MUSIC THEATRE
Changed by Caroline
R & B’s Jully Black

CONVERSATIONS
On the Early Trail of Indigo
Suba Sankaran & Alison Mackay

OPERA SPOTLIGHT
Speranza Scappucci
Lightning Conductor

JAZZ NOTES
My Funny Valentine
A Brief History

REAR VIEW MIRROR
Beethoven @250
INTRODUCING THE REMENYI EXCLUSIVE

EXCLUSIVE OFFERS DELIVERED MONTHLY TO YOUR INBOX
SIGN UP NOW

www.remenyiexclusive.com

REMEMYI
HOUSE OF MUSIC

210 BLOOR STREET WEST, TORONTO  416.961.3111  REMENYI.COM
THE INDIGO PROJECT

Directed by Elisa Citterio
Created by Alison Mackay in collaboration with Suba Sankaran & Trichy Sankaran

A compelling musical journey exploring the vast social, cultural, and political implications of a powerful blue dye.

Feb 27–Mar 1, 2020
Jeanne Lamon Hall
Trinity-St. Paul's Centre

Mar 3, 2020
George Weston Recital Hall
Meridian Arts Centre (formerly Toronto Centre for the Arts)

With Feet of Blue (Indigo Extraction, South India), detail, Tim McLaughlin, MAIWA

BACH GOLDBERG VARIATIONS

Directed by Elisa Citterio
Apr 22–26, 2020
Trinity-St. Paul's Centre
Apr 28, 2020
Meridian Arts Centre

BACH ST. JOHN PASSION

Directed by Ivars Taurins
Mar 26–29, 2020
Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre

LESS TALK, MORE BACH
Wednesday February 26, 2020
8:00pm Concert | 7:15pm Pre-Concert Chat | Koerner Hall

Electric & Eclectic

ESPRIT ORCHESTRA
Alex Pauk, Founding Music Director & Conductor

Buy Tickets
espritorchestra.com
Koerner Hall Box Office
416 408 0208

Season Sponsor
BMO Bank of Montreal

Follow us

Esprito Spitalfeuer: Electric & Eclectic
Jully Black, at a rehearsal for Caroline or Change (The Musical Stage Co. Jan 30 - Feb 15). I am always so grateful when I get to be in the same room as Jully Black. She radiates joy, and makes people laugh, but has an electric level of concentration when she needs it. She’s an absolute shining light in performance, dazzling! I’m rather in awe of her. Photographing her is an honour and a privilege every time. I’m excited I get to do it yet again in the Caroline or Change dress rehearsal and opening nights! As a photographer, I totally live for subjects like Jully and everything she touches. — Dahlia Katz
Plenty of Nothing

There’s an improv class I take from time to time (that’s comedy improv, not musical improv, by the way) that’s good for lots of things.

Sometimes it’s good for when I am wracked with guilt and beating myself up for having messed up something really important, and need something entirely unimportant to beat myself up over instead—Beethoven called it Die Wut über den verlorenen Groschen, ausgetobt in einer Caprice and you should give it a listen sometime.

Sometimes it’s good as affirmation when I know I can do no wrong because in improv there are no mistakes other than believing there are such things as mistakes.

Sometimes it’s good as a way of affirming that there’s one evening in the deadline-driven world I occupy when I can, if I wish, make a stand and say “sorry I can’t save the world tonight, or go visit your aunt, or come to your concert, or write my editor’s opener that the printer is waiting for. Because, I Have. A. Class. To. Go. To. (It didn’t work tonight, but what the heck.)

Sometimes it’s only good for some laughs during, and a couple of beers after.

But once in a while—perhaps in a very long while—it is good for life-changing revelations, such as the following.

It happens while you are shuffling your feet waiting to make an entrance (because it’s your turn), neither able to empty your mind and trust the moment, not even able to latch onto some carefully prepared nugget, so you can fake spontaneity even though you know you will feel like a fraud on the other side, because at least there would be another side.

It was, in short, the dark 6.45pm Monday evening of the soul. The moment you realize you have nothing. Nothing funny to say. No heart to wander out and mime making a cup of coffee in some imaginary room waiting for one of your fellow improvisers to rescue you. No nugget, so you can fake spontaneity even though you know you will likely never see again. A story to tell your grandchildren, if you ever want to have any after this! Accompaniment is “piano and selected orchestral instruments” and that in itself should be something to behold.

Sometimes it’s good for when I am wracked with guilt and beating myself up for having messed up something really important, and need something entirely unimportant to beat myself up over instead—Beethoven called it Die Wut über den verlorenen Groschen, ausgetobt in einer Caprice and you should give it a listen sometime.

Sometimes it’s good as affirmation when I know I can do no wrong because in improv there are no mistakes other than believing there are such things as mistakes.

Sometimes it’s good as a way of affirming that there’s one evening in the deadline-driven world I occupy when I can, if I wish, make a stand and say “sorry I can’t save the world tonight, or go visit your aunt, or come to your concert, or write my editor’s opener that the printer is waiting for. Because, I Have. A. Class. To. Go. To. (It didn’t work tonight, but what the heck.)

Sometimes it’s only good for some laughs during, and a couple of beers after.

But once in a while—perhaps in a very long while—it is good for life-changing revelations, such as the following.

It happens while you are shuffling your feet waiting to make an entrance (because it’s your turn), neither able to empty your mind and trust the moment, not even able to latch onto some carefully prepared nugget, so you can fake spontaneity even though you know you will feel like a fraud on the other side, because at least there would be another side.

It was, in short, the dark 6.45pm Monday evening of the soul. The moment you realize you have nothing. Nothing funny to say. No heart to wander out and mime making a cup of coffee in some imaginary room waiting for one of your fellow improvisers to rescue you. No nugget, so you can fake spontaneity even though you know you will likely never see again. A story to tell your grandchildren, if you ever want to have any after this! Accompaniment is “piano and selected orchestral instruments” and that in itself should be something to behold.

Two cautionary notes: first, if you go to Rheingold on the Friday, Valentine’s Day, do not, I repeat not try to impress anyone by stealing the ring. Bad things will happen, trust me; and second, if you are still around at the end of Monday’s show, you might want to know that the nearest firehall is at College and Bellevue, just two blocks east.

Lots to read ahead! And lots, musically, as always, to see and hear. And that’s something.
At first, she told me, she had said “No” to the invitation. “I said no to myself, no to my agent, mostly out of fear and dealing with vocal challenges.” Yet, when she realized in hindsight that those challenges were coming from emotional trauma, she began a deep research process into “the connection between silence and holding things in, between emotions and your vocal chords, between spirituality, neural pathways, and cognitive reflexes,” and came to the courageous decision that taking up this invitation would be – a thought she would repeat several times in our conversation – “a great opportunity to be a living witness and example of ‘change your mind and change your life’.”

Although an acclaimed and multiple award-winning performer and recording artist for 20 years, with an impressive list of credits that includes a year as correspondent for CTV’s daily entertainment program eTalk, and hosting various award shows and TV specials, Black had never before performed in a musical. She had been part of the cast of Trey Anthony’s breakout Canadian hit play Da Kink In My Hair that played at the Princess of Wales Theatre in 2005, and repeated her role in a few episodes of the TV series that followed (as well as writing and singing the theme song), but Caroline or Change would be a very different challenge. Caroline is regarded as one of the most powerful female roles in the entire musical theatre canon, and Caroline or Change is sung through, rather than being a mix of songs and dialogue. This would be a physically as well as artistically demanding role and she would be leading a cast of top Canadian performers for a company widely acknowledged to be one of, if not the top, producer of thought-provoking, socially conscious musicals in Canada.

So how did this invitation come about? The first step was back in 2012 when Musical Stage had produced a multiple Dora Award-winning production of Caroline or Change back in 2012 and had been hoping to remount it ever since, but as time passed and the decision was made to build a new production from the ground up, they began exploring the idea with Jully.

As Black told me: “It was about a year after my mom passed, so doing [Uncovered] was about the journey of self-discovery, and ‘What does my life look like now without her?’ It was good for me, something that gave me a little bit of fear, a new challenge that I was taking on, by myself without anyone that I knew. It gave me the chance to strip away the whole imagery of Jully Black and honour another artist by exploring their songs. It was like a new beginning. I felt like I was 16 all over again, discovering that music is the one love that will never leave me.” Black was a great success in this concert and returned to blow audiences away a year later in 2019’s Uncovered: Stevie Wonder & Prince, in particular with a heartbreaking interpretation of Stevie Wonder’s My Cherie Amour, sung as if by a mother giving up her child for adoption.

In between came the invitation to play Caroline in a year’s time. When I asked music director Reza Jacobs if the inspiration of casting Black came from this experience, he said: “Absolutely. Jully has within her tremendous strength and vulnerability and has access to both of those at the same time and that seems integral to the fibre of Caroline, plus, of course, she has that amazing voice.” Artistic director Mitchell Marcus agrees. Musical Stage had produced a multiple Dora Award-winning production of Caroline or Change back in 2012 and had been hoping to remount it ever since, but as time passed and the decision was made to build a new production from the ground up, they began exploring the idea with Jully.

Described by The Boston Globe as “the first great piece of musical theatre of the 21st century,” Caroline or Change, which debuted at New York’s Public Theatre in 2003 and transferred to Broadway in 2004, rests very much on the shoulders of its leading lady. Paraphrasing Marcus’ synopsis: Caroline is a 39-year-old single mother of four, a black maid working for $30 a week in the Jewish Gellman household in 1963 Louisiana. Day in, day out her routine is the same: a bus ride to work, laundry, cooking, cleaning, and a bus ride home. She has long suppressed her feelings of want and need in exchange for getting
Sharing a laugh in the rehearsal hall – internationally renowned Canadian soprano Measha Brueggergosman (left) plays the virtuoso role of the Moon, a gorgeous maternal presence overseeing all, shining her light where the characters need to see, particularly Caroline, played by Jully Black (right).

by and not causing trouble. But this preference for the status quo is rocked when a seemingly inconsequential event occurs: Caroline’s employer instructs her to keep any pocket change that she finds while doing the laundry, as a way to teach Noah – the nine-year-old child of the Gellmans – a lesson about minding his money. With the civil rights movement unfolding around her, years of suppressed feelings of inequity and anger bubble up to the surface from the opportunities that extra pennies and nickels provide.

The powerful semi-autobiographical book by Tony Kushner (Angels in America) and rich score by Jeanine Tesori (Fun Home) have been described by stage director Robert McQueen (who also directed the 2012 production) as “a perfect fusion of text and music.” Music director Jacobs agrees: “As with all of Kushner’s work it’s an entire universe onstage, and it’s really a perfect musical setting.” The score draws on many different styles of music including “Motown, rhythm and blues, klezmer, and various different ages of classical music, but it never comes across as pastiche, Tesori is able to take these different genres and serve the dramatic moment and not make it about the genre. She completely immerses herself in the world and then it seems that she is humble enough to leave without any trace that she was there. There is a clever use of anthropomorphized appliances, particularly the radio played by three women who sing in a variety of different styles to comment, articulate, encourage, frustrate, or sympathize with Caroline. There is also one beautiful sequence where Caroline and her daughter Emmie switch the radio back and forth and the difference you hear in the feeling and vibe of the music encapsulates the difference between the two in generation and attitude.”

This focus on mother and daughter, and the story itself, also had personal echoes for Black whose mother had been a domestic worker for a wealthy white family in Jamaica in the 60s – a family who later helped her emigrate to Canada. This personal connection was part of what encouraged Black’s decision to take on the role of Caroline, to acknowledge her own old personal stories but also to leave them behind, to immerse herself in this character, to jump into a year of
intense training in order to “get to know the blank canvas of Jullyann Inderia Gordon, again.”

The regime she described to me was intense: physical training building up to running 10K while singing or talking to fans online in order to build her stamina and vocal power; working with a vocal coach for the first time in her life (the famed Elaine Overholt) to increase her range from her natural alto soprano; and working weekly with music director Jacobs to learn the score. She is revelling in the rehearsal process which she describes as being like part of a relay team with exceptional teammates, and is working personally every minute to be “very present, to really stand in every word I am singing.”

