascades through its development section with ease under Blechacz’s hands. He ends the disc with a rapturous performance of Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring – Dame Myra Hess’ arrangement. Blechacz was the winner of the 15th International Chopin Piano Competition. This is his sixth recording for Deutsche Grammophon in addition to a handful of others. You might as well start collecting the CD cover, but it’s a bit misleading both from a participation and expectation viewpoint: the main musicians listed in the booklet are a six-piece guitar, bass and percussion combo, an oboist and an accordionist and anonymous Friends from the named orchestra.

It’s certainly the combo that seems to be front and centre most of the time, and even when there are strings present the sound seems to be more synthesized than live. There’s a clear jazz influence in the Dedications, along with the occasional melismatic Eastern feel, some pleasant melodic writing, and a rhythmic rock-fiddle drive in the number dedicated to O’Connor.

There’s a thicker orchestral sound with much the same feel throughout Three Sisters, but with added electronic effects and more of an improvisatory feel – one wonders just how much of the music was actually notated.

All in all, it’s typical Kennedy – spiky performances of varying effectiveness from a huge talent who simply refuses to follow what could be called standard career paths. When he gets away from the normal classical fare it tends to be hit or miss with him a lot of the time, and which category this particular CD falls under will probably depend on your own musical tastes.

Finally, there’s another recording of the complete Tchaikovsky Works for Violin & Orchestra, this time by the Korean violinist Moonkyung Lee on her debut Navona Records CD (NV6079) with the London Symphony Orchestra under Miran Vaupotić.

Her performance of the Violin Concerto in D Major Op.35 is a competent one which never quite reaches the heights, although the rather lacklustre contribution of the LSO under Vaupotić may well be a contributory factor; certainly the tempos tend to drag in places, and the orchestral balance tends to be a bit muddy and the sound quite dry. It’s a performance that just doesn’t take flight.

The other two works here – the Méditation in D Minor (the original slow movement for the Violin Concerto) and the Sérénade Mélancolique in B-flat Minor Op.26 – fare better, as the soloist’s rather dark tone is more suited to the slower tempos and the minor keys. Certainly the performances seem to get closer to the heart of the music.

The problem, though, is that given the fierce competition in recordings of these works – especially the concerto – a competent performance, while nothing to be sneezed at, will inevitably struggle to compete with the absolutely top-level recordings available.

The soloist’s instrument, incidentally, is the 1845 Vuillaume violin once owned by Jack Benny.
flues. It’s built and voiced to provide the greatest possible dynamic range for the building it occupies.

Hollihan’s clever choice of stops is nowhere more impressive than in his own arrangement of the Italian Concerto BWV971. It’s playful, celebratory and sparkles with colour. Every track on this CD takes advantage of this remarkable instrument and its gifted performer.

Beethoven’s exhaustive treatise on the variation form that we know as the Diabelli Variations Op.120 is the heart of Ronald Brautigam’s latest recording, Beethoven – Diabelli Variations Ronald Brautigam (fortepiano) (BIS-1943). The disc is the final production in Brautigam’s complete set of Beethoven’s works for solo piano, performed on fortepiano.

This alone would suffice to set it apart for special attention. An added feature, however, is its recording on a modern fortepiano modelled on an instrument built by Conrad Graf in 1822. We know that Beethoven admired Graf’s fortepianos and eventually came to own one himself. One of Graf’s unique features was his quadruple stringing of notes, giving added volume and power to the sound – though it must have been a tuning nightmare. The copy used in this recording demonstrates a wide dynamic range and an impressive responsiveness to touch, not only for dynamic expression but in clarity of strike, release and repeat in the very fast passages.

Brautigam concludes the disc with the Six National Airs with Variations Op.105. This is just one of several such sets Beethoven wrote for British publisher George Thomson. The relationship with Thomson helped spark some interest in folk-songs which Beethoven wrote for British publisher George Thomson. The relationship with Thomson helped spark some interest in folk-songs which Beethoven pursued in 15 further sets. The tunes in this one are Welsh, Irish, Scottish and Austrian. Best known among them is The Last Rose of Summer.

The disc is another of the outstanding recordings by Brautigam, produced in a career-long devotion to performance on original instruments that includes the complete keyboard works of Mozart and Haydn.

Mid-30s Icelandic pianist Vikingur Olafsson is a Juilliard graduate and a busy concert performer with a passion for contemporary music. His acquaintance with Philip Glass makes for fascinating reading in the liner notes of his new recording, Philip Glass – (Deutsche Grammophon 479 6918).

The recording is largely devoted to 11 of the 20 Études that Glass wrote between 1999 and 2012. Olafsson plays them from a personal place of detachment but with all the subtlety and nuance they require. His performance of the final Étude No.20 is striking for its otherworldly feel. He relates the story of asking Glass how this one étude came to be so different and how the composer answered that he didn’t know, he just somehow found himself out in space.

The disc also includes the now well-known Opening from Glassworks as its first track. The same piece appears again as the final track, but reworked for piano and string quartet. It’s a very satisfying comparison. The reworked version comes across with richer sonority, and with the piano taking on a much lesser role than might be expected.

Olafsson has produced a very fine performance in a field growing ever more populous. The calibre of his playing assures he will always stand out.

Bruce Levingston is a widely recognized interpreter of Philip Glass’ music. His new 2CD set Dreaming Awake – Philip Glass – Bruce Levingston (Sono Luminus DSL-92205) contains a superbly planned program. Covering a period from 1966 to 2005 the music presents, among others things, an overview of how Glass’ music has evolved.

The earliest work is Wichita Vortex Sutra played by Levingston and narrated by actor Ethan Hawke. Written by poet Allen Ginsberg during the years of the Vietnam War protests, it and the music speak jointly to the injustice of the war and a universal call for peace. It’s a work that reveals more of itself on repeated listening.

Much of the two discs is devoted to ten of Glass’ 20 Études. Written primarily for his personal keyboard practice, they each contain a handful of specific technical challenges. It’s not surprising though that Levingston immediately seizes upon the composer’s creative germ in each of them, and sets them on the creative plane Glass must have intended from the outset.

Levingston gives a rich and colourful performance of the enigmatic, Buddhist-inspired Dreaming Awake. It’s an active work of frequent movement between places of intense feeling and moments of great repose. His playing reveals a deep understanding of the music and its composer.

Compositions for film make up a large part of Glass’ oeuvre. While Metamorphosis No.2 is a frequently recorded work, it is also quoted in the soundtrack of The Thin Blue Line. The Illusionist Suite offers another example of his remarkable writing for the screen.

Levingston is a master in this genre, with complete interpretive access to Glass’ work, whether originating in poetic protest or the cinema, whether written for study or meditation.
An eclectic combination of piano works appears on Natalia Andreeva plays Piano Sonatas – Beethoven, Scriabin, Prokofiev (Divine Art dda 25140). Andreeva is a gifted performer, researcher and teacher. Her program choices are deliberate, balanced and artful. Her approach is methodical, yet inspired. For example, Beethoven’s directions in Sonata No.27 in E Minor Op.90 call for the pianist to play with “liveliness, sensitivity and expression.” Andreeva lets these instructions guide her through a beautifully considered performance of this two-movement work. She takes an especially Romantic posture in the second movement, arguing in her notes that Beethoven always wrote with pictures in his mind. Whatever image emerges from this movement is, according to Andreeva, bound to be one of love. Andreeva builds her phrases with care and balance. Their shape and motion in this sonata are elegant and very often quite exquisite.

Andreeva takes her research seriously, looking for interpretive clues in diaries, letters and other original sources. In the case of the Scriabin Sonata No.10 Op.70, her sleuthing has convinced her that the key to this work’s content is the composer’s notation “radieux” in the score. For Andreeva this single-movement sonata is about light. Consequently, the delicate upper filigree and frequent trills become important textures in the mood Scriabin wants to establish. Andreeva delivers a masterful performance of this 1913 Russian work.