Two days before we spoke she had had a breakthrough while singing Lot’s Wife that had everyone in the room in tears. This is Caroline’s tour de force solo, described by Jacobs as “a song that has in it all the heartbreak of frustrated dreams butting up against self-imposed limitations and limitations from the world; seeing a blossoming future in your daughter; wanting to move forward but also afraid to; wanting to dissolve and die, but also needing to continue and live.” Immersing herself in this song in rehearsal, Black suddenly realized that Caroline was her mother’s best friend, her “Aunt Jenny” when she was growing up, a woman who, like Caroline, was caught unable to change in spite of the world changing around her.

So much of this story is about ordinary people facing extraordinary change, and all the members of the company I have spoken with talk about how this drew them to the show and how they expect audience members will find it as relatable and cathartic as they do.

Caroline or Change plays at the Winter Garden Theatre January 30 to February 15, coinciding with Black History Month.

When did you two first start talking about this project?” I ask my guests.

It’s January 14, 2020 and The Indigo Project, the latest in a long series of thematically based multimedia projects from the fertile curatorial mind of Tafelmusik’s Alison Mackay, will open on February 27. We sit surrounded by samples of indigo-dyed fabric, some old, some new, some borrowed – all very definitely blue. A fat binder of images from which Raha Javanfar is designing the projections for the show, sits on the table; over the course of the next 45 minutes, Mackay dips into it from time to time.

“Around a year ago …?” Mackay says, looking inquiringly across at Suba Sankaran, her prime collaborator on this project. “These things always take about two years to incubate…maybe a bit before that… I began to think about this as a topic when I was working on Safe Haven. I have always been very inspired by the work of Natalie Zemon Davis – she wrote the first Return of Martin Guerre and she’s in her 90s now – she’s Aaron Davis’ mother, if you know him – and she’s just won, a couple of years ago, this enormous international history prize because she’s one of these cutting-edge people, examining court documents and things like that for written records that give glimpses into the lives of people who, perhaps as the less powerful, fall through the cracks of history. And she has done a lot of work on Sephardic Jewish refugees who went to Surinam and then in turn became plantation owners, and there was one family that were indigo growers there. I asked her to read the Safe Haven script for me, and she had some suggestions; but she also gave me some material about indigo at that time and it made me think, oh this would be a compelling topic! …”
“Compelled” is exactly the right word to describe the effect germinal ideas like these have on Mackay. A voracious reader and indefatigable hunter-gatherer; the fruits of her inquiries spill out in conversation in a stream of “so’s” and “ands” and “buts,” as she weaves, like the shuttle of a loom, the stories of all the trails she followed while the project was coming together.

“And what was the thing that most grabbed you when Alison invited you to collaborate?” I ask Suba Sankaran.

“The whole challenge and specificity of bringing the thing to life,” she replies. “The idea of marrying the story of how indigo travelled, not just geographically and historically, but musically as well. Also the fact of its roots not just being in India, but specifically in South India, is where one of my specialties comes in. And then Alison said ‘I’m thinking about you and one other person to work along with you,’ and I immediately thought of my father, Trichy, as the perfect candidate for that. He was born just outside of Thiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu, which was the heartland for the cultivation of indigofera tinctoria, and also the seat of the musical activity we would need to explore here.”

“It’s been wonderful!” Mackay chimes in. “Often with projects like these, I am out of my own depth musically – relying on the work of scholars...so to be working musically with collaborators you always hope for someone who’s not only a dynamite performer but also has some scholarly knowledge of the repertoire as it might have been in the 17th and 18th centuries, and so you can only imagine how thrilled I was to have Suba and her father [Trichy Sankaran is a Carnatic master percussionist, composer, scholar and educator], who have so much knowledge and very, very deep historical roots to share.”

“For your father, was the fact that this is all so specific to his own birthplace and musical tradition a strong incentive to get involved?” I ask Suba Sankaran.

“Absolutely!” she replies, “and on various levels. He and I have a very special connection, especially when we are on stage together. Growing up it was always that beautiful blurry line between daughter and disciple. So there was that aspect. Then, also, there was the aspect of marrying Western and Eastern Hemispheres, with new information being gleaned from both sides. And the fact that it was so close to his birthplace, I think hits very close to home on various levels: everything from his upbringing right through to what we call the gurukula system [how things pass from] the guru to the disciple. He had a very strict upbringing; the chance now to bring the music together with his personal life in his formative years was I think very, very compelling for him.”

“Blue Gold”

For all the major European colonial powers, the economic heft of indigo cake – “blue gold” as it was called – during the time explored in this project is impossible to overstate.

“It became so popular,” Mackay explains, “that once they realized its potential they started to grow it in the plantations in their new colonies: the Dutch, as I already mentioned, in Surinam; the French in Haiti and Louisiana; and then the English a little bit later in South Carolina, and it was really because of that ....”

“Louisiana [named after Louis XIV, King of France from 1643 to 1715] sounds like a cue!” I quip.

“For me it’s always important to tie these projects in authentically to the Tafelmusik repertoire, so it made sense to concentrate on the 17th and 18th centuries,” Mackay replies “and then, also, to bring it up into the present. There are chapters to the story: we begin at the court of Louis XIV because Colbert [French politician who served as Louis’ Minister of Finance] wrote a treatise about indigo dyeing. Colbert had to keep a middle course between this new economically advantageous and technically better dye from the East and the old blue dye of woad...so in every vat of indigo for dyeing in France there had to be a little measure of woad in order to start the fermentation of the vat. I’m sure it didn’t really keep anybody happy, but it may be that it led to an especially gorgeous colour of blue!”

Balancing the Louis XIV court chapter in the narrative is one on the South Indian court of Thanjavur: “There was a music-loving Raja there at the end of the 18th century,” says Mackay, “and he had a library in it with early editions of Corelli and Handel works, for his own edification, from visiting English tradespeople; he also had a musical...
instrument lending library, so that Europeans who were working in the textile trade or various aspects of his business or diplomacy could borrow instruments or editions of music."

"With the British Raj in India you would often have this kind of influence and confluence of cultures and traditions," Sankaran continues. "So there are many stories of how the South Indian composers would hear the marching bands and be influenced in their writing. One example, that unfortunately is on the cutting room floor of our particular project, was quaintly titled "English Note" — where they purposefully decided to eliminate all of the microtonal inflections inherent in the South Indian music. In order to make it sound that much more Western. Very fascinating, and there are many stories like this."

Story follows story as our conversation unfolds: about forced conversion of subsistence economies to cash crop economic production of *indigofera tinctoria* — both in Tamil Nadu and Europe's colonies; about how a six-foot length of dyed "guinea cloth," sailing from Amsterdam to West Africa would buy, and sell, a man into slavery in the indigo and cotton plantations of the New World; about how the word "jeans" derives from the port of Genoa, and the word "denim" from "serge de Nîmes"; about how Handel made his fortune through investments in the South Sea Company with its indigo connections...

Mackay leafs through the binder of images on the table. "This is one of the women who helped to found the London Foundling Hospital that Handel was also so involved with; there she is, dressed in an incredible indigo outfit; and this is a statue outside the boys entrance of a so-called 'blue coat' school, where children of the 'worthy poor' wore blue coats and blue dresses which certainly by the time of Handel were dyed with indigo outfit; and this is a statue outside the boys entrance of a so-called "blue coat" school, where children of the 'worthy poor' wore blue coats and blue dresses which certainly by the time of Handel were dyed with indigo. The students at Marc Garneau found this so interesting — another one of these stories that a piece of cloth will tell."
With a career spanning half a century, renowned Toronto-based percussionist Bob Becker has garnered a global reputation for his instrumental mastery, interpretive skill and rigorous commitment to his art.

Reading road kill on balding tires

In the 1996 issue of Percussive Notes, veteran marimbist Leigh Howard Stevens summed up the prevailing opinion of Becker: “Everybody who knows anything about xylophone knows you are not only the greatest living xylophonist, but also the greatest xylophonist who has ever lived. Everybody who knows anything about ‘world percussion’ knows you are a black belt on tabla and African hand drums. Anyone who has heard you perform the Toru Takemitsu From me flows what you call Time with Nexus knows you have a golden touch on steel drums. Anyone who is familiar with your performances with the Steve Reich Ensemble has to admit that you are a hot marimbist and vibe player, and anybody who knows you well, also knows that you are a superb all-around orchestral percussionist and timpanist who can read road kill on balding tires.”

Having established Becker’s percussion street cred, Stevens cheekily continued, “[but] … how are your drum set chops?” Becker’s equally cheeky reply: “Well, the older I get, the better they used to be.”

Ba dum tsh: truly a drum sting-worthy punchline.

While internationally known as a brilliant percussionist, Becker’s two upcoming concerts in Toronto, early in February 2020, showcase his composer and music director chops – sides of his career becoming more prominent in the last two decades.

February 4, the Bob Becker Ensemble presents “Clear Things May Not Be Seen” at the COC Free Concert Series, with the same program on February 6 on the U of T Faculty of Music free Thursdays at Noon Concert Series in Walter Hall. The four Becker compositions in the concerts all feature vocals by soprano Lindsay Kesselman and mezzo-soprano Andrea Ludwig, as well as Becker on percussion, pianist Midori Koga, marimbist and conductor Christopher Norton, percussionist Louis Pino, plus clarinet and string quartet.
Blending musical cultures

Before touching on those four works, though, I’d like to explore the musical journey Becker has taken to arrive at this point in time. Some of the first compositions of his I heard, Lahara (1977) and Palta (1982), employed an explicitly multicultural approach, cannily morphing elements of Western military-based rudimental drumming with North Indian classical (Hindustani) idioms: tabla drumming and raga. In Hindustani concerts the role of tabla drumming is primarily as a time keeper, though on occasion it transforms into a dialogue between the tabla and the main melodic performer. Becker made use of such tabla playing in his “melodic” writing for the snare drum in Palta, implementing in the music a convincing multicultural music aesthetic. Traces of influences from musical minimalists like Steve Reich, as well as his extensive percussion keyboard work with NEXUS, were also evident stylistic elements.

Becker’s world music education began in earnest at Wesleyan University. He spent four years in its world music program studying with several masters of Javanese, Indian and Ghanaian music.

“Probably the most significant teachers for me at that time were my tabla teacher Sharda Sahai and my African drum teacher Abraham Adzenyah,” noted Becker in Percussive Notes.

As for his 49-year association with NEXUS, Becker once candidly reflected that it “is far more than a musical ensemble of which I happen to be a member. It has been a support group, a forum for composition and experimentation, an educational resource, a financial cushion and an extended family, with all of the joy, sadness, love and craziness that ‘family’ implies.”

The spoken, written and sung word

I asked Becker which of the four works on the February concerts is informed by raga (commonly spelled “raag” in Hindustani music).

“All the works on my February concerts are informed by raga,” Becker stressed. “Mudra (1990) also references Indian music. It was composed for the Toronto choreographer Joan Phillips for her dance work UrbhanaMudra. A 15-minute music suite, Mudra led me to develop the musical language I still use. Over time I’ve found this idea had legs.”

In his article Finding a Voice (in The Cambridge Companion to Percussion, 2016) Becker delineates his idiosyncratic journey incorporating notions of raga into his compositions. “The exquisitely ornamental and melismatic melodic phrases of Indian music,” he wrote, “imply no harmonic direction and hold no cadential tension to be resolved by real or implied triadic progression. … However, my experience was quite different. For someone born and raised in a culture saturated with music based on chord progressions, it is probably inevitable that the mind will supply imagined harmonies when hearing monophonic or heterophonic melodies.”

Music On The Moon, commissioned by Esprit Orchestra, is a 1996 Becker chamber orchestra work informed by raga Chandrakauns. “Chandrakauns has five tones per octave,” Becker observed. “By playing around with these tones, I discovered that stacked vertically they create an ambiguous harmonic space. From a Western perspective, I could construct chords with these stacked notes. I was able to derive some surprisingly elaborate structures, including the matrix of four nine-tone scales currently employed in my music, from this conceptual notion.”

Becker describes this set of principles as “a comprehensive, consistent and personal methodology for handling both melodic and harmonic construction. In that way I explored raga as a source of melody and harmony. As for instrumentation, I usually score for keyboard percussion instruments such as vibraphone, marimba and piano as in Cryin’ Time. In my music, the piano is treated like a percussion instrument while I often treat the percussion instruments as keyboards.”

Bob Becker Ensemble

Becker has been a veteran member of several prominent Canadian and American percussion-based ensembles. When (and why) did he think to establish his own group?

“In the mid-1990’s I formed an ensemble to exclusively perform my music,” he replied, “taking a page from the Steve Reich Ensemble, of which I’m a longtime member. I learned much from Steve in how to combine the roles of performer and composer. His ensemble works

Raga and tala in Becker compositions

Raga is a central concept in Indian music, yet there’s no simple way to describe it in Eurocentric music tradition terms. As I understand it, ragas fall somewhere on the continuum between melody and scale. They can further be characterized as separated by scale, lines of ascent, descent and transilience, emphasized notes and register, modal contour, by intonation and ornamentation.

I asked Becker which of the four works on the February concerts is informed by raga (commonly spelled “raag” in Hindustani music).

““In the mid-1990’s I formed an ensemble to exclusively perform my music,” he replied, “taking a page from the Steve Reich Ensemble, of which I’m a longtime member. I learned much from Steve in how to combine the roles of performer and composer. His ensemble works
Six Pianos (1973) and Music for 18 Musicians (1976) are seminal examples of that [communal creative] process in action. The rehearsals and compositional process went hand in hand, taking a number of months for the full composition to slowly emerge, section by section."

Is there ever a tension between Becker’s career as a percussionist and a composer? “I often play in my own works,” he reflected, “for instance, I’m playing vibes in the February concerts, doing double duty. I’ve always wanted to be in the music. On the other hand, for over 20 years I was on the road as a percussionist for more than half the year and I found it difficult to compose on the road. I need to be ‘in the zone,’ in a dedicated space, when composing.”

Double career of the percussionist-composer
It seems to me, I observed to Becker, that in the Western world the double career of percussionist-composer is a particularly 20th-century phenomenon. Which notable composers who also played percussion have been Becker influences? “I can think of John Cage, Lou Harrison, Harry Partch and the late Michael Colgrass,” he quickly replied. “Of course we should also add Steve Reich, who not only studied Western percussion but also cited West African and Balinese percussion as early influences. Also significant in this context is that Steve was always interested in using musicians with non-Western and early [Western] music backgrounds.”

“In Finding a Voice I discuss composing for percussion,” Becker added. “I’ve kept writing music in a continuously developing manner, building and developing on previous works consciously, as I saw Steve Reich and Philip Glass doing. In my quest as a composer I learned a lot from them...”

February concerts: the compositions
Cryin’ Time (1994) scored for soprano solo, vibraphone, marimba and piano features lyrics adapted from a poem by Canadian artist Sandra Meigs. It tells the troubling story of a young mother who accidentally drops her baby into a deep river canyon; yet it’s told in an anomalously matter-of-fact narrative style redolent of a hurtin’ country song. “I wanted my music to play even more on this ambiguity, which was the reason for adapting the text (done with the artist’s permission),” writes Becker in his program notes. The eight-minute work closes ominously with an enigmatically dense chord on the piano, while the keyboard percussion supplies low tremolos and arpeggiated figures.

Never In Word (1998) is also scored for soprano, piano and keyboard percussion. Its lyrics are drawn from a short poem by the American author Conrad Aiken (1889-1973), long one of Becker’s favourite poets, one of series of 96 poems under the collective title Time in the Rock (1932, 1953). Aiken begins his poem with a comparison of the merits of music and poetry. Becker’s vocal melody moves between cantabile lines and disjunct leaps, the instruments effectively echoing, underpinning and contesting it.

The remaining two songs on the February program represent Becker’s most recent work. To Immortal Bloom (2017) is for soprano, vibraphone, piano and cello, with lyrics also derived from Aiken, here poem XXI of Preludes for Memnon (1931). “The obvious musical and numerical references, as well as a feeling of reverie in the concluding imagery, were the inspiration for the musical setting,” writes Becker.

Clear Things May Not Be Seen (2018) ups the vocal and instrumental ante. Scored for two soprano soloists plus string quartet, clarinet, bass clarinet, marimba and vibraphone, the song’s lyrics once more borrow from Aiken’s epic cycle Time in the Rock – this time from three different poems. At 13 minutes it also clocks in nearly twice as long as To Immortal Bloom, reflecting Becker’s expanding compositional ambitions.

Becker has thought long and deep about what it means to be both a composer and performing musician today. “… Am I a percussionist-composer or a composer-percussionist?” he asks in Finding a Voice. “Although I still may be in transition from the former, the principles and rules I need to function as the latter are firmly in place in my work,” begins his answer, concluding with, “If percussionists recognize me to be a composer, and composers consider me to be a percussionist, perhaps that is the best of both worlds.

Andrew Timar is a Toronto musician and music writer. He can be contacted at worldmusic@thewholenote.com.
Will there come a time when we journalists will be able to stop making a big deal out of women conductors? We are not there yet – systemic barriers in the profession remain all too real – but the fact that we can already see such a time on the horizon is thanks to the critical cohort of women in their 30s, 40s and 50s who have more than paid their dues in the industry and are now toppling the dams everywhere, finding themselves equally at home in opera and symphonic music, and combining associate principal positions with at least one directorship. We are talking people like Susanna Mälkki, Xian Zhang, Keri-Lynn Wilson, Dalia Stasevska, Gemma New, Han-na Chang, and the conductor currently in charge of the COC’s The Barber of Seville (January 19 to February 7), Speranza Scappucci.

Piano study since the age of five; degrees from the Conservatory of Music Santa Cecilia in Rome and the Juilliard School; nine years as the rehearsal conductor with Ricardo Muti; 15 years as a répétiteur in some of the most prestigious opera houses in Europe; fluency in English, Italian, French, German – even with such a résumé and experience, the switch to full time conducting wasn’t immediate. “It helped that I have worked as a coach in so many places and that I know the opera world well already,” recalls Scappucci. “But trying to break that wall between the categories – convincing people to see that yes I was a good répétiteur and can also be a good conductor, that was a challenge sometimes. People like to put you in a box. So they’ll think, ‘Oh she’s a pianist, and pianist primarily.’"

It wasn’t a long uphill battle, however. “I think I was lucky that it happened in a historic moment when it was becoming more open for women to make that transition. If I had tried ten years ago, I expect it would have been harder.” And then there were colleagues who saw something in her from very early on: “People like Francesca Zambello, and the artistic director of the Macerata Opera Festival who gave me my Italian debut, or Emilio Sagi in Spain whom I have worked with – they all felt that there was something there to be explored and gave me my first chances,” she says. “And from then on things have started rolling.” They’ve continued rolling so well that the Rome-born conductor is now the music director in Belgium’s Opéra Royal de Wallonie Liège, has conducted in opera houses in Vienna, Zurich, Washington, Barcelona, Rome, and L.A. and is debuting this season in Toronto, the Paris National Opera and at the Tokyo Spring Festival. She is open to all kinds of repertoire – her ideal season, were she to be an artistic director of an opera house, would include a little bit of everything in between the back ends of Baroque and contemporary music – but these days she is most often found conducting the Italian 19th century, from the bel canto years until the late-style Verdi.

What would she say to opera lovers who aren’t huge fans of Rossini and bel canto, who find it all repetitive, too focused on the vocal fireworks, hampered with weak librettos? Her answer is multi-pronged. It matters who sings it, of course. “With all of Rossini – and same for Bellini and Donizetti – you need these super voices who are technically very advanced. If you don’t have the right tenor in I Puritani, for example, you can’t do it.” And this is the reason why we don’t often see operas like Tancredi or Guglielmo Tell – works more complex than Rossini’s comedies: they’re not the easiest to cast. I tell her that for me there are only certain singers who can bring Rossini to life, like Cecilia Bartoli or Anna Bonitatibus – and ask her who else should I look for. “There are a few great Rossini singers of the new generation (there have been many in the past), like Paolo Bordogna, Bruno de Simone, Nicola Alaimo, Juan Diego Flórez, Lawrence Brownlee. They do other repertoire too, but they’re particularly good in bel canto.” They tend to be Italian? “Not necessarily... I just did Cenerentola in Liège with Karine Deshayes who was excellent, and there’s a new South African tenor who’s incredible in this rep, Levy Sekgapane. And let’s not forget Jessica Pratt.”

But while singing is important in bel canto, it’s not the only thing that makes or breaks those operas. She concedes: “There’s been a tradition of focusing the attention only on the singing in this repertoire. And that’s a mistake. The orchestra is just as important in bel canto. The orchestra is not just an accompaniment to the singing. The orchestra is what propels the energy of the work. How you shape the music can change completely the sensation that the listener will have – they’ll be moved, not moved, bored to death. It’s not all about the singing; it’s the singing and the orchestra and the chorus. The
orchestra has to be refined, always, in its sound. Rossini’s orchestra-
tion is closer to Mozart than we presume.”

There are also traditions of performing Rossini that have become
dominant in the course of the last decades but are nowhere to be found
in the original score as Rossini wrote it, says Scappucci. “We have to
respect the composer and try to understand why the music was written
the way it was written,” she says. “If Rossini doesn’t change the tempo
in certain parts of the Barber, but for the last 50 years conductors have
been deciding that we’re going to go drastically slower – why? Why did
that tradition come in? Is it a good tradition or does it make more sense
the way he wrote it? For example, when Figaro comes near the end of
act one and tells the count ‘watch it!’ – Signor giudizio, per carità – the
beat stops completely. It doesn’t even sound logical – if you’re amidst
chaos and take somebody aside to tell him something, would you slow
down? No. You stay in tempo. Otherwise Rossini would have written
something like più lento, col canto, rallentando, free. Performing
Rossini is full of things like that.” She sings another example, a little
later in the same act, when the police knock on the door and everything
stops, followed by the next line slowed down: Zitti, che battono. “Why
ignore the tempo? Is it because it’s easier to conduct the slower stuff
– or is the time meant to have stopped? Usually I go back to see what
Rossini tried to do. Does it make sense the way he wrote it? And sure,
it doesn’t always – but it’s worth trying to see if doing it the way it’s
written is more effective than the path usually travelled.”

Riccardo Muti too is known for precision and research of this kind,
as well as the mockery of some of the crustier traditions of performing
Italian rep. (Search on YouTube for the clip from his onstage inter-
view with Harvey Sachs about Toscanini, in which he defends Italian
opera from its own performing traditions. It went viral for a reason.)
Scappucci possessed this rigour even before meeting Muti, but
working with him has certainly fuelled it, she says.

And so we turn to the topic of Italian musical heritage – gigantic,
globally celebrated. And yet somewhat under-supported at home?

“If Rossini doesn’t change the tempo in certain parts of
the Barber, but for the last 50 years conductors have
been deciding that we’re going to go drastically slower
– why? Why did that tradition come in? Is it a good tradi-
ion or does it make more sense the way he wrote it?
“Yes, I think Italy could do better in that respect. I worked a lot in Italy – Turin, Rome, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Parma, the Pesaro Festival – and always happily return. But calendars are planned differently in different countries: I was, for example, offered this Toronto Barber back in 2016, and many houses plan four years ahead. Italian state-funded theatres, with a few exceptions like La Scala, tend to plan in shorter time frames because the budgets need to be confirmed. There is a problem we have in Italy with funding and with support for the arts.” Even in Italy, one of the globally most recognizable cultures and languages? “When the country is in financial crisis like we are now, the first thing that goes is the arts. It’s a pity and we should be involved more with our musical heritage; we should teach music in school, bring up all our children to know what The Barber of Seville is.”

What gives hope is that there is still ardent opera fandom all around Italy: the art form is very much alive among the populace. And so is the study of Italian poetry, mandatory in the public education system. Studying poetry and Latin language in school, says Scappucci, helped her later understand better how the libretto is constructed. “A lot of choices that I make in music are based on what’s in the libretto. What kind of rhyme do we have, what’s the metrics of the verses? If you’re doing Verdi Requiem, you ought to know how the Latin text of the messa di requiem is built. Where do the words of Stabat Mater come from? This is still part of general education in Italy – and it comes in handy in the conducting profession.”

Lydia Perovic is an arts journalist in Toronto. Send her your art of song news to artosong@thewholenote.com.