Prokofiev’s Sonata No.2 in D Minor Op.14 is an early work in his series of nine sonatas and dates from almost the same time as the Scriabin. Andreeva’s approach to this underscores the principal traits of Prokofiev’s creative personality: harmonic adventurism, rhythm drive, playful grotesqueness and classicism. Each movement becomes a stage for these elements as Andreeva constructs a complex picture of Prokofiev’s musical world.

Andreeva is a deeply thoughtful artist and definitely worth hearing.

VOCAL

Bach – Matthäus Passion

Berliner Philharmoniker; Sir Simon Rattle; Peter Sellars

Berliner Philharmoniker Recordings

BPHR140021

“Everyone knows it’s the great piece of music in the Western tradition,” affirms Peter Sellars with chorus master Simon Halsey in their 51-minute illuminating discussion of the St. Matthew Passion incorporating Sellars’ staging. The two sat on the stage of the Berlin Philharmonie and talked about aspects of the music and this performance. Here are some of Sellars’ thoughtful musings:

“It’s not theatre, it’s a prayer, a meditation, and I invited them to dedicate the opening chorus to someone they care about, to one who is still with them or maybe someone who is not. Someone who’s leaving the world now or someone who needs their help or thoughts or some act of kindness and to make the performance itself to be the prayer that reaches that person whether they are here or gone. Bach wrote the music for us to place everything we hope and care about into the vessel of this music... This music has been the property of the early music movement for 80 years and which

engaging with itself and working through issues together and talking it out and so equal time is spent playing and singing and listening and being receptive.”

The participants in this performance of April 11, 2010, are Mark Padmore (Evangelist) and Christian Gerhaher (Jesus), together with Camilla Tilling (soprano), Magdalena Kožená (contralto), Topi Lehtipuu (tenor) and Thomas Quasthoff (bass) in the recitatives and arias. Peter Sellars is the stage director and the conductor is Sir Simon Rattle, who has said that this is the best thing he has done.

In every way, this is music-making at the highest level. It is no longer a matter of listening to and watching a group of singers before an orchestra but a depiction of the events behind the words, raising Bach’s great work to a new level of appreciation and understanding. We look forward to the Sellars, Rattle, Padmore, BPO St. John Passion that follows.

If you acquire a copy of this set, I most heartily suggest that you first absorb the complete conversation between chorus master Halsey and the charismatic Sellars, a bonus on these discs. Their appreciation of what you are about to see and hear, how it was achieved and so much more, sets up the performance. As I write this I am re-watching this conversation just for the pleasure of doing so.

Bruce Surtees

Puccini – Turandot

Nina Stemme; Maria Agresta; Aleksandrs Antonenko; Coro e Orchestra del Teatro Alla Scala; Riccardo Chailly

Decca 071 5937

Puccini’s regretfully unfinished Turandot was premiered at La Scala in 1926 under the baton of Toscanini. It was a likely choice to celebrate Milano Expo 2015, directed by Nikolaus Lehnhoff and conducted with passion and vehemence by La Scala’s new music director, Riccardo Chailly. It also features a new ending composed (in 2001) by modernist Luciano Berio that unfortunately does away with the jubilant and exuberant finale that served well for over 80 years and which one would expect after the cruel and terrifying mayhem of this fairy-tale opera.

The opulent and impressive monumental, symmetrical set suggests a timeless, universal rather than explicitly Chinese milieu with an ever-present bloodthirsty crowd of identical gloomy figures in dark gowns and face masks reminiscent of Stanley Kubrick’s Eyes Wide Shut. Gorgeous colours shift according to the mood of each scene and the central focus is the Emperor or the Princess elongated into divine proportions.

True to the spirit of La Scala the singers are top quality. Famous Swedish soprano Nina Stemme (Turandot) has phenomenal presence in her black multi-dimensional costume, her voice impressive as it soars over the theatre in the showstopper Nessun Dorma. The grand tradition of Pavarotti lives on in Aleksandrs Antonenko’s splendid Nessun Dorma. The riddle scene is a spectacular climax with both tenor and soprano in top form dramatically and vocally. Maria Agresta (Liù) was touching, beautifully singing Tanto amore, segreto with a gossamer-like ethereal vocal line. There is a commedia dell’arte quality in the comedy trio of the three Chinese ministers consistent with the surrealistic feel of this unorthodox but impressive and thought-provoking production.

Janos Gardonyi

Alma Mahler – Lieder und Gesange

Catharina Kroeger; Monica Lonero

Brilliant Classics 95469

Alma Schindler was an aspiring composer.
who, in 1900, became a student of Alexander von Zemlinsky (who also became her lover). In December 1901 she became engaged to Gustav Mahler, who did not allow her to compose. He was the composer of the family; she was to be the loving companion and understanding partner of her husband. Such an attitude seems insensitive and draconian but it would not have been uncommon at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1910, at a time of great personal stress, Mahler relented and helped his wife revise five of her songs for publication. After his death two further publications followed: four songs in 1915, five in 1924.

The performance of the Alma Mahler songs is complemented with Patrizia Montanaro’s Canto di Penelpe, in which the protagonist “rejects the role that has been assigned to her by the myth and lays claim to her own autonomy as a woman, a mother and a head of household.” The oblique relevance to the story of Alma is clear.

It is time to move past the notion of Alma Mahler as Gustav’s wife and to listen to the songs in their own right. Several of them are certainly arresting, with surprising harmonies. They are beautifully sung by the soprano Catharina Kroeger. The pianist Monica Lonero is especially fine. I note that in November soprano Barbara Hannigan and pianist Reinbert de Leeuw will perform in Koerner Hall works by members of the Second Viennese School and that the concert will include not only works by Alban Berg and Anton Webern but also songs by Hugo Wolf (a forerunner?) and Alma Mahler. It will be interesting to see how her work will stand up in that context.

Hans de Groot

Sibelius – Kullervo; Kortekangas – Migrations
Lilli Paasikivi; Tommi Hakala; YL Male Voice Choir; Minnesota Orchestra; Osmo Vanska
BIS BIS-9048 SACD

The early 1890s found Sibelius engrossed in the Kalevala and other verses of Finnish poetry that were to become the subject matter of so many of his most celebrated and memorable works. Kullervo, published in 1892, was Sibelius’ first grand symphonic opus. It was his first setting of stories from the Kalevala and is packed with new ideas, revealing first glimpses of many of the composer’s trademark orchestrations, his poetic spirit and his depiction of northern vistas. The work is a symphonic poem in five parts scored for symphony orchestra, male voice choir, mezzo-soprano and baritone. The story tells of a clan massacre, seduction, incest, revenge and suicide. This performance is instantly pleasing, particularly the male choir. Interestingly, between 1892 and the composition of the First Symphony in 1898-99 Sibelius wrote just about all of his many mighty tone poems, Op.8 to 27. The first performance of Kullervo in Canada using Sibelius’ final revisions was in Roy Thomson Hall on May 3, 1986. The soloists were Ritva Auvinen, soprano, and Esa Ruutunen, bass, with the Laulun Ystävät (from Turku, Finland), the Toronto Finnish Male Choir, the Toronto Estonian Male Choir and the CJO Orchestra conducted by Paul Robinson. It was truly a gala event for the city and the who’s who, too.

Olli Kortekangas, born in 1955, studied music theory and composition at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki under the direction of Einojuhani Rautavaara and continued his studies in Berlin with Dieter Schnebel. His music has been featured in concerts and festivals around the world and he is currently working on several domestic and international commissions. Migrations, scored for orchestra, male choir and mezzo was commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra. The English-language text was written by Sheila Packa, a Minnesotan poet of Finnish roots. “I believe that immigration affects families deeply, particularly in relation to borders, language and landscape...many believe that speaking a new language brings out different parts of the self.” Migrations is a narrative poem in seven parts: four sung movements, Two Worlds, Resurrection, The Man Who Lived in a Tree and Music That We Breathe, separated by three instrumental interludes. A suitable disc mate for the Sibelius. The brilliant YL Male Voice Choir was founded in Helsinki in 1883 is deservedly one of the most prominent male choirs in the world. The recorded sound is superb.