FERTILE GROUND FOR THOUGHTS AND DREAMS
NMC THEN AND NOW

Now in its 49th season, Toronto’s New Music Concerts (NMC) remains one of the main presenters of contemporary concert music in Toronto, with a long and diverse legacy of bringing first performances of significant new works to Toronto audiences, covering compositions from a wide range of styles, written by living composers from around the world, including Canada.
NMC was founded in 1971 by composer–flutist Robert Aitken and composer Norma Beecroft. In her unpublished NMC Memoirs, Beecroft wrote, “Norma and Bob founded a baby. This was not your usual conception, but a brainchild which would revolutionize the city of Toronto’s musical public – we hoped. In fact, it was not our brainchild, but seeds that were planted by the Canada Council, which found fertile ground in the thoughts and dreams of both of us.”

Aitken and Beecroft had previously collaborated, in the 1960s, with a larger group of composers and performers in a series called Ten Centuries Concerts. As its name suggested, this had been a series with an extremely broad range of potential repertoire. But for the newly created NMC, the main objects were both clear and ambitious:

• To promote interest in the art of music and contemporary musical ideas;
• To advance knowledge and appreciation of musical culture, with special emphasis on contemporary music;
• To perform, preserve, publish, record and broadcast all forms of contemporary music;
• To establish and maintain a series of concerts to compare, contrast and illuminate, by imaginative and experimental programming, music of the modern age; and so on.”

The decades that followed: these objectives defined precisely what NMC did, ambitiously and with remarkable rigour. Aitken and Beecroft insisted that the composers on NMC concerts should come to Toronto and be present for the preparation of their works, to assure the authenticity of the performances. Aitken also insisted on a full schedule of rehearsals, so that all the music, regardless of its difficulty, was fully ready to be performed. This policy was costly, but it set an incredibly high standard for performance. Accordingly, dozens of the leading composers from around the world were invited to Toronto for definitive performances of their most recent and most challenging works, and the list of those who were drawn to Toronto for the NMC series reads like a who’s who of contemporary composition: John Adams, Lucian Berio, Pierre Boulez, Henry Brant, John Cage, Elliott Carter, George Crumb, Peter Maxwell Davies, Vinko Globokar, Helmut Lachenmann, Witold Lutoslawski, Krzysztof Penderecki, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Toru Takemitsu, Iannis Xenakis and many more. And the list of Canadian composers is every bit as comprehensive, including Aitken and Beecroft themselves, and also John Beckwith, Walter Buczynski, Brian Cherney, Harry Freedman, Serge Garant, Chris Paul Harman, Alexina Louie, Bruce Mather, Barbara Pentland, Murray Schafer, Harry Somers, Ann Southam, Gilles Tremblay, Claude Vivier, John Weinzeig and on and on...yet another who’s who list!

On the record: an equally impressive third list can be found on the NMC website, newmusicconcerts.com: a detailing of the 16 recordings featuring Aitken and the NMC Ensemble. Perhaps the most striking of these are the collections of chamber works by Elliott Carter (on the occasion of his 100th year), George Crumb and Toru Takemitsu, all on Naxos records. Also on Naxos is a historically important release, Lutoslawski’s Last Concert, made from the broadcast on CBC’s Two New Hours, of the live performance we recorded on October 24, 1993 at Jane Mallett Theatre. Lutoslawski conducted the NMC Ensemble with violin soloist Fujiko Imajishi and soprano Valdine Anderson. It was Lutoslawski’s final appearance as a conductor of his own works. O Bali: Colin McPhee and His Legacy, on CBC Records, is another highlight, a recording which features Aitken both as flute soloist, and as conductor of the NMC Ensemble. Murray Schafer’s opera, Loving/Toi, is another unique release, on Centrediscs.

In fact, the history of NMC is reflected in recordings predating the items on this list, which are all CD releases. Before the advent of the CD, the NMC Ensemble appeared on an LP, in a recording (which I produced) of John Cage’s Sixteen Dances, for a boutique record label, CP2 (Composers Performance Squared) in 1981. The American violin virtuoso Paul Zukofsky conducted and Cage himself was present at the sessions – part of an ambitious NMC John Cage Weekend, filled with concerts of Cage’s music, including the first-ever concert performance of Cage’s epic work, Roaratorio.

Another very important aspect of how NMC applied their operating philosophy was in the commissioning of original new works by the composers featured in their concerts – commissions that were offered to the international and the Canadian composers. NMC’s record of significant artistic achievements in the creation of important new works is an impressive one, forming another long list. Among the
international set are Elliott Carter’s Scrivo in vento, George Crumb’s An Idyll for the Misbegotten and Toru Takemitsu’s Bryce, this latter title having been borrowed from Bryce Engleman, the son of percussionist Robin Engleman, with whom Takemitsu formed a bond while visiting in Toronto. Among the major Canadian works NMC has commissioned are Amerika by Chris Paul Harman and Zwei Lieder nach Rilke by Omar Daniel, both of which subsequently won the Jules Leroy Prize for New Chamber Music, as well as Princess of the Stars by Murray Schafer, Sanctuary by Alexina Louie, El Dorado by Marjan Mozetich, Triomphus by Gilles Tremblay, Zipangu by Claude Vivier, and Chura-Churum by Harry Somers, to name only a few.

Pieces for Bob: it is this aspect of the NMC legacy that will be celebrated in “Pieces for Bob”, a concert scheduled for Saturday, April 4 at Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre at 8pm. As the title indicates, the program is made up exclusively of works composed for Robert Aitken. The two aforementioned pieces by Carter and Crumb are in the lineup, as well as Cage’s Ryoanji, Henry Brant’s Ghosts and Gargoyles, the world premiere of Epigrams for Robert Aitken by Daniel Foley, and Tierra...tierra by Ecuadorian composer Diego Luzuriaga. The work on the program that gives the concert its title is one that I was personally involved in – Norma Beecroft’s Piece for Bob, dating from 1975. In it, the flute soloist is called upon to execute advanced performance techniques, such as multiphonics, vocal modulations, and brilliant technical writing, while simultaneously synchronizing with both analogue electronic tracks and digital audio effects, all created with the latest technology of the time. Beecroft had decided to create her electronic sounds with a digital sound synthesis system I had helped to install at the University of Toronto while I was a music graduate student there in the early 1970s. (My role was to guide Beecroft through the still new territory of synthesizing sounds with a mainframe computer.) Piece for Bob became one of Beecroft’s most performed works, and has been fittingly chosen to provide the theme for this concert in celebration of Aitken and NMC.

Beecroft left NMC in 1989 to pursue her many other creative interests, but those 17 years with the organization remain an important chapter in her own story, as well as the story of NMC. Hopefully, her unpublished memoirs will soon be revealed.

Committed to continuing: more changes are now in the works, as the distinguished NMC organization, with its long legacy of creation and innovation, approaches its 50th anniversary next year. Aitken will retire after 50 years as artistic director and will be succeeded by the renowned composer and conductor, Brian Current, now serving as NMC’s co-artistic director during the period of transition. “We are committed to continuing Robert Aitken’s legacy of excellence in programming and performance,” Current says, “and part of our exciting transition is to celebrate his 50 years of groundbreaking leadership with concerts featuring pieces written just for him.” Next year’s series will include works by Aitken as well. Meanwhile, the immediately upcoming NMC concert, February 13 at Harbourfront Centre Theatre at 8pm, will give us a glimpse of what’s next for NMC – Current’s first chance to design a program in its entirety for NMC. The concert, titled “Serious Smile”, includes recent compositions by three emerging young Canadian composers: Brandon Chow, Keiko Devaux and Corie Rose Soumah, and Toronto audiences will meet the extraordinary young German multimedia wizard, Alexander Schubert for the first time. And as a gesture to the earliest days of NMC, György Ligeti’s famous Chamber Concerto will be remounted for the first time since 1973.

“Our job as artistic directors is to scour the globe for the greatest music out there,” Current told me, “and to bring it to our audiences through performances by the best musicians, in the context of our magnificent 21st-century Toronto.”

The mandate continues.

David Jaeger is a composer, producer and broadcaster based in Toronto
**KOERNER HALL**

**2019.20 Concert Season**

**Takács Quartet**

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 3PM KOERNER HALL**

Tickets start at only $40

The New York Times has lauded the ensemble for “revealing the familiar as unfamiliar, making the most traditional of works feel radical once more.”

Works by Beethoven, Bartók, and Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel.

Part of The Conservatory’s Beethoven 250 Festival.

---

**Raul Midón and Lionel Loueke**

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 8PM / POSTLUDE PERFORMANCE KOERNER HALL**

Tickets start at only $40

An evening of song and guitar wizardry. Raul Midón “turns a guitar into an orchestra and his voice into a chorus” *(The New York Times)* and Lionel Loueke moves effortlessly between West African roots and modern American jazz.

---

**Alison Young**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 1PM MAZZOLENI CONCERT HALL**

Free tickets will be available starting Mon. Jan. 24.

“One of the most versatile musicians in Canada!” *(Jaymz Bee, JAZZ.FM91)*

Canadian saxophonist and composer Alison Young plays with “endless creativity and flair. From Hank Crawford-esque to Dexter Gordon meets-Herschel Evans, to Eddie ‘Lockjaw’ Davis and Sonny Stitt territory. Equally on point” *(Downbeat)*.

Generously supported by Dorothy Cohen Shoichet

---

**Kyung Wha Chung with Kevin Kenner**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 8PM KOERNER HALL**

Tickets start at only $40

“Simply, relentlessly, magnificent: a miracle of momentum and humanity,” is how *The Sunday Times* describes legendary violinist Kyung Wha Chung. She is joined by Kevin Kenner on piano to perform works by Brahms, Franck, and Beethoven. Part of The Conservatory’s Beethoven 250 Festival.

---

**Johannes Debus conducts the Royal Conservatory Orchestra**

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 8PM PRELUDE RECITAL AT 6:45PM PRE-CONCERT TALK AT 7:15PM KOERNER HALL**

Tickets start at only $25

Johannes Debus has been Music Director of the Canadian Opera Company since 2009. He will lead the RCO in a program that includes Strauss’s *Don Juan*, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7, and Keiko Abe’s *Prism Rhapsody* with percussionist Zuri Wells.

Part of the Temerty Orchestral Program

---

**The Glenn Gould School Vocal Showcase**

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 7:30PM MAZZOLENI CONCERT HALL**

Tickets start at only $20

A wonderful opportunity to see the GGS’s talented voice students present an evening of art songs and opera arias.

---

**TICKETS & SUBSCRIPTIONS ON SALE NOW!**

**TELU S centre**

for performance and learning

237 BLOOR STREET WEST (BLOOR ST. & AVENUE RD.) TORONTO

**416.408.0208   RCMUSIC.COM/PERFORMANCE**

**2019.20 Concert Season**

**KOERNER HALL**

**BMO**

**The Royal Conservatory**

**TORONTO STAR**

**The finest instrument is the mind.**
February is the shortest month of the year, which is merciful, because it is also surely the bleakest. By the time it rolls around, winter has been with us for what seems like an eternity, with still plenty to come. The festivities of Christmas and Hanukkah are a distant memory and the bloom is off the rose of the new year. Of course there’s Valentine’s Day on February 14, but even that special day of celebrating romance is a mixed blessing to some, and many have sworn off it. Those not blessed with a partner, or who have recently lost one, find it lonely and painful. And even many with partners find it an empty and contrived occasion filled with pressure, a cash-in day for florists, candy makers, card companies, swanky restaurants and the like.

Despite these misgivings, I thought it might be interesting to explore the history of the song most associated with the day, My Funny Valentine, one which has become an essential part of jazz history and its repertoire, and also one which has been much misunderstood. It has been recorded over 1,600 times by more than 600 artists, both instrumentally and vocaly, and is permanently associated with Frank Sinatra, Gerry Mulligan, Chet Baker and Miles Davis, among others. It was written in 1937 by perhaps my favourite songwriting team, Richard Rodgers and lyricist Lorenz Hart. Rodgers had the supreme gift of writing simple, pure melodies which stuck in the ear and which he would often flesh out with more interesting chords. And Hart stood alone as a lyricist; his words had great wit and charm, ironic humour, interior rhythm and often plumbed emotional depths worthy of poetry. As a team, they were incomparable; Rodgers’ later songs with lyricist Oscar Hammerstein are far less successful simply because the words don’t work nearly as well. (As an aside, this didn’t stop Cole Porter’s “beard” wife, Linda Lee Thomas, from asking pointedly of Rodgers & Hart after meeting them at a party: “Two guys, to write one song?!”