Bruce Surtees

In the Stream of Life – Songs by Sibelius
Gerald Finley; Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, Edward Gardner
Chandos SA-CD CHSA 5178

Jean Sibelius, the long-lived national Finnish composer, was in fact brought up in a Swedish-speaking home, studied in Berlin and Vienna and the bulk of his song output was set to Swedish and German poems. Despite that, he came to symbolize Finnish music the same way Edvard Grieg did the Norwegian national school. Incidentally, Grieg was for many years the artistic director of the Bergen Philharmonic heard here, one of the oldest orchestras in the world, ringing in 250 years of continuous existence.

Which brings us to Gerald Finley, everybody’s favourite baritone. This Montreal-born, Ottawa-raised artist, currently living in the UK, received particular attention from the sadly departed (in 2016) Einojuhani Rautavaara, another great Finnish composer. It was Finley for whom Rautavaara composed his brilliant Rubaiyat and orchestrated seven of Sibelius’ songs – In the Stream of Life – originally composed for voice and piano. In fact, these orchestrations turned out to be Rautavaara’s swan song and this world premiere recording was only concluded in the week of his funeral. Finley navigates the complex harmonies of Sibelius’ (and Rautavaara’s) music and the treacherous linguistic ground with mastery and elegance that we have come to expect from him.

The Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra’s playing deserves kudos as well, especially in the tone poem Pohjola’s Daughter. It may be of interest that the current principal conductor in Bergen, Edward Gardner, led the English National Opera in the artistically rich, financially disastrous period from 2007 to 2015. Five stars.

Robert Tomas

Patrick Hawes – Revelation; Beattitudes; Quanta Qualia
Elora Singers; Noel Edison
Naxos 8.573720

Patrick Hawes is a modern British composer and organist living on the Norfolk coast, whose compositions are inspired by nature, literature and his deep Christian faith. His approach to choral music, at least in this recording, is sublimely gentle and tonal. Even with a subject matter such as the Book of Revelation, he eschews such fiery terrors as the “four horseman of the apocalypse” and the “gnashing of teeth,” instead selecting verses that convey anticipation, awe and reverence. Although there are flashes of drama in the antiphonal section Coming with the Clouds and flashes of lightning and thunder appear in From the Throne, the overall impression conveyed in the scoring of this lovely a cappella setting inspires rather than terrorizes. The voicings in Epilogue: The Alpha and the Omega are both mystical and jubilant.

Following this work is Hawes’ setting of The Beattitudes, transcendentally peaceful with music that provides a soothing balm equal to the text. The piano accompaniment performed by Leslie De’Ath is beautifully subtle in its support of the voices. Another notable accompaniment is John Johnson’s alto sax on one of the five stand-alone choral works, Quanta Qualia. This time, the instrumental part is written as a blissful voice to enhance and highlight some ecstatic soprano passages. The Elora Singers deliver a pure
and flawless performance in this collection of heavenly works.  

Dianne Wells

CLASSICAL AND BEYOND

Le Mozart Noir

Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra; Jeanne Lamon

Tafelmusik Media TMK 1031 DVD/CD (tafelmusik.org)

► This is a welcome re-release from 2002, featuring an hour-long DVD documentary on the life of the significant 18th-century Parisian composer Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, who was the son of a slave. There is also a full-length CD recording of several of Saint-Georges’ compositions, as well as a movement of a Leclair violin concerto and a symphony by Gossec.

The docudrama is well-researched and engaging, despite rather stilted dramatic performances in period costume. What is most interesting is R.H. Thomson’s narrated story of Boulogne’s life, the lively Tafelmusik performances, the interviews with his biographer and with Tafelmusik director Jeanne Lamon and soloist Linda Melsted. Together they make a good case for the complexity, grace and beauty of Saint-Georges’ music. One clip of Lamon explaining in detail the beauty of a particular theme and accompaniment is wonderfully articulate and a powerful insider’s explanation of how music is put together.

The DVD is entertaining, educational and quite moving in its presentation of the life of this remarkable and unique musician, athlete and military leader. The accompanying booklet includes a beautifully written essay on Saint-Georges by Charlotte Nediger.

As Tafelmusik heads into a new era with the recent appointment of Elisa Citterio as their music director, this recording is a poignant reminder of what a powerhouse the orchestra has been over the years under Lamon’s direction. The recorded sound is excellent and the performances are first-rate, most notably the solo playing of Melsted and Genevieve Gilardeau.

Larry Beckwith

Concert notes: Tafelmusik presents “Bach: Keeping It in the Family” featuring Alfredo Bernardini, oboe, and Cecilia Bernardini, violin. April 5 through 8 plus a matinee on April 9 at Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre. A chamber offering, “Close Encounters...of the German Kind” will be presented on April 22 at the Temerty Theatre (sold out) and at Heliconian Hall on April 28 (11am). On April 2 the Windermere String Quartet presents “Mozart by Any Other Name” including Chevalier de Saint-Georges’ Quartet In C Minor at St. Olave’s Anglican Church.

New Era – Stamitz; Danzi; Mozart

Andreas Ottensamer; Kammerakademie Potsdam; Emmanuel Pahud; Albrecht Mayer

Decca 481 4711

► Andreas Ottensamer, principal clarinet of the Berlin Philharmonic, has released a delightful assortment of tracks on a disc designed to educate and entertain. New Era refers to the period in Mannheim from the mid- to late-18th century, an epoch in which composers and performers consorted, collaborated and so consolidated what we now call the Classical Style.

Most wind players encounter Johann (père) and Carl (fils) Stamitz, as well as Franz Danzi, en route through undergraduate performance courses. Seldom are these composers heard outside of the academic recital hall, perhaps owing to the tendency in our own era to reduce and highlight, so that we use Mozart as a stand-in for an entire range of musical peaks, as we might with Everest for the Himalayas. These four composers are represented here. For once Mozart’s sublime Concerto K622 is left off the menu in favour of two transcribed arias (from Mitridate and Don Giovanni), and a fantasy on the beloved La ci darem la mano, written by Danzi. For substance, there is a concerto from each Stamitz, and a delightful Concertino by Danzi for clarinet and bassoon (transcribed to great effect for cor anglais). Danzi’s Fantasy is an early iteration of the virtuosic form where a technical tour de force is derived from the music of a popular opera.

Ottensamer plays with fluid precision and a surprisingly bright tone that suits the material; perhaps long gone are the days when to be a member of the Berlin Philharmonic meant using the darkest possible set-up. His articulation is crisp, his intonation trustworthy, and his improvisational cadenzas in the concerti are like riffs in the time-space continuum, somehow joining that New Era with our own. Collaborators include flutist Emmanuel Pahud (on both of Stephan Koncz’ transcriptions of the arias) and Albrecht Mayer on cor anglais, both colleagues of Ottensamer in Berlin, and like him brilliant instrumentalists. The back-up band, Kammerakademie Potsdam, is equally brilliant under the clarinetist’s direction.

Max Christie

Haydn – Symphonies 8 & 84; Violin Concerto in A Major

Aislinn Nosky; Handel and Haydn Society; Harry Christophers

Coro COR16148

► This is the latest in a series of recordings of the symphonies and concertos of Haydn by the Boston-based Handel and Haydn Society, under the dynamic direction of Harry Christophers. The Toronto connection is the orchestra’s concertmaster – and violin soloist on this disc – Aislinn Nosky, a former member of Tafelmusik and one of the driving forces behind J Furloji.

Haydn’s eighth symphony – nicknamed “Le soir” – is a sinfonia concertante, meaning it features solo passages from several of the orchestra’s principals, including Nosky. It’s a great pleasure to hear the freedom, humour and tenderness each soloist brings to their playing and the whole performance has a tremendous buoyancy and elegance to it.

The A-Major concerto is difficult to bring off the page because of its rather pedestrian themes and somewhat predictable turns, but Nosky and Christophers give it a convincing and lively reading. It’s exciting to hear Nosky let loose in the cadenzas, unencumbered by the regular phrasing and symmetry of the main body of each of the movements.