My Funny Valentine was written for the musical comedy Babes In Arms, which opened in New York on April 14, 1937 and ran for 289 performances until December of that year. Because of its title, My Funny Valentine has always been associated with Valentine’s Day, but that’s something of a misconception, as its original use in the show is more literal: it is sung by a female character to the male lead whose name is Valentine “Val” La Mar, and it’s only in the closing line – “each day is Valentine’s Day” – that the day itself is mentioned. It’s a love song, yes, but not a typical one. Rather than extolling the virtues of the paramour in typical “moon in June” fashion, the words address the foibles of the object of affection, while leaving no doubt that Valentine is loved in spite of these obvious flaws – “Your looks are laughable, unphotographable. Yet you’re my favourite work of art.” And later, “Is your figure less than Greek? Is your mouth a little weak?” And finally, “Don’t change a hair for me, not if you care for me.” The irony at work here is typical of Lorenz Hart, indeed many have commented that these words are a love song to himself. To put it mildly, Hart suffered from low self-esteem and was a somewhat desperate soul: short, unattractive, a closeted gay who suffered from severe addictions to both drugs and alcohol, given to nasty outbursts yet with the soul of a poet.

The emotional ambiguity of the lyrics are echoed in the musical content of the song, which begins with a stark and sombre melody in C minor with a chromatically descending bass line down from C. (It was–somewhat rare for Rodgers to work in minor.) The second system remains in C minor but the melody shifts to imply the relative major of E-flat. The middle section, or bridge, remains in E-flat major and is bright in mood, but returns to C minor for the closing system, which has an extra four bars. The first two bars of this last 12 are identical to the first two bars of the song – darkly minor in melody and harmony – then switch to major melody with minor harmony underneath. This leads to the song’s climax, “Stay little Valentine, stay,” with the word “stay” landing on a sustained, high E-flat against a C minor chord, which gradually resolves to an E-flat major chord – “Each day is Valentine’s Day.”

The lyrics and the music form an organic whole, and the layered complexity of both explains the attraction of the song for singers and instrumentalists alike through the years, yet it was some time before the song became the ubiquitous standard it is now. Perhaps it was too dark and poignant, but at any rate it was left out of the 1939 movie version of Babes In Arms, featuring Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland, which spawned the “Hey kids, we could put on a show!” genre of movies they often made together. There were only a few recordings of it made in the 1940s, but a revival of the show in the early 50s spawned a flurry of great recordings of the song – perhaps audiences
Frank Sinatra recorded it for Capitol just as his career was hitting stride again after hitting the doldrums in 1949-51. The “Poet Laureate of Loneliness” certainly captured all of the song’s vulnerability and tenderness and his nuanced version did a lot to put the song on the map with both audiences and musicians. Sinatra’s rendition of it in the hit 1957 musical movie *Pal Joey* didn’t hurt either, but by that time there were several celebrated jazz recordings of the song. As has so often been the case, it is these jazz interpretations which have rendered the song immortal, starting with Gerry Mulligan’s 1953 version by his pianless quartet featuring Chet Baker, which came hard on the heels of the Sinatra record.

This quartet achieved instantaneous and widespread success, and Mulligan’s recording of *Valentine* was both a boost to this and to the tune itself. His restrained, lyrical arrangement makes brilliant use of the bass in filling out the harmony in the absence of piano and as always, the melodic interplay between him and Baker is ravishing. In 2015, Mulligan’s 1953 version of it (he would revisit it several more times) was inducted into the National Recording Registry of the Library of Congress for its “cultural, artistic and/or historical significance to American society and the nation’s audio legacy.”

The first Mulligan quartet’s success ended with his imprisonment for narcotics in early 1954, but Chet Baker didn’t miss a beat, scoring a vocal version of *Valentine* in 1954 which made him a jazz star forever. His sensitivity toward both the song’s lyric and melody captivated audiences and bestowed on Baker a cult following of James Dean proportions, one which, for better or worse, would remain with him throughout his career.

1954 was the year Miles Davis began moving toward real stardom, leading to the formation of his first great quintet in 1955. Miles first tackled *Valentine* in a marathon recording session on October 26, 1956, with tenor saxophonist John Coltrane sitting out. He takes a more daring approach to the song, playing the melody for only about five bars before offering some beautiful melodic improvisation, yet he fully captures the song’s mood and possibilities. The track owes a lot to pianist Red Garland’s lyricism and again, it further cemented the reputation of both Davis and this song. Miles played the song often and there is a famous live version from a concert recorded at Lincoln Center on February 12, 1964, with his celebrated second quartet. This version is arresting in both its starkness and abstraction, owing a lot to the harmonic acuity and daring of Herbie Hancock.

These are likely the most celebrated jazz recordings of *My Funny Valentine*, yet there are two others done between the Mulligan and Davis versions which elicited my notice for a long time and which deserve to stand alongside these others. Ben Webster recorded a lovely version on a March 30, 1954 session with Teddy Wilson, Ray Brown and Jo Jones which yielded just four tunes and was released as *Music For Loving*. Music for loving indeed; a sonic and emotive master like Webster need only play the melody to make you realize what a beautiful song this is. Cornetist Ruby Braff and pianist Ellis Larkins, who excelled as an accompanist in duos, tackled it in 1955 on their celebrated Vanguard album of Rodgers & Hart tunes, 2X2. Braff is as creative with the song in his own way as Miles Davis was in his. This is the first version I’d heard which includes Valentine’s stirring, almost madrigal-like verse, played here by Larkins. It deserves to be better known, but is usually only included by singers, with its oddly appropriate Elizabethan words such as “doth” and “thou” and “thee.”

Speaking of duo treatments, Bill Evans and Jim Hall recorded a very fast (the song is generally played as a ballad) version on their 1962 album *Undercurrent*. The rest of the record is generally lyrical and gentle, but Hall and Evans take the song to the races, it’s by far the most aggressive treatment of the song up to that point. Evans, in very frisky form, states the melody, then offers crunchy, bristling accompaniment to Hall’s guitar solo. Hall returns the favour by breaking into some of the finest 4/4 rhythm guitar ever played, complete with bass lines and drum-like shots. It’s stunning and swings like mad. Hall would revisit the tune at a similarly fast tempo on It’s Nice To Be With You, recorded in Berlin in 1968 with Jimmy Woode on bass and Daniel Humair on drums. Hall overdubs a second improvised guitar voice, demonstrating that he had telepathic melodic interplay not only with others, but also when playing with himself, so to speak.

These are some of the celebrated instrumental jazz versions which gave the song a permanent place and showed its almost infinite possibilities as a vehicle for improvisation, but I would be remiss if I didn’t mention a couple of vocal versions which stand out among many. Sarah Vaughan recorded it several times but the version on 1973’s *Live In Japan* is stunning – Vaughan at her sassiest, almost operatic best.

Clockwise from top left: Frank Sinatra, Chet Baker & Gerry Mulligan, Lee Wiley, Miles Davis, Sarah Vaughan
And yet another version from 1954—a big year for the song—by Lee Wiley, accompanied by a trio with Ruby Braff. Like everything else she did, it’s warm and utterly original.

So, if you’re not a fan of Valentine’s Day, you could do worse than spend the evening on YouTube checking out these and other versions.

As for me... well, there’s bound to be a north wind blowing through my house in the wake of this article as my wife has a permanent and thorough dislike of My Funny Valentine. Oh well, she can’t be right about everything.

JAZZ NOTES QUICK PICKS

- FEB 1, 8PM: Jazz Performance and Education Centre. "Generations: Stars and Rising Stars." Lorne Lofsky, guitar; David Cruz, guitar; Artie Roth, bass. Aga Khan Museum. This has been a nice series and this latest offers a chance to hear a good up-and-coming young guitarist with one of the great veterans of the Toronto scene, Lorne Lofsky, in a splendid and intimate setting.

- FEB 12, 8PM: Royal Conservatory of Music. TD Jazz Concerts Series: “Oscar Peterson’s AFRICA.” Benny Green, piano; Christian McBride, bass; Lewis Nash, drums; All-Star Big Band; John Clayton, conductor. Koerner Hall. Not much needs be said here. A superb trio with a first-rate big band in one of the best-sounding venues around.

- FEB 23, 4:30PM: Christ Church Deer Park. Jazz Vespers. Allison Au Quartet. 1570 Yonge St. Free will offering. Religious service. Alto saxophonist Alison Au is one of the most talented young musicians in Toronto and this offers a chance to hear her in a reflective setting.

Dave Douglas

- FEB 27, 12:30PM: York University Department of Music. Jazz at Midday: Featuring jazz artist-in-residence Dave Douglas. Tribute Communities Recital Hall, Accolade East Building. Free. The once-daunting trek to York University has been made bearable by the subway extension, so take this opportunity to hear one of the seminal creative figures in contemporary jazz.

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

Beat by Beat | Classical & Beyond

Romancing Rachmaninoff, And Ophelia Gets Mad

PAUL ENNIS

In Billy Wilder’s classic 1955 film The Seven Year Itch, Tom Ewell fantasizes seducing his upstairs neighbour (Marilyn Monroe) while playing a recording of the slow movement of a piano concerto—“Good old Rachmaninoff,” he says, “the Second Piano Concerto, it never misses.” Monroe replies, “It’s not fair. Every time I hear it I go to pieces.” Indeed, the power of the concerto was extensive. Its second movement played a major role in David Lean’s Brief Encounter (1945); Eric Carmen’s All by Myself (1975), notably used in Bridget Jones’s Diary (2001), is also derived from the second movement; Full Moon and Empty Arms, a song written by Buddy Kaye and Ted Mossman derived from the third movement, has been covered by the likes of Frank Sinatra (1945) and Bob Dylan (2014). And that just scratches the surface of the impact of some of the most romantic music ever written. It’s an appropriate valentine to Toronto as Stephen Hough and the TSO, conducted by Elim Chan, perform it February 14 to 16—the evening’s other major work is Rimsky-Korsakov’s crowd-pleasing Scheherazade with TSO concertmaster Jonathan Crow as soloist.

A leading pianist of the generation that includes Marc-André Hamelin, Hough is also a polymath, the first classical performer to receive the MacArthur Genius Award, an exhibited artist, a published author and newspaper columnist. He’s also a lively participant on Twitter, engaging with his audience, posting personal photos (especially of food) and links to musical nuggets out of the past.

Hough’s latest book, Rough Ideas, which came out in the UK last August, has just been released in North America. Hough writes in his introduction that most of the book expands notes he has made during dead time on the road. “Mostly I’ve written about music and the life of a musician (not always the same thing), from exploring the broader aspects of what it is to walk out onto a stage or to make a recording to specialist tips from deep inside the practice room: how to trill, how to pedal, how to practise. Other subjects appear too, people I’ve known, places I’ve travelled to, books I’ve read, paintings I’ve seen. Even religion is there: the possibility of the existence of God, problems with some biblical texts and the challenge involved in being a gay Catholic, and abortion. I’ve placed these reflections in a separate section so that readers allergic to such matters can avoid them and we can remain friends.”

Fun fact: Both Hough and Hamelin are Hyperion Records artists. Hough will be on the jury in the upcoming Cliburn Competition in 2021, for which he will compose the compulsory piece. Coincidentally, Hamelin was on the most recent Cliburn jury in 2017 and composed the compulsory work for that year’s competition.