The disc finishes with a glorious performance of Symphony No.84, one of Haydn’s Paris symphonies. Christophers coaxes clean, balanced performances from his charges without sacrificing drama and expressiveness. The second movement goes to some dark places, which are enhanced and deepened by a wonderful attention to dynamics and accents.

It’s clear that Christophers and Nosky are a powerful team. We will await the next Haydn disc with great anticipation.

Larry Beckwith

Strauss – Ariadne auf Naxos; Bourgeois Gentilhomme (Suites)

Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra; JoAnn Falletta

Naxos 8.57346

► Now here is a real gem I wouldn’t mind listening to over and over again. This brand new release from Naxos comes from Buffalo, NY, by an orchestra, one of the best in North America, whose skills were honed by such names as Josef Krips, Lucas Foss, Semyon Bychkov and now led most ably by JoAnn Falletta. If you’ve never heard of or cared for her, you certainly
There is a story of the music of Lully inspired this absolute jewel of incidental music for Molière’s comedy Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, first performed at Chateau Chambord for Louis XIV in 1670. Strauss’ Suite (1912/1920) is written for a small but virtuoso orchestra, difficult and intricate but played here with flair, charm, delicacy and humour one rarely encounters even from the very best conductors. The violin solo by concertmaster William Preucil is an unforgettable delight.

The Suite from Ariadne auf Naxos is quite new (and a world premiere) by a young American, D. Wilson Ochoa, who put it together from the highlights of the opera of the same name. He certainly knew what he was doing and the suite now enriches the concert repertoire like a new symphonic poem by Strauss and surely will be so welcomed. Strauss said once that “melody strikes him like a bolt of lightning from the clear blue sky” and that’s well proven by the exquisite finale when the god Bacchus appears in his radiance curing Ariadne’s sorrows by falling in love with her and we hear wave upon wave of radiant music pouring forth from Falletta’s magic baton.

Janos Gardonyi

Anton Bruckner – The Complete Symphonies Staatskapelle Berlin; Daniel Barenboim Deutsche Grammophon 479 6985

There is a story about Karajan that once when he got sick and had to cancel a few concerts, the Philharmoniker decided on Daniel Barenboim to substitute. As soon as he heard this, Karajan exclaimed “OMG not HIM!” and sick no longer, he jumped out of bed and ran back to conduct.

Barenboim’s approach to Bruckner is different from the holler-than-thou century-old Germanic tradition, trademark of many venerable conductors, mostly dead by now. I remember the great Celibidache stopping the orchestra (the BPO) 15 times before reaching the end of the first bar of the Seventh Symphony to get the opening tremolando just right, his tempo so slow, the symphony ended a half-hour longer than anybody else’s. Now Barenboim, a consummate musician, does not revere anything but the music, making it as enjoyable, interesting, even exciting as possible and his tempi in Bruckner have always been faster, but never rushed. This is true for this new, beautifully recorded set of the nine numbered symphonies, already the third such cycle in his career, but now on his own label Peral Music, under the aegis of Deutsche Grammophon. The orchestra this time is the Berlin Staatskapelle, one of the oldest in the world, once upon a time the Prussian Court orchestra which the maestro, being its director for the last 20 years, had moulded it into perfection. It even gives the famous Berlin Philharmoniker a run for its money.

There is a unified approach, a remarkable consistency, and the orchestral playing is incredibly precise. Most of the players are young, highly skilled, enthusiastic, very devoted to each other and simply revere their conductor. I have watched some of the performances (televised by medici.tv and Mezzo) and his conducting style avoids all histrionics and, being past 70, he budgets his strength and gets maximum effect with very little effort. All performances are solid, high-quality and the symphonies throb with life, infused with rhythmic vitality. One will discover previously unheard details in the tremendously rich orchestral palette and the conductor’s stamp is always felt. The fff outburst in the Largo of the Seventh Symphony has never been more impressive on record and made even me jump out of my seat practically hyperventilating. Incidentally this had been the moment of my own conversion to Bruckner some 40 years ago.

If you want to enjoy Bruckner rather than worship it, this is the set for you.

Janos Gardonyi

Adam Schoenberg – American Symphony; Finding Rothko; Picture Studies Kansas City Symphony; Michael Stern Reference Recordings RR-139 SACD (referencerecordings.com)

Another Schoenberg? Anyone who thinks even one is too many can relax, as Adam Schoenberg (b.1980) bears no relation to Arnold, genealogically or musically. Currently teaching at Occidental College in Los Angeles, he’s a rising star, his tonal, tuneful, colourfully scored music performed by orchestras across the US.

Schoenberg composed Finding Rothko (2006), depictions of four Rothko paintings, while a doctoral student at Juilliard, mentored by John Corigliano. The music successfully mirrors Rothko’s art – atmospheric, meditative and imposing, with shimmering colours that effectively play against each other in unexpected ways.

Schoenberg’s five-movement American Symphony (2011) begins and ends with buoyant optimism, powered by quasi-minimalist ostinatos. Two solemn, slow movements, built on sustained Coplandesque pastoral harmonies, frame the jazzy, syncopated middle movement. Schoenberg says, “I set out to write a modern American symphony that paid homage to our past and looked forward to a brighter future.” Indeed, it all sounds very “American.”

In 2011, the Kansas City Symphony and the city’s Nelson-Atkins Museum commissioned Schoenberg to compose “a 21st-century Pictures at an Exhibition,” based on pieces in the museum’s collection. Picture Studies (2012) depicts paintings by van Gogh, Kandinsky, Miro and Albert Bloch, a Calder sculpture and three photographs. The brilliantly orchestrated music is variously perky, sentimental, velvety and exultant.

Conductor Michael Stern elicits playing with rhythmic brio, precision and wide dynamics in these audience-pleasing works. Whether Schoenberg can create music that digs deeper than “audience-pleasing” still remains to be heard.

Michael Schulman

Scavenger

Amy Brandon

Independent (amybrandon.ca)

The first sounds to greet the listener on Amy Brandon’s debut CD are electronic swirls and squiggles, likely guitar-based and clearly running backwards. Within seconds, however, one is in for a surprise, as the very pure sound of her acoustic, nylon-string guitar emerges. Brandon is a Nova Scotia-based musician whose work here regularly combines contrasting elements: her musical identity is a composite, arising in the gap between the electroacoustic elements and acoustic melodies and improvisations.

On Scavenger, most tracks include these pre-recorded sounds, some of them clearly reworked from her own guitar tapes, others likely using other elements, whether the sound source of the War Games backing tape is thunder, actual combat, a reverb unit or the resonant bass strings of a piano. The results are fascinating, in part because of Brandon’s instrumental approach: it’s a model of classical guitar clarity in the tradition of Segovia, Yepes and Bream, with lyricism and triadic harmony that can suggest idiomatic composers like Villa-Lobos and Rodrigo.

Along the way, Brandon invites others into her musical world. VI. is a duet with the distinguished Montreal jazz guitarist Mike Rud, his glassy sound contrasting with Brandon’s warmth between otherwise similar approaches; in contrast, her duet with Ottawa-based acoustic guitarist Roddy Ellis on Ecuador is a clear mirroring of sound. This is a fascinating debut, and one looks forward to Brandon’s further explorations.

Stuart Broomer
The Quebec City-born, Vancouver-based musical journeyman André Lachance may be better known as one of Canada’s highly prized younger bassists, but he is reincarnated as a guitarist on The Orange Challenge, which also features his dreamy and distinctive writing. The music here is fascinatingly complex. At its dizzying best, it conjures imagery of the guitar equivalent of dancing figures in ice skating, dispatched consummately by the abstract, dramatic and virtuosic ramblings of Lachance. Rush-hour momentum, caffeine highs, ennui, angst and closing-time loneliness are driven powerfully by the guitarist together with swinging, rock-solid contributions from keyboardist Brad Turner, drumming colourist Joe Poole and the sonic lightning of Chris Gestrin’s Moog bass.

It is difficult to single out any chart for special mention, but for sentimental reasons Claude shall receive exactly that. For one, its high and lonesome beauty perfectly describes its inner melancholia. Secondly, it is the perfect dedication to the legendary Canadian drummer Claude Ranger. Understandably, the spotlight is on Poole, who crowns the song with sonic wonders while Lachance caps things with the heart-stopping sadness of his playing. The rest of the music, though, is not as heavy-laden as Claude. Noteworthy are the lovely, swinging miniatures: Life Cycle and The Orange Challenge – the latter informed by an invigorating workout from Turner as well as another fine solo by Poole. The rich and sweet sound and impeccable virtuosity in a spacy and warm acoustic all combine to make this a rather memorable disc. 

Raul da Gama

Sweet Ruby Suite – The Music of Kenny Wheeler
University of Toronto Jazz Orchestra
U of T Jazz (uoftjazz.ca)

The University of Toronto Jazz Orchestra is an 18-member student unit directed by Gordon Foote. On Sweet Ruby Suite, they pay tribute to the late Kenny Wheeler, Canada’s most esteemed jazz composer. The orchestra is joined by singer Norma Winstone, one of Wheeler’s closest collaborators and the distinguished American saxophonist Dave Liebman. The program also pays tribute to one of Wheeler’s finest Canadian chapters, his work as soloist, composer and orchestrator with the Maritime Jazz Orchestra: the group, which featured U of T faculty member Mike Murley, recorded two of the pieces here, the half-hour title suite and the brief W.W. in 2002, and another, Winter Sweet, in 1996.

The U of T orchestra brings admirable precision and taste to the performance, with Foote drawing lustrous brass textures from the ensemble in keeping with Wheeler’s Hindemith-inspired harmonies. Two of the trumpeters are featured as soloists on flugelhorn, Wheeler’s own frequent instrument of choice: Brad Eaton has a lively give-and-take improvisation with Liebman on the sprightly W.W., while Marie Goudy touches on Wheeler’s special lyricism, at once slightly muffled and soaring, on Winter Sweet. Center No.1, which Wheeler performed with both small groups and large, is effectively arranged here by Terry Promane, creating a delicate backdrop for Winstone’s brilliant wordless improvising and Liebman’s rapid, peppering soprano saxophone. The entire program is a worthy homage to Wheeler’s contributions to jazz composition and education.

Stuart Broomer

Trio
Arthur Bull; John Heward; Adam Linson
Ambiance magnetiques AM 229 CD (actuellecd.com)

The title track features Brown and tenor saxophonist Kelly Jefferson in a counterpoint ofcountry blues to it, a vocabulary of elemental life. Bull brings something of the ensemble’s performance belies the great energy and fluidity. The graceful ease fully sculpted lines and Restivo solos with responsive, resembling instead the inevitability, consistency and variegation of water, stone, earth or air.

Given that, there’s still development from piece to piece. There’s a general build in intensity and density as the program progresses: lines become thicker, pitches higher, attacks more percussive; the degree of abstraction grows as it becomes more animated, the notion of a lead voice becomes less appropriate. The absence of ego along with the heightened sense of communion and consistency make this an ideal introduction to improvised music, a kind of folk music of the future.

Stuart Broomer

The Waves
David Restivo
Modica Music MM0015 (modicamusic.com)

David Restivo, one of the country’s most forward-thinking pianists, has employed a time-honoured format for his latest CD, The Waves. The music he has composed for the classic lineup of trumpet, tenor saxophone, piano, bass and drums is modern, challenging and beautiful. The album’s eight tracks are arranged like a suite and reward being listened to in one uninterrupted session.

The opening compositions provide a series of quick segues into the main body of music. The aptly titled Piano Intro showcases Restivo’s harmonically lush and adventurous playing in a solo context and perfectly sets up the band’s entrance on the short piece The Bull and the Roses. Honeydew Harbour settles into a straight eighth, odd-time groove and features Restivo on the Fender Rhodes piano. Trumpet player Alexander Brown builds from a relaxed approach into beautifully sculpted lines and Restivo solos with great energy and fluidity. The graceful ease of the ensemble’s performance belies the complexity of the music.

The title track features Brown and tenor saxophonist Kelly Jefferson in a counterpoint line with Restivo and bassist Luke Sellick that gives way to a deep four-four swing courtesy of drummer Maxwell Roach. Restivo tastefully crafts lines that move in and out of double time. Jefferson starts sparsely, exploring the lower register of his horn and incorporating a restrained yet intense bluesiness. Kurt and Mark, a tribute to guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel and saxophonist Mark Turner, captures the spirit of the two musical comrades from the point of view of a very like-minded peer.

Ted Quinlan
Common Ground
KMJO (Kirk MacDonald Jazz Orchestra)
Addo Records AJR032 (addorecords.com)

► Common Ground, the latest offering from saxophonist/composer Kirk MacDonald, is a major work of uncommon scope and depth. The double-CD set is also somewhat of a retrospective of material drawn from his impressive body of work, set this time in a big-band format by longtime collaborator, arranger and trumpeter Joe Sullivan. Sullivan, who has often worked with MacDonald in both large and small groups, displays an uncanny ability to interpret the composer’s tunes on a grand scale and the results here are outstanding. MacDonald has been generous in his allotment of solo space and the casting on this album is extraordinary, featuring a stellar lineup of Canada’s top jazz musicians.

PJ Perry and Pat LaBarbera are an inspired pairing on the title track. Perry’s beautiful alto tone and bop-ish sensibility sound perfectly at home in the contemporary harmonic context of MacDonald’s music. LaBarbera brings his huge tenor sound to a duet with bassist Neil Swainson for the opening of his solo. It’s a nice dynamic shift and the two master musicians take full advantage of the space it affords before the rest of the rhythm section kicks in and LaBarbera lets loose with impassioned, angular lines.

There are too many similarly brilliant moments to mention here. MacDonald’s rich tenor tone and deep linear concept can be heard several times throughout the album perhaps most notably on the final track Vanda Justinia where he shares solo responsibilities with his daughter, the excellent clarinetist, Virginia Frigault-MacDonald.

Ted Quinlan

Tropical Fun & General Lightness
Pink Saliva
Sono Sordo S02 (actuellecd.com)

► Don’t be fooled by the title of this album by Montreal band Pink Saliva. The two-CD set is anything but light and fun. That’s because the 24 tracks consist of moderated-paced oscillating drones, percussion pivots and brass squeals that in a (Morton) Feldman–like fashion unfold slowly while swirling forward. On the other hand, band members Alexandre St.-Onge who plays electric bass and electronics, Michel F. Côté, whose skill encompasses percussion, steel guitar and all manner of electronics, and Ellwood Epps, who varies his trumpet sound with a series of mutes, are canny enough to limit their compositions to between two and four minutes.

Overall, the tunes’ appeal is in how precisely like light bulbs in a socket, the musicians’ ideas adhere and subsequently illuminate. For instance a track such as Mario & Saliva is measured out in double bass thumps, making rhythmic sense of brass squeaks and hamster-wheel-like cranks, while (I von P) transforms from doom-laden drumming, as it’s opened up with molecule-sized brass bits to reach a theme of satisfying nonchalance. Like its subject matter, Nixon à la télévision shows that the band can be down and dirty in its exposition but by its conclusion use focused string pulses and relaxed drum pops to direct the narrative to soar sympathetically upwards.

Tropical Fun & General Lightness easily proves that the trio members are experts in creating the musical equivalent of Instagram photos or pointed tweets. But without appearing to be too old-fashioned, longer tracks with more extensive solos would demonstrate how well Pink Saliva stacks up against the work of earlier, innovative improvisers.