Elim Chan, at 33 the youngest-ever principal conductor of the venerable Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, was born in Hong Kong and began piano lessons at six. At 28 she became the first woman to win the Donatella-Flick LSO Conducting Competition which led to a posting as assistant conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra with then-principal conductor Valery Gergiev. The next year, a fellowship enabled her to work with music and artistic director of the L.A. Philharmonic, Gustavo Dudamel. She leads the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (of which she is chief guest conductor) in Benjamin Grosvenor’s just-released recording of the Chopin Concertos; Grosvenor returns to Music Toronto next month for a recital on March 31.
David Bowser, Artistic Director and Conductor

Trumpet Concerto in D major
Leopold Mozart
Andrew McCandless, trumpet

Requiem, K 626
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Soloists from the 2020 Toronto Mozart Vocal Competition

Toronto Mozart Players
Pax Christi Chamber Choir

Church of the Redeemer
162 Bloor St W, Toronto, ON

mozartproject.ca

And pianist-author James Rhodes, who makes his Toronto debut in Koerner Hall on March 5 under the auspices of the Glenn Gould Foundation, includes the Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No.2 in his latest book, *Playlist*. “It has everything that any music fan could ever want – incredible, unforgettable melodies, insane piano pyrotechnics... excitement, melancholy, heartbreak, and heroism,” he writes.

In other TSO news, regular visiting orchestras, the National Arts Centre Orchestra (NACO) and the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal (OSM) arrive – unusually – in the same month. On February 6, NACO and conductor Alexander Shelley’s program features Joshua Bell in Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto, an audience favourite. Notably, Bell will eschew the composer’s cadenza for his own. OSM comes to Roy Thomson Hall on February 19 in what will be Kent Nagano’s last visit as music director; Beethoven’s Symphony No.6 “Pastoral” is the main event. And finally, TSO favourite, Donald Runnicles, broadens the impact of guest conducting Wagner’s Siegfried Idyll and Bruckner’s majestic Symphony No.7, by collaborating on piano with mezzo-soprano Krisztina Szabó in a pre-concert performance of Wagner’s Wesendonck Lieder at 6:45pm on February 20.

The Takács Returns

The celebrated Takács Quartet returns to Koerner Hall on February 23 for a concert that includes Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel’s String Quartet in E-flat Major, Bartók’s String Quartet No.4 and Beethoven’s Op.59, No.3 “Razumovsky.” First violinist Edward Dusinberre, who joined the quartet in 1995, wrote in his book, *Beethoven for a Later Age* (2016), that in the quartets dedicated to Razumovsky, Beethoven presented a vivid spectrum of emotions at times linked to his personal experience. “Let your deafness be no more a secret – even in art,” he wrote at the top of a sketch of the last movement of Op.59, No.3. In an email exchange I had with Dusinberre two years ago, he described the benefits of playing in Koerner Hall. “What a gorgeous hall and acoustic! Such a space creates the possibility for more varied dynamics and colours of sound: in particular it is more rewarding to play very quietly. Also timing can be affected. The last chord of a slow movement will fade beautifully into silence, where in a less good hall it might stop abruptly, so one is encouraged to linger.”

Since the quartet’s last visit to Toronto, Richard O’Neill has replaced Geraldine Walther as the ensemble’s fourth violinist since their founding in 1975. Laurence Vittes caught up to him recently for the January/February 2020 edition of *Strings Magazine*.

“Two summers ago, I was having lunch with the Takács’ second violinist, Harumi Rhodes, an old friend from Marlboro and Lincoln Center,” O’Neill told Vittes, “when she asked if I would be interested in auditioning for the Takács. ‘Gerry is going to retire. It’s top secret,’ Harumi told me. It had been 13 or 14 years since I had auditioned for first violinist Edward Dusinberre and cellist András Fejér. I said I would be honoured.

“In October I flew to Boulder, Colorado, and auditioned with a healthy list of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Bartók – typical Takács repertoire. One thing I absolutely loved about the audition was that Ed was so willing to try anything – whatever anyone suggested, he didn’t flinch. He said, ‘Let’s try it.’ I also have a lot of Bartók memorized, and every time I’d look up to get a sense of where we were going, Ed was looking up too, which felt like we were making an amazing connection.”

Within a few weeks, Vittes writes, O’Neill got a call from Dusinberre, saying they’d like him to join, with one caveat: It would be necessary for O’Neill to leave James Ehnes’ quartet. “It was a hard
Ophelia Gets Mad

The inimitable bassoonist, Nadina Mackie Jackson, took time out from preparing her new show – Ophelia Gets Mad – to fill us in via email on the raison d'être behind its catchy title. The story, she explained, is a loose retelling of Hamlet’s Ophelia: “My goal is to show possibilities and to move/provoke people to reimagine their own lives and outcomes. Ophelia Gets Mad is the best [title], because it is in opposition to the standard trope that her girlish intellect crumbled beyond repair under grief and disappointment. I think she was the only sane one in the court and would have recovered, given half a chance, but that someone pushed her off that branch.

“What if this earnest and bright teenager rejected her roles of dutiful daughter, trusted needlewoman and plaything of a playboy, abandoned her solipsistic boyfriend and the twisted court of Elsinore, vaulted the moat and, carrying a sword and maybe a credit card, left behind the chains of established and deadly society, maybe with just enough psychological scarring to write a few hit songs?

“The story interfaces with the music (not in this order) Vivaldi Bassoon Concerti RV483 and RV490; Mathieu Lussier’s Le Dernier Chant d’Ophélia; Marc Mellits’ Dark Matter (for electric bassoon); Drew Jurecka’s On the Roof; Glenn Buhr’s man will only grieve if he believes the sun stands still; Joni Mitchell’s Both Sides Now and more.

From Vivaldi’s Baroque charmers to the handful of contemporary works – listen to Mackie Jackson’s live recording of the Lussier on Soundcloud for a sense of her passion and grace – the musical component of Ophelia Gets Mad is compelling. As are the musicians in the backup band, the first three of whom are members of Payadora Tango Ensemble: Rebekah Volkstein, violin; Drew Jurecka, violin; Joe Phillips, bass; Charlotte Paradis, viola; and Rachel Desoer, cello, of the late, lamented Cecilia String Quartet.

CLASSICAL AND BEYOND QUICK PICKS

FEB 2, 2:30PM: Kingston’s Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts presents the heart-on-sleeve virtuosity of violinist Blake Pouliot in a program of Mozart, Bartók, Kreisler, Janáček, Prokofiev (Romeo and Juliet Suite) and Sarasate (Zigeunerweisen).

FEB 3, 8PM: Pocket Concerts presents the first of four recitals with four different cellists playing Bach’s six Suites for Solo Cello. “Canada’s next big cello star” (CBC), 23-year-old Cameron Crozat starts the cycle with Suites 1 & 4. The venue is Bellwoods Coffee & Gelato because “Bach loved coffee and so do Pocket Concerts.” FEB 24, 8PM: TSO associate principal cello, Emmanuelle Beaulieu Bergeron, takes the bow for Suite No.6.

FEB 8, 3PM: Amici Chamber Ensemble presents “Bohemian Rhapsody” with music by Ravel, Dvořák, Suk, Sarasate and Kradjian. Among the special guests are 22-year-old violin sensation Kerson Leong, TSO principal bassoon, Michael Sweeney and National Arts Centre Orchestra principal bass, Joel Quarrington. In Mazzoleni Hall.

FEB 11, 7:30PM: Join Rob Kapilow in his latest foray into his “What Makes It Great?” series; this time the subject is Mendelssohn’s great Octet, with the Rolston String Quartet and U of T strings. The idea behind the series has its origin in Kapilow’s freshman year at Yale where he took an art history course from “a wonderful professor named Robert Herbert” that began to teach him the difference between “looking and seeing.” In Walter Hall.

FEB 16, 2:30PM: Janina Fialkowska brings her pianistic warmth to a well-designed program at Kingston’s Isabel Bader Centre. French music by Tailleferre, Fauré, Poulenc, Debussy and Ravel fills the first half; after intermission Chopin takes centre stage with a sampling of a scherzo, a nocturne, three mazurkas and the masterful Ballade No.4.

FEB 18, 8PM: Music Toronto presents Swiss-born pianist Francesco Piemontesi, winner of the prestigious Queen Elisabeth Prize in 2007, and known for his “exceptional refinement of expression.” He devotes the first part of his program to the music of Bach, including arrangements by pianists Federico Busoni and Wilhelm Kempff; in the second half he tackles Debussy’s mesmerizing Images, Book II and Rachmaninoff’s formidable Sonata No.2 in B-flat Minor; Op.36.

FEB 24, 8PM: Music TSO associate principal cello, Emmanuelle Beaulieu Bergeron, takes the bow for Suite No.6.
- FEB 21, 8PM: The Royal Conservatory of Music presents two sold-out concerts within five days. If you don’t already have a ticket, consider the rush line for one or both. The first features Russian-born phenomenon, pianist Daniil Trifonov performing Scriabin, Borodin, Prokofiev and Beethoven (his penultimate Sonata No.31, Op.110 FEB 25, 8PM: American pianist Murray Perahia makes a welcome visit to Koerner Hall, program TBA.

- FEB 26, 8PM: The Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society presents Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony concertmaster Bénédicte Lauzière and Ensemble Made in Canada’s pianist, Angela Park, performing sonatas by Mozart, Prokofiev and Elgar.

- FEB 27, 1:30PM: The Women’s Musical Club of Toronto presents the Diotima Quartet playing Alban Berg’s String Quartet No.3, Misako Mochizuki’s Brains and Beethoven’s penultimate String quartet No.15, Op.132. Formed in 1996 by graduates of the Paris National Conservatory, according to their website, “the quartet’s name evokes a double musical significance. At once an allegory of German Romanticism – Friedrich Holderlin gave the name to the love of his life in his novel Hyperion – and a rallying cry for the music of our time, brandished by Luigi Nono in his string quartet Fragmente-Stille, an Diotima.”

- FEB 27, 8PM: Music Toronto presents the return of the Schumann Quartett, a young German quartet renowned for their assurance and accuracy. The brothers Mark, Erik and Ken Schumann were joined in 2012 by violist Liisa Randalu. Following study with the Alban Berg Quartet, they won many awards and released several acclaimed recordings culminating in the BBC Music Magazine’s Newcomer Award in 2016 and a three-year residency at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Quartets by Haydn, Shostakovich and Smetana (the evocative Quartet No.1 in E Minor “From My Life”) comprise the program.

- FEB 29, 3PM: 5 at the First Chamber Players presents Schubert’s melodic masterpiece, his Quintet in A Major D667 “The Trout,” played by a top-notch array of chamber musicians: Angela Park, piano; Mayumi Seiler, violin; Yehonatan Berick, viola; Rachel Mercer, cello; and Joel Quarrington, bass.

- MAR 6, 8PM: Legendary South Korean-born violinist, Kyung Wha Chung, brings her 50-year concertizing career to Koerner Hall for a program of Mozart, Beethoven and Franck (the glorious Violin Sonata). Longtime collaborator Kevin Kenner is at the piano.

- MAR 6 & 7, 8PM: Dynamic Dutch violinist Liza Ferschtman is the soloist in Mendelssohn’s beloved Violin Concerto, one of the cornerstones of the repertoire. Gabriel Bebeselea, the 32-year-old principal conductor of the Transylvania State Philharmonic Orchestra of Cluj-Napoca, leads the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony in the program which also includes Schuman’s Symphony No.3 “Rhenish” and Enescu’s Pastorale-Fantasie, a piece close to Bebeselea’s heart.

Paul Ennis is the managing editor of The WholeNote.
Digging Deeper
Rewarded
(Musical Archaeology)
MATTHEW WHITFIELD

Exploring the history of classical music and its vast network of composers, interpreters and commentators is a fascinating task, nebulous yet surprisingly linear all at once. In many ways, the work of the musicologist resembles that of an archaeologist, who unearths and examines historical evolutions through the fossil record and physical structures, using the earth’s geological formations to tell us what came before and how that led to the modern world.

Where archaeologists use rock and sediment, the musical scholar uses manuscripts, treatises and libraries to explore the past, in both specific and wide-ranging ways. For example, the field of Bach studies has grown and improved immensely in the last five decades. This focused scholarly work on a single composer’s output has led to numerous reissues of Bach’s works, each an improvement and clarification of the previous volume. New works have been discovered as well, such as the Neumeister Collection, a series of chorale preludes found in the 1980s at Yale by Christoph Wolff and Wilhelm Krumbach, filling in our understanding of a great composer and his personal compositional evolution.

Occasionally these explorations of music’s hidden records reveal previously unknown composers and interpreters, buried under the weight of the past and, for whatever reason, functionally banished from history. We are living at a fine time for this type of discovery, as a renewed interest in the works of female composers is gradually leading towards a small-scale renaissance, with previously unheard-of names and pieces of music presented on concert programs around the world.

A third outcome of musical archaeology is the detection of surprising and unexpected connections between the music of different peoples, places and times. The deeper that scholars delve into the past, the more they discover that everything is connected, especially in Europe where rich cultural traditions and relatively small geographical distances have combined to create artistic and intellectual exchanges for centuries.

Two by Tafelmusik
Here in Toronto, there have been numerous explorations of these connections and exchanges, particularly by Tafelmusik through their extraordinary multimedia productions. These concerts serve as exhibitions for their creators’ archaeological ‘digging,’ in which new and surprising bridges are discovered and demonstrated between the most unlikely people, places and ideas. This month Tafelmusik presents The Indigo Project, a musical journey exploring the social, cultural and political implications of a powerful blue dye. The question, simple and obvious, immediately presents itself: What does the discovery of a fabric dye have to do with Baroque music? The answer is much more complex.

For more information on what will undoubtedly be a magnificent and original concert experience, look for an interview with Alison Mackay and Suba Sankaran in this issue of The WholeNote.

While this concept of musical archaeology is perhaps most readily applicable to the art form’s “software” (i.e. the people, places and ideas that combine to produce musical material), it can also be applied to the “hardware,” the sound-producing instruments themselves. Shakubs, sackbuts, and hurdy-gurdys are all examples of instruments that were long extinct until the period performance revival of the 20th century, as were fortepianos, clavichords and, to a lesser extent, harpsichords.

One such revived instrument is the viola da gamba, part of the gamba family of string instruments. Although it may occasionally resemble the cello, its modern orchestral counterpart, the viola da gamba is unique: all members of the viol family are held between the legs (viola da gamba literally translates to “viol for the leg”), and feature adjustable tied gut frets on the fingerboard to improve intonation and pitch accuracy. Although frequently called for in Renaissance and Baroque works, the viola da gamba is rarely found at the forefront of an ensemble, until now.

To rectify this injustice, Tafelmusik collaborates with guest director and viola da gambist Vittorio Ghielmi to present “Dreaming Jupiter,” February 6 to 9. Conceived as a dramatic dialogue shifting from solo gamba to full orchestra, the concert features orchestral dance suites in musical conjunction with solo gamba music, as well as a brand-new piece written by Ghielmi himself. This program is an ideal one for aficionados of the French Baroque, with works by Forqueray, Rameau, Lully and more.

L.A. Master Chorale visits Toronto
Peter Sellars is not a name typically associated with early music; the American theatre director is primarily noted for his unique
his pain and remorse into a towering work of beauty. According to the press release:

"For this performance, 21 singers transform this 75-minute sweeping Renaissance masterpiece – committed to memory and dramatically staged and lit – into a performance piece. Set to the poetry of Luigi Tansillo (1510–1568), “I accept responsibility” is the fundamental theme of this work, depicting the seven stages of grief that St. Peter experienced after disavowing his knowledge of Jesus Christ on the day of his arrest and prior to Jesus’s crucifixion. Sellars translates Lagrime through a contemporary lens, suggesting a powerful allegory that by taking responsibility and facing our past head-on, we can forge a more resolved and fulfilling future."

Founded by renowned conductor Roger Wagner in 1964, The Los Angeles Master Chorale is widely recognized as the country’s leading professional choir and has an extensive and varied approach to repertoire; the LAMC appears frequently on film scores and soundtracks, most recently Star Wars: The Last Jedi. It will be fascinating to hear how such a prestigious ensemble with such a varied skill set manages the complexities and subtleties of di Lasso’s score, especially while executing the vision of Sellars. This don’t-miss concert takes place at Koerner Hall on February 1 and 2 and will undoubtedly be a highlight of the season.

This month’s concert presentations underscore the increasing scope and scale of what a modern “classical music” concert is. More and more we see a move towards multidisciplinary collaborations, a striving towards what Wagner called Gesamtkunstwerk, a “total art work,” in which the individual arts are subordinated to a common purpose, thereby presenting the clearest and most profound expression of the essence of a work of art. These performances will be superb opportunities for such existential experiences, whether learning about the societal implications of blue dye in Europe or discovering di Lasso’s Lagrime di San Pietro through Peter Sellars’ dramatic interpretation.

Peter Sellars (left) and the L.A. Master Chorale

contemporary stagings of classical and contemporary operas and plays. This month, however, we have a unique opportunity to witness Sellars’ approach to Renaissance polyphony, as he and the Los Angeles Master Chorale tackle Orlando di Lasso’s Lagrime di San Pietro.

Lagrime di San Pietro (The Tears of St. Peter) was di Lasso’s final work, a collection of 27 madrigals in seven parts. Di Lasso knew that Lagrime was to be the last piece he would ever compose, so he filled every measure with an emotionally charged texture that channelled contemporary stagings of classical and contemporary operas and plays. This month, however, we have a unique opportunity to witness Sellars’ approach to Renaissance polyphony, as he and the Los Angeles Master Chorale tackle Orlando di Lasso’s Lagrime di San Pietro.

Lagrime di San Pietro (The Tears of St. Peter) was di Lasso’s final work, a collection of 27 madrigals in seven parts. Di Lasso knew that Lagrime was to be the last piece he would ever compose, so he filled every measure with an emotionally charged texture that channelled
**Conversations in Song and Choral Relevance**

**BRIAN CHANG**

Artists of many kinds feel like it should be the goal for their art to rise above the everyday – art is its own thing. Other artists strive to make the everyday the fulcrum of their art: to drive conversations to respond to them, to change narratives, and to leave people changed. Over the next month I’m highlighting two of the latter for you to attend and find yourself inserted into an ongoing conversation about the past, about now, about who we are, about who we want to be. I hope you don’t just accept the music passively and are instead empowered to respond to it. My kind of choral music is about conversations in song. Join me!

**The Woman Donald Trump Took off American Money**
The Nathaniel Dett Chorale presents a concert version of American composer Nkeiru Okoye’s opera *Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom* as part of their Voices of the Diaspora series. Harriet Tubman has been much in popular culture lately. Beginning in 2020, she should have been on American $20 bills in circulation across the US, but Donald Trump’s office has stopped this from happening. Tubman, born Araminta Ross, is part of the black history of Canada and her incredible story and leadership continue to inspire. Cynthia Erivo brought Tubman to life in the 2019 film *Harriet* and has earned Oscar nominations for Best Actress and Best Original Song for it.

Here in Canada, Southern Ontario has been an important marker on the life and enduring legacy of Tubman’s work. Driving through Southern Ontario, you’ll see the Underground Railroad marked with footprints and the North Star. The *Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on the Global Migrations of African Peoples* is based at York University, which is also home to the Nathaniel Dett Chorale. There is deep and rich history of black peoples and cultures across the region and exploring that vibrancy is core to the Nathaniel Dett Chorale.
Commissioned by the American Opera Project (AOP), the opera had its premiere in 2014 in Brooklyn and has been performed periodically since its inception.

“The opera’s grounding in folk music gives it yet another dimension - one that is educational, while entertaining,” wrote Okoye in the original production program. “Between spirituals, juba, ragtime, field hollers, work songs, gospel, jazz and shouts – the opera remains surprisingly contemporary, interweaving these idioms, seamlessly, with Western traditions.

“Many people know about Harriet Tubman as the legendary American hero… I decided to find Tubman as a human being beyond her enslavement and liberation of others.”

The opera enlivens the relationships that inspired Tubman to become a leader. Behind the great risk and danger she faced were people whom she loved dearly. These relationships gave her the strong feelings of love and responsibility to justice that moved her to lead others to safety. Behind all of this is a powerful story of relationships which Okoye has brought to life.

AOP describes the opera as telling “how a young girl born in slavery becomes the legendary Underground Railroad conductor.” More than 150 years on, we can still learn so much more about this incredible woman, the community she helped build and the legacy of her legend.

That legend should have been commemorated with the honouring of Tubman on the $20 bill. But, just as when she was alive Tubman was despised and feared for what she represented – justice and freedom – even now, there are political forces who would further
Robert Cooper
Artistic Director

SPECIAL GUESTS:

Grace Church on-the-Hill,
300 Lonsdale Road

Nobody Writes Songs About Pipelines for Good Reason
March 7, Chorus Niagara presents “Touch the Earth Lightly.” Conductor Bob Cooper shares in an interview that “this concert is about the environment.” He’s leading Chorus Niagara in a concert to educate, inspire, and commit for action on the environment. “Given the last election, the climate has always been on the order paper, but never in this way.” With fires burning out of control all across the continent of Australia, forest fires burning the lungs of the planet in the Amazon, the Canadian government investing heavily in more oil extraction and transportation, and Fridays For Future strikes happening around the world — there are so many conversations about the environment happening right now. Music can be a vital way to have a discussion about the world we should all be trying to build.

For this concert, Cooper is premiering Canadian composer Tawnie Olson’s That’s One Small Step, inspired by the landing on the moon. “She has taken various speeches and actual copy from mission control from the 1969 mission,” shares Cooper, combining them into an “austere, rhythmically challenging contrast” that explores the infinitesimal, yet vital, planet we live on in an infinite universe.

The piece is accompanied by projections on screen, Cooper says: “We’ve pulled the images from NASA to create a montage from the landing on the moon.” Much time has passed since that lunar landing but it has been catapulted back into mainstream discourse with the Apple TV+ non-historical drama, For All Mankind. Space has always captured the minds and hearts of humans, the epitome of which has been the lunar landing.

The main focus of the concert, however, is Norwegian composer Ola Gjeilo’s Sunrise Mass. This beloved work has become a staple of choral repertoire since it was premiered in 2008, placing the familiar text of a Latin mass into a deeply atmospheric and evocative musical composition. For the mass, Cooper is also using projections, developed two years ago and premiered with another of his ensembles, the Orpheus Choir. The projections will match the music, giving shape and form to the sounds. In The Spheres, for example, Cooper’s projections match the planets evolving and coming into form. The mass will also include a glorious sunrise.

“I’ve tried to find ways to interpret visually what the music is saying and doing... By and large, choirs aren’t that interesting to look at. In this day and age, when people are so overstimulated, we have to find ways for people to connect to the music,” Cooper says, and he’s right in this assessment. Traditionally, choirs evoke in a non-visual way: the task of the chorister is never to stand out, always be part of a larger whole, contributing to something greater than oneself without over-doing it. There are some important lessons for ecological protection we can take from this aspect of choral music making. But there needs to be something more.

“Because we deal with text in choral music,” shares Cooper, “we have a responsibility to make our music making as relevant as possible.” Choral music is a niche art form. We like to think that we can be as broad-based and entertaining as other art forms. We obviously want to open choral music to be as broad-based and

JAZZ WITH PASSION

Saturday, February 29, 2020 @ 7:30pm

Grace Church on-the-Hill, 300 Lonsdale Road

Passions are stirred in this creative fusion of jazz, gospel and choral music, highlighted by the Canadian premiere of Will Todd’s evocative Easter oratorio, Passion Music.

Tickets $20-$45. For information call 416-530-4428 or visit OrpheusChoirToronto.com
relevant as possible.” No composer sets words to music without specific reason; there’s actual meaning to those words which, once discovered, is deepened by a musical setting. Overall, in today’s concert halls, fewer tailcoats, more organic experiences, and less highbrow presentations help all music, not just choral music, come alive.

In this day and age of Instagram and YouTube, presenting concerts as though we’re in 18th-century Vienna no longer works. Our audiences have changed and evolved. They’re out on the streets fighting for environmental protection, they are filming Instagram stories about daily injustices on their commutes, they are empowering Indigenous voices of the Wet’suwet’en on Twitter during their lunch breaks, they are looking for discussions to be part of. It’s time for choirs to create space to be part of those conversations.

As a singer, when I’m looking for inspiration to sing the high G on a Sanctus, I can tell you that it isn’t devoid of meaning. It might sound like a G, but sometimes it is me singing “Thank you for being present.” And sometimes it is “This note, this offering is for all the voices out there fighting for a better world. I stand with you. Join me.” Come ask me sometime; I’ll tell you which times are which, and we can have a conversation about it.

March 7, 7:30pm. Chorus Niagara presents “Touch the Earth Lightly.” Conducted by Bob Cooper, the choir is joined by the Niagara Symphony String Orchestra and the Chorus Niagara Children’s Chorus. Partridge Hall, FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, St. Catharines.