Ken Waxman

Infinite Distances
Noah Haidu
Cellar Live CL080216 (cellarlive.com)

Masters Legacy Series Vol.1 – Emmet Cohen
Emmet Cohen featuring Jimmy Cobb
Cellar Live CL03161

Sapphire Birds
Maya Rae
Cellar Live CL101816

► The Cellar, Vancouver’s iconic jazz club, may have long-since closed and the hive of activity relocated to Coastal Jazz, but impresario Cory Weeds – the common denominator in it all – has retained executive producer privileges at Cellar Live. Virtually every month something resembling a gleaming gem (or three) pops up on the horizon. Here, for instance, are three such nuggets of plenty – two from American artists and one by a Canadian; or put another way, two featuring gifted pianists – Noah Haidu and Emmet Cohen – and one startling young singer: Maya Rae. As is expected not a ray of daylight separates talent here. In the case of the pianists, styles may be disparate, but intellect and authentic pianism is of one piece. In Rae one is presented with the beckoning voice of a young woman that stands out in solitary splendour from among a crowded field.

Noah Haidu’s jazz abstraction is, not for nothing, called Infinite Distances and is presented in the form of a ten-piece suite of the same name. The title is borrowed from the German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, who suggested: “Among the closest people there remain infinite distances.” In keeping with this inspired Rilke quotation all of the songs included here reflect this profoundly meditative state of being for Haidu, who has also been touched, it would seem, by the mortal nature of humanity. Each of the miniatures in the suite is a beautiful heart-offering, poetically crafted and ornamented by the gifted pianist with an all-star ensemble featuring saxophonist Jon Irabagon, trumpeter Jeremy Pelt and bassist Peter Brendler.

Pianist Emmet Cohen draws on the gifts of the virtuoso drumming and all-around erudite musicianship of Jimmy Cobb to bring his trio recording to fruition with the ubiquitous and supremely talented bassist Yasushi Nakamura. The album includes two quartet features with the vibrato-rich voice of alto saxophonist, Haitian-born Godwin Louis as musical doppelgänger. Cohen’s playing is spry and his right-hand agility is wonderfully complemented by a genuinely expressive left hand punching out chords that recall the many-splendoured stride masters of a bygone era that still beg emulation. His breathtaking introduction to When I Fall in Love – easily the high point of the performance – beckons an ineffably delicate response from the legendary Jimmy Cobb on cymbals. A memorable performance from end to end.

Maya Rae’s disc must surely be a front-runner for many accolades to come. The Vancouver singer is an extraordinarily prodigious talent who is still barely 14 years old and who, even more incredibly, wrote the title track of Sapphire Birds when she was in fourth grade. It is impossible to overstate the genius of Rae who also displays maturity wildly beyond her years in So Caught Up. Showcasing those wondrous “vocalastic” skills, Rae turns up the heat in a fiery version of I Got Rhythm and then knocks it right out of the park with Summertime. There is ample evidence here that the world is Rae’s to conquer. What a coup for Cellar Live to have her on board.

Raul da Gama
Rivers
Shawn Mativetsky
Samskara SAM-3 (shawnmativetsky.com)

In his Indiegogo fundraising campaign video, Montreal tabla player Shawn Mativetsky quips that his album Rivers would be the “first album of solo tabla music to be recorded by a Quebecker!”

Bracketed by footage of what appears to be the St. Lawrence River, Mativetsky continued: “This album would be the way to pay tribute to my guru Pandit Sharda Sahai-jí [of the Benares/Varanasi tabla lineage] who truly desired for his family’s tabla tradition to spread around the world, to be enjoyed by all.”

For well over a decade Mativetsky has been “living fully immersed in the world of tabla and Indian classical music,” but it was only last year he finally felt the time had come to release his first traditional solo tabla album.

Rivers is an apt poetic-geographic metaphor for the project. It refers to both Mativetsky’s home St. Lawrence as well as to the mighty Ganges in his adopted Varanasi, India. The cover photographically mashes up a bare snowbound shore with the other shore featuring the ghats of Varanasi, but the long tracks are truly a one-way “rhythmic journey to Varanasi.”

Mativetsky’s tabla solos are idiomatically accompanied on the bowed dilruba by the veteran Toronto bassist and long-time Hindustani music performer George Koller. They are set in the 16-beat teental, the principal tala (rhythmic cycle) of North Indian classical music.

Koller accompanies the tabla solos with a series of lehars, which are repeated short melodies, providing an aural outline of the tala. Enriching the listening experience, they have wisely chosen lehars in five different ragas, each evoking a distinctive modal and emotional flavour for each tabla section instead of choosing standard practice: a single melody throughout.

The Madhya Laya (medium tempo) track presents fixed tabla compositions, while the Vilambit Laya (slow tempo) track explores the theme-and-variation format with reverse alchemy on modern tunes. Sabor de habanera, a Schiaffini composition, moves from tango to tea dance to something more within the contrapuntal challenge between the trombonist and clarinetist and ends with a Count Basie-like repeated riff. Meanwhile Voci del Deserto, treated as a cousin to Hoagy Carmichael’s Hong Kong Blues, features both free-form reed wiggles from Popolla and sizzling Gene Krupa-styled drums from drummer Nicola Raffone. Relentless polyphony that characterizes the recasting of Jelly Roll Morton’s Cannonball Blues relates both to notated orchestrations with a Native Indian-like lilt that pulls it one way plus slap bass and so-called Jungle effects trumpeting pulling it in another. More distinctively Tontini’s sputtering tongue stops and Schiaffini’s well-modulated slides not only made a perfect topping for the stacked reed trio vamps on Come Sunday but by leaves space for altissimo clarinet puffs. The piece is deconstructed to the extent that the performances – like most of the CD – become timeless.

Timeless too is a 1979 Paris duo between American cornetist/saxophonist Joe McPhee and French saxophonist/clarinetist André Jaume on Nuclear Family (Corbett vs Dempsey CD031 corbettvsdempsey.com). At a time when so-called young lions claimed ownership of all of jazz’s pre-1960s vocabulary and ignoring modern currents, these players presented their own originals alongside classics from the Duke Ellington band, Monk, Coleman and Charles Mingus. With a layer-cake-like recipe of dense and voltaic alto saxophone licks atop guttural bass clarinet slurs, the narrative of Ellington’s Come Sunday is more emotional yet grounded than the Freexielanders’ version. This combination of jump-through-hoops modernism coupled with heart-on-sleeve sentiments conveyed by Jaume’s tenor saxophone isaugured on the preceding Chelsea Bridge and echoed on Nuclear, the free improvisation that follows. With variable snorts and spits nearly electric in output, the half-atonal, half-accessible theme is transformed when the pocket cornet’s sprightly grace notes add a whiff of Come Sunday to the exposition, completed by staccato growls and slurred snarls from reeds and brass. This tiltrope-balancing act between affiliation and avant-garde is expressed throughout, whether the two play off one another’s advances with punchy note nips during Pithecanthropus Erectus or make jittery Blue Monk even more antsy in execution, as Jaume’s outer-space-like bass clarinet rumbling and

Something in the Air
Twisting Classic and Jazz Classics
KEN WAXMAN

Classic jazz, sometimes called Dixieland or trad jazz, can be a path into the music. However since the 100th birthday of recorded jazz passed last month, those who stick to recreating jazz standards of earlier eras are in the position of early music devotees who refuse to consider anything not played on period instruments. Ironically enough, some well-known Free players started out as Dixielanders, including saxophonist Steve Lacy and Toronto artist-pianist Michael Snow, but they soon switched to more challenging fare. Recently a new curiosity has emerged. As a postmodern paradox some advanced improvisers are mixing old-timey classics with free-form sounds with unique results.

Take for instance the Italian octet The Freexielanders on Looking Back, Playing Forward (Rudi Records RRJ032 rudirecords.com) the band brings the same rollicking, texture-stretching freedom to contemporary originals as they do to two-beat tunes that were even considered warhorses in the early 1950s. Yet starting with the first track which blends the hoary St. James Infirmary with Gotta Get to St. Joe, the foot-tapping performance is done with such finesse that it’s obvious that Alberto Popolla’s sparkling clarinet blowing and Giancarlo Schiaffini’s gutbucket trombone slurs would impress during this pseudo-march exposition whether played in 1917 or 2017. This same sort of transplantation is applied to standards like Yardbird Shuffle, borne on trumpeter Aurelio Tontini’s Gabriel-like high chortles and slap bass from Gianfranco Tesedchi; or Black Maria that evolves into a hearty swing-shuffle dance, a Schiaffini and echoed on Nuclear, the free improvisation that follows. With variable snorts and spits nearly electric in output, the half-atonal, half-accessible theme is transformed when the pocket cornet’s sprightly grace notes add a whiff of Come Sunday to the exposition, completed by staccato growls and slurred snarls from reeds and brass. This tiltrope-balancing act between affiliation and avant-garde is expressed throughout, whether the two play off one another’s advances with punchy note nips during Pithecanthropus Erectus or make jittery Blue Monk even more antsy in execution, as Jaume’s outer-space-like bass clarinet rumbling and

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by air/wind movement, and Bach's strong contrapuntal lines flow on the recorder. Of the six arrangements, most satisfying is group member/arranger Raine-Wright’s take on Concerto in D Minor BWV 566. Her focus on Bach's flowing lines and contrasting articulations add colour and clearly emulate the organ sound. Of note is the attention-grabbing high-pitch opening note of her arrangement of the Toccata and Fugue in D Minor BWV 565.

Why jazz? Because Flûte Alors! had a café gig and decided to mix Bach with jazz. Their jazz tracks may not be as astounding as their Bach, but this musical experiment is an evolving work in progress. Fly Me to the Moon opens with contrapuntal Baroque flavours leading to a jazzy pleasant swing-feel rendition of this popular standard. Dick Kooman's The Loggger is a clever mix of classical and jazz with pavement-pounding detached rhythmic patterns driving the piece home. Congratulations to Flûte Alors! for taking programming risks. Their Bach is more memorable, yet their detours to jazz land are pleasant listening, and crucial to the group's artistic development.

Tiina Kilk

McPhee’s tongue slaps and bites break down the theme into atoms before reconstructing it. Echoes of early jazz even work their way into Rue St. Jaume. Here New Orleans-style tongued exaggerations from both saxophonists swirl around the theme like a handkerchief waving at a parade, with high-pitched split tones overlapping with the equivalent of a reverent coda at a jazz funeral.

Pianist Jelly Roll Morton’s jazz funeral took place in 1941, but pianist Dave Burrell and tuba player Bob Stewart pinpoint the adaptability of Morton's arrangements to contemporary setting on The Crave (No Business Records NBLP 100 nobusinessrecords.com) by splitting the program between three Morton compositions and three by Burrell. A commandant stylish, Burrell’s performances bring an Ellington-like refinement to this bare-bones format, opened up on tracks such as his own Pua Mae O’Le. But at the same time, like a couturier who insists on classic detailing on a leading-edge garment he’s crafting, the pianist doesn’t mute echoes of the past, such as primitive blues on Morton’s New Orleans Blues and ragtime reflections on Morton’s The Crave. On the latter Stewart defines the function of a so-called brass bass, buffeting a grounding ostinato alongside the pianist’s jaunty interpretation that also twists tango intimations into jazz, with intelligent pauses and contemporary chord augmentations not upsetting the piece’s terpsichorean orientation. In contrast, the tubist’s dramatic growling, coupled with the pianist’s meditative pace, ups the intense storytelling that is Burrell’s I Am His Brother. Instructively enough Burrell’s savvy conversion of two other Morton tunes points out the lineage between 1920s Ivory ticklers and Monk. These Monkish allusions are especially noticeable on the harder-edged Spanish Swat, where Burrell’s keyboard creaking leads to opaque, moderate and angled patterning. His narrative, which slides from high-pitched glissand to segmented bass chords, is held up like the top man on a human pyramid by Stewart’s puffing continuum. New Orleans Blues is taken at a more leisurely pace than the original, with contemporary note variations pockmarking the stone face of Morton’s original. These improvisations not only stretch the theme with the looseness of a cat chasing a string, but allow the tuba player’s contemporary oom-pah-pahs to march in rhythmic lockstep with Burrell’s deeply felt and relaxed tune elaborations.

With many Monk compositions now nearly 70 years old, they’re as much classic jazz as Morton tunes. On Monk ‘n’ More (Leo Records CD LR 780 leorecords.com), Russian-American pianist Simon Nabatov tries for a similar alchemical updating of five Monk lines by interspersing them among five originals that probe keyboard extensions using live electronics. Nabatov no more takes the Monk canon as immutable than a Talmudist would take the Torah’s words as unavailable for interpretation. Like that scholar’s theories, Nabatov’s explorations provide alternative readings of the pieces. Nabatov’s take on Skippy, for instance, is more herky-jerky than the original, while Oska T. is taken thicker and faster. Using pedal shifting Nabatov adds echoes of the Russian Romantic tradition, while paradoxically emphasizing the tune’s swinging pulse that in turn links it to the blues and stride Morton and Ellington were perfecting in the 1920s and 1930s. Re-harmonized, Pannonica becomes more expansive, with the triplet-timed note colouration adding unexpected tenderness to its habitual angularity. Although most of the electronic experiments are concerned with laboratory-condition-like probes into pitch and timbral extensions, the additional clanging results confirm Monk’s unique orientation. The discontinuous interface on Electroacoustic Extension 4, for example, with its blurry pulses reflecting back onto the initial stop-and-start theme posits how Monk could have utilized computer programming. This is confirmed on Sunrise Twice Redux, the CD’s 14-minute centrepiece. Unfolding like a flower probed by a buzzing bee, unique pitch-bending techniques allow for tone examination, rhythmic asides and protracted pauses that add honeyed chamber music allusions to the jazz and electronics already present.

Gathering these strands together to revamp existing parts of the jazz canon is Nabatov’s contribution to examining classic music from new angles. All of these CDs are instances of how intermingling new ideas and older themes rejuvenates venerable material.
Old Wine, New Bottles | Fine Old Recordings Re-Released

BRUCE SURTEES

The awaited Volume Four of the projected ten-volume Michael Gielen Edition contains 24 distinctive performances of works by a dozen composers with, as in the earlier volumes, the SWR Radio Symphony Orchestra of Baden-Baden and Freiburg plus orchestras of Saarbrucken and Stuttgart (SWRMUSIC 19028CD, 9 CDs).

Born in Dresden in 1927, Gielen was répétiteur at the Vienna State Opera in 1950/51 where he encountered Karajan, Böhm and others, then making his first conducting appearance before the orchestra in 1954. A few of his many subsequent appointments included: from 1969 to 1773, conductor of the Belgian National Orchestra; first guest conductor of the BBC Symphony from 1978 to 1981; music director of the Cincinnati Symphony from 1980 to 1986; and music director of the Berlin State Opera from 1991 to 2012.

All of the performances here are of interest and most works hold your attention through to the last bar, particularly to those familiar with the music from other recordings. None are outrageously different. The subtle variations from the usual, both in phrasing and timpi, are most convincing and do not sound affected. Major works are Schumann’s Scenes from Goethe’s Faust with soloists and choruses, and the Berlioz Requiem; Dvořák’s Violin Concerto (Josef Suk), Cello Concerto (Heinrich Schöff) and the Seventh Symphony; Tchaikovsky’s Fourth and Sixth Symphonies; Josef Suk’s A Summer’s Tale (symphonic poem for large orchestra, Op.29); Schumann’s First Symphony orchestrated by Mahler and Weber’s Der Freischütz Overture and Second Piano Concerto (Ludwig Hoffman). Adding works by Mendelssohn, Smetana, Liszt, Wagner, Rachmaninoff and others makes this an interesting and noteworthy collection, especially the Brahms Cello Sonatas. The version by Fournier and Wilhelm Backhaus (Decca 1955) was almost a permanent resident on my turntable and remains the favourite. There are other two versions, with his son Jean Fonda (Switzerland 1961) and with Rudolf Fireusky (Berlin 1965). There is such a wealth of music here that just about any appropriate composer that comes to mind is heard, from Bach (the cello suites and sonatas) to Gershwin and Vivaldi, from Boccherini to Stravinsky. Anyone interested in the cello will think they’ve died and gone to heaven (as they say).