**CHORAL SCENE QUICK PICKS**

**FEB 9, 4PM:** The Viva Chamber Singers are joined by the Elmer Iseler Singers in “The Spirit of Peace and Reconciliation.” Co-Conductors Carol Woodward Ratzlaff and Brad Ratzlaff have brought together their Chamber Choir in a program of the work Words, Stories, Truth, A Trilogy in Honour of Canada’s Indigenous Peoples. Mark Sirett won the Choral Canada 2018 Outstanding Choral Composition for this work set to text by Indigenous poet Vera Wabegijig of the Mississauga First Nation and Wikwemikong Unceded Reserve community. Cree composer Andrew Balfour’s Trapped in Stone also features in the concert. Eglinton St. George’s United Church, Toronto.

**FEB 22, 3PM:** The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir presents “Romantics and New Romantics,” a free concert featuring gorgeous German Romantic gems, including Mendelssohn’s Psalm 43 and Brahms’ O schöne Nacht plus contemporary treasures like Laudenski’s Sure on this Shining Night and Ešenvalds’ O Salutaris Hostia. John William Trotter is the guest conductor. Yorkminster Baptist Church. Doors open at 2:15pm.

**Follow Brian on Twitter @bfchang**

Send info/media/tips to choralscene@thewholenote.com.
Have you spent much time wondering about those mysterious things going on inside your body, and especially those processes that your life is utterly dependent upon such as your heart and circulation system, or your breath and the entire respiratory system? Ever been curious about how a hospital trauma team works together in such a coordinated and precise way while working to save a life? Whether you have or not, you may now be wondering whatever does all this have to do with music? These are the questions that Toronto-based composer and interdisciplinary artist Juliet Palmer recently pursued during a research residency at Sunnybrook Research Institute in 2018. Arising out of this period are two works that will be performed in a concert on February 9 produced by Continuum Contemporary Music, that will also include a Continuum-commissioned work by composer Martijn Voorvelt from the Netherlands entitled Frederick's Doctor. I talked with Palmer to find out more about her compositions and how the residency in a hospital informed her creative process.

The first of these compositions is entitled Inside Us, a piece commissioned by Vancouver’s Western Front and premiered in 2018 by the Voice Over mind choir conducted by DB Boyko. Palmer invited choir members to share stories about moments of awareness they had had regarding their breath and their heartbeat. Being involved in the Sunnybrook residency led Palmer to consider the basic things in the body that sustain us and how those things have connections to music making such as singing, playing wind instruments and also, of course, rhythm. “Beautiful stories were shared,” Palmer said, “stories that come from the edges of life such as people being present with loved ones who were dying, being pregnant, giving birth and also signs of stress.” She chose ten stories to create the backbone of the piece that highlight the precariousness of being alive. Palmer edited the story-telling recordings but we never hear the original voice. Instead, the choir performs with earbuds attached to their phones, and in various configurations of solos, duets and full chorus, the performers speak in sync with the recording that they are listening to. In that way, the performers recreate the same inflections, pauses and stutters as the original. “I was trying to capture the musicality of the individual voice telling the story which I find much more compelling than if you were to read that story, or even hear the recording. As well, as a performer, it’s an interesting experience to hear the story in your own ear and channel it out through your own voice.”

Various musical structures and vocal gestures are taken from the stories and Palmer has created a series of cues for the conductor to play with. On February 9, the Element Choir will be performing with Christine Duncan conducting. There will also be some backing tracks created with the vocal soloist Laura Swankey. During two interludes, Swankey will be improvising both vocally and on a turntable with recordings on a custom-cut disc created from ultrasound Doppler diagnostic recordings made at Sunnybrook from Palmer’s blood flow, including both arteries and veins. Palmer describes these recordings as having “distinct sound palettes. You get a sense of space from these recordings, the vast amount of blood flowing into the liver, or the blood moving through the tightened constrained area in your neck. Each has different qualities.” Palmer clarifies that these ultrasound recordings are not audio recordings, but rather the changes in frequency “as sound from a transducer is directed towards the body, bounces off moving blood cells and then returns to the transducer. The resulting Doppler shift conveys speed, pressure and direction.” The projected video images in the performance are inspired by her discovery of parallel processes in daily life – images she observed while riding her bike that reminded her of the medical processes she was becoming more acquainted with.

The second work of Palmer’s on the concert will be the world premiere of The Choreography of Trauma composed for the Element Choir and the Continuum ensemble. This piece is the most direct work to come from her residency, Palmer told me, and is the outcome of having spent a Saturday evening at the trauma bay where she witnessed the trauma team working to save someone’s life. Prior to this experience, she had had a conversation with Dr. Avery Nathens, chief of surgery at Sunnybrook, about the systems that enable a team to respond to someone in crisis, particularly in a high-stakes and often chaotic environment. Questions she asked included, “What is the choreography at play between team members in a constantly evolving situation? How is it all coordinated, how do they communicate, and what is the role of the trauma team leader?” The events she witnessed in the trauma room were captured on a recording she made, and provide the materials for the work – including the ways in which people work together as well as the sounds in the room, such as the electronic sounds of machines and the dialogue between team members.

One thing Palmer noted was the gentle humour amongst the people working. “Everyone is very calm, skilled, and in a state of flow that we might think of as being similar to a musician’s flow while improvising. They are in the flow of what they are trained to do and responding to the changes that are flying at them, and when one element is disrupted, it throws everything out of balance.” Thus the piece has an unpredictable and semi-improvisational structure with the flexibility for the conductor to suddenly take the piece to a different place. There are also a lot of repetitive or recursive structures,
reflecting how there is always someone constantly checking things during the trauma bay process. “At times there is a quieter space, checking in to see how everyone is, more checking in, and then something disrupts that. Some of the words from the interview with the trauma team leader as well as from the event itself are woven into the piece, both spoken and sung. We don’t ever hear the recording I made, but it’s all transcribed and translated into material for the ensemble and choir.”

And elsewhere
Palmer has also just completed another new work, for the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, to be premiered on March 14. Titled Fire Break, Palmer describes it as “a song for the forests that have burned this past year, especially the forest fires that have been fed by climate change.” The harmonic world of this piece is inspired by recordings she made this past summer in Oregon while attending an ecologically-focused residency. While there, she visited a large water reservoir that had been created by the flooding of an area where a forest once stood. The trees had been chopped down before the flooding began, and now, with water levels as low as they are, the roots from the felled cedars protrude out of the water. Palmer experimented with the roots by rubbing them with a stick, like a type of bowing, searching for what the trees might have to say. Contact mics were placed on the roots and the sounds she heard she describes as “incredible and totally unexpected. It was like an overtone series and different for each root. The voices of these dead trees singing to us through their roots is the starting point of the piece.” Composing this work also gave Palmer an opportunity to express both her anger as well as ecological grief for what is happening to the trees and forests of the world. “Trees have been there for so long and have much longer life spans. They have a wisdom we lack and a different sense of time.” At the same time, she doesn’t want to be mired in dystopian visions of the future. “There is so much we can do”, she said. “Planting trees is one of the positive ways forward, as well as connecting with these empathic beings who give us so much.”

Wendalyn Bartley is a Toronto-based composer and electro-vocal sound artist. sounddreaming@gmail.com.

IN WITH THE NEW QUICK PICKS

- **FEB 4, 12PM:** Canadian Opera Company, Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre. Works by Bob Becker will be performed at a COC noon concert, titled “Clear Things May Not Be Seen,” part of their New Music Series.
- **FEB 6, 12:10PM:** University of Toronto Faculty of Music. A repeat of the COC event from February 4 with works by Bob Becker.
- **FEB 6 TO 9, 8PM:** Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, Tafelmusik presents the world premiere of Jupiter, a work by Italian composer and viola da gamba virtuoso Vittorio Ghielmi.
- **FEB 13, 8PM:** New Music Concerts. Harbourfront Centre Theatre. “Serious Smile” features music by Canadian composers Keiko Devaux, Corie Rose Soumah and Brandon Chow, along with a work by German composer Alexander Schubert and a chamber piece from 1969-70 by György Ligeti.

Three members of Bakarlari, Music Gallery March 1

- **MAR 1, 7:30PM:** Music Gallery. Part of the Emergents Series (curated by Sara Constant), the Montreal-based soloists collective Bakarlari will perform contemporary solo works for trumpet, tuba and clarinet by Olga Neuwirth, Cort Lippe, Elliott Carter, Alexandre David, Quinn Jacobs and Olivia Shortt, along with a new trio work by Toronto/Hamilton-based composer Christina Volpini.

James O’Callaghan’s Not non-other, world premiere, Esprit, February 26

- **FEB 26, 8PM:** Esprit Orchestra, Koerner Hall. A program of works for orchestra and electroacoustics titled “Electric & Electric.” Of note is Not non-other by James O’Callaghan for orchestra and octophonic electronics. It will be presented on a surround sound multi-speaker setup and will blend transformed orchestral sound with pre-recorded sound files. Other works include Son of Chamber Symphony by John Adams and Alfred Schnittke’s Concerto Grosso No.1 for two solo violins, harpsichord, prepared piano and string orchestra. Featured soloists: Marie Bérard, violin; Stephen Sitarski, violin; Stephen Clarke, harpsichord/prepared piano.

Three members of Bakarlari, Music Gallery March 1

- **MAR 1, 7:30PM:** Music Gallery. Part of the Emergents Series (curated by Sara Constant), the Montreal-based soloists collective Bakarlari will perform contemporary solo works for trumpet, tuba and clarinet by Olga Neuwirth, Cort Lippe, Elliott Carter, Alexandre David, Quinn Jacobs and Olivia Shortt, along with a new trio work by Toronto/Hamilton-based composer Christina Volpini.
New Opera for Soprano and Cello Promises Multilinear Magic

JENNIFER PARR

Toward the end of January I was invited to sit in on an early staging rehearsal of the new opera, Jacqueline, gaining a rare glimpse into the creation of this experimental world premiere that explores the life and legacy of celebrity virtuoso cellist Jacqueline du Pré, who, at 23, began experiencing numbness in her fingers, at 28 was diagnosed with MS and stopped playing the cello, and in 1987 passed away at age 42.

While the work’s stated format, a duet for soprano and cello, sounds as though it might be very static on stage, what I saw in the rehearsal room was the exact opposite. It moves, is playful, fun, exciting, sad, and unexpected. The music, both vocal and instrumental, is gorgeous and sometimes startling in its layering and detail, echoing the same experimental nature of the libretto and the whole approach of the production. The staging that I saw was equally dynamic: as if happening in the moment, always grounded in the characters’ motivation and inspired by the music, using the full space of the stage, finding a physical shape for everything happening in Jacqueline’s mind and memory. Versatile soprano Marnie Breckenridge embodies Jacqueline du Pré, but at many different ages and stages of her life; the second “character,” is the cello itself – Jacqueline’s closest friend, partner of her greatest successes, witness and sharer in her failures and losses, and finally a potent symbol of her legacy to the world – portrayed by renowned cellist Matt Haimovitz.

There have been other dramatic interpretations of the life of Jacqueline du Pré, notably the play Duet for One by Tom Kepinski made into a film starring Julie Andrews in 1986, and the successful but controversial 1998 film Hilary and Jackie, starring Emily Watson and Rachel Griffiths, with a screenplay by Frank Cottrell-Boyce based loosely on conversations with du Pré’s siblings. There is even a new ballet, The Cellist, being created for England’s Royal Ballet this year by Cathy Marston. All of these, however, follow a primarily linear narrative of du Pré’s life from early success to international stardom, to her famously sad diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, and the devastating effect that this had on both her personal life and her career.

Jacqueline, on the other hand, is not linear but multi-layered, moving through time but also freewheeling into the emotional life, memories and dreams of its central character and her other half, her cello. The concept and inspiration for the new opera came from celebrated Montreal-based composer Luna Pearl Woolf, who says “Jacqueline du Pré has always been in my consciousness as a legend, as a tragic hero, and certainly as integrated into the lives of all the cellists that I know.”

The first impetus to create Jacqueline, in this unique form of duet for soprano and cello, came in 2015 as Woolf finished creating a new medium-sized