Karl Böhm – Great Recordings 1953-1972 is the second collection of the late conductor’s memorable recordings for Deutsche Grammophon (4797021, 17 CDs). The first set of 23 discs, Late Recordings, a limited edition, appears to be almost depleted. Well, are these “Great Recordings” great recordings? For this collection there was a project manager and a man responsible for the compilation who had Böhm’s entire oeuvre at his disposal. Where would they start? Not an enviable task but not as impossible as selecting “Böhm’s Greatest Hit” would be. Of course, if he were totally obsessed with original instrument practice he would be the wrong man for the job. Clearly, he wasn’t and listening through these 17 discs there is no question that almost all of these fit the bill. Touching on a few highlights beginning with CD 1, the Eroica is fresh and dynamic, impeccably played by the BPO in December 1961…before any of the Karajans. The 1955 Missa Solemnis on CD 3 with the BPO and Maria Stader, Marianna Radev, Anton Dermota and Josef Greindl is outstanding; however, the BPO Brahms First Symphony from 1959 on CD 4 simply floored me. It is perfectly balanced, driven and totally irresistible. A juggernaut. CDs 6 and 7 contain Böhm’s captivating spontaneous 1967 vision of Haydn’s Season’s with Gundula Janowitz, Peter Schreier, Marti Talvela, the Vienna Singverein and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. CD 8 has Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau in Berlin in 1964 singing Mahler’s Kindertotenlieder and four Rückert-Lieder. No commentary needed here. CDs 9 to 12 contain Mozart Serenades played by members of the BPO, plus the Haffner, the Posthorn, the Serenata notturna, the Grand Partita, the Grand Finale and four Schubert and music by Böhm’s friend Richard Strauss. There are three CDs of Strauss’ most famous tone poems played by the Dresden Staatskapelle orchestra. Including them was a mistake. The performances and recordings are of a lower order and not worthy of inclusion in this collection. There are two excellent CDs devoted to Böhm rehearsing and performing the Schubert’s “Great” C Major Symphony together with “A Life Retold” all about Böhm in German. Still, 14 out of 17 isn’t bad and, who knows, a lot of people might like the Strauss. The project manager did. Full track details at arkivmusic.com.
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with the support of the Floyd Chalmers Foundation, and remounted in 1968. In 1969 Riel was produced for national viewing by CBC Television and this version is now available on DVD through the CMC's Centrediscs label. And of course, this year's new production by the COC, premiering on April 20, stands tall among the many Canada 150 projects.

All that creative fury in 1967 was somewhat lost on me, as I was, at the time of the Canadian centennial, an undergraduate music student at the University of Wisconsin (UW) School of Music in Madison. But then, while prowling the UW music library, I discovered a shiny-new, complete collection of that very same Music and Musicians of Canada series, where I first heard the music of Somers, Freedman, Pentland, Schaefer, John Weinzweig and other Canadian composers. When, in 1970, a Woodrow Wilson International Fellowship aided my choice of the University of Toronto Faculty of Music for graduate study, I realized I would almost certainly meet these, to me, already iconic composers.

The centennial euphoria had died down just a bit when I walked into the University of Toronto Electronic Music Studio (UTEMS) for the first time, in 1970. It wasn’t long before I met flutist/composer Robert Aitken, whose electronic composition, Noesis, was included in a famous Folkways LP, also released in 1967, showcasing UTEMS. This was also the studio in which Somers, together with engineer Lowell Cross, had created the electronic music episodes that appear at various dramatic climaxes in Louis Riel. Beecroft created her mixed media composition, Piece for Bob (commissioned by CBC Radio and composed for Bob Aitken,) at UTEMS as well. It was a facility that was literally dripping with history. Every major composer of the time who included electronic music in their musical language walked through those doors.

It was at this time in the early 1970s that Aitken and Beecroft were working to launch New Music Concerts, an organization that remains one of the leading contemporary music presenters in Canada. And it was through New Music Concerts that I first worked directly with Harry Somers. In 1975, the same year that Louis Riel was revived by the COC, New Music Concerts presented the premiere performance of a work they had commissioned, Somers' Zen, Veats and Emily Dickinson. This is a major work of theatrical music (as opposed to music theatre), in which musicians interact with stage actors who, in turn, deliver passages of text compiled from Zen writings, and poetry by William Butler Yeats and Emily Dickinson. In the course of making the recording of the work, and then preparing its presentation on the CBC network Radio program, Music of Today, Harry and I discovered we had affinities in our respective approaches to music and broad casting. We agreed that we should meet again in the near future and discuss some innovative programming ideas.

In fact, it took more than a year for the meeting to take place, and rather than a meeting, it turned out to be a production. Harry called and asked if I could book a studio and engineer for the “meeting.” He arrived with a large binder filled with sheets containing what appeared to be some sort of graphic notation. Without much conversation, we made our way to the studio. Harry went in to the microphone, as if he meant to record a statement. But instead of speaking, he began with long, drawn-out breaths, repeating several times with contrasting shape and inflection. He gradually transformed these to more voiced sounds, with occasional bursts of pops, shouts, growls and a wide range of vocal effects. Nearly 20 minutes later he returned to the breathing sounds and eventually fell silent. Harry possessed a marvellous, sonorous voice, and he made very effective use of it.

Harry had just given a performance of a work that he had composed for the American vocalist, Cathy Berberian (1925-1983), titled symphonies, concertos, string quartets, sonatas and other instrumental works, Somers' feeling for the voice was one of his greatest gifts, and it’s only natural that he would grow to be a superb and prolific composer of art song, choral music and opera. While in France in 1960, he had taken time to stay at the Abbey of Solesmes where he studied the practice of Gregorian chant. When he and I undertook to prepare the recording that CBC producer Digby Peers and engineer Brian Wood had made of the 1975 revival of Louis Riel at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC for release on a 3-LP Centrediscs release, Harry handed me an extra tape, right at the beginning of the first editing session. It was the opening song of Act 1, in which an unseen “Folksinger” (as the libretto has it) intones the lines, “Riel sits in his chamber o’ state/Wi’ his stolen silver forks and his stolen silver plate...” and so on, in a simple, unadorned style. It was beautifully sung and it was clearly Harry’s own voice. He asked me to replace the version from the performance with this preferred interpretation, which he had re-recorded in some unidentified studio. The song was edited into the assembly, and after several months of further editing and sonic enhancement the recording was mastered and released on Centrediscs. The launch of the recording took place at the University of Guelph during an academic conference, “The Image of Riel in Canadian Culture,” in 1985, the centennial of the death of Louis Riel. In 1988, Somers was commissioned by the COC to write another opera, together with librettist Rod Anderson, Mario and the Magician. It became a larger work than Riel, and it took four years to complete. In the midst of the writing, Somers told me that being an opera composer was a surefire way to bankruptcy, since the work would be so completely all-consuming, there would be no possibility to accept other commissions. To the best of my knowledge, financial disaster was avoided and soon, after the opera was completed, Somers was once again accepting commissions. One of the first works he completed in 1992 was commissioned by CBC Radio, Of Memory and Desire, for Ottawa’s Thirteen Strings. The work was subsequently performed by Esprit Orchestra and recorded for broadcast on Two New Hours. In his introduction to the broadcast of the work, Somers revealed that the source of the title was from the first stanza of T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land: “April is the cruellest month, breeding/ Lilacs out of dead land, mixing/ Memory and desire, stirring/ Dull roots with spring rain.”

Harry Somers died in 1999 at the age of 73. Shortly after his death, a group of us, under the leadership of Barbara Chilcott Somers and Robert Cram, began recording his music for Centrediscs. This 13-CD/DVD series is called A Window on Somers. Needless to say, most of these recordings were broadcast first on CBC Radio’s Two New Hours. And as it turned out, in a moment of intended symmetry, the very last work heard on the final broadcast of Two New Hours, ten years ago, in March 2007, was a rebroadcast of Somers’ Voiceplay.

David Jaeger is a composer, producer and broadcaster based in Toronto.
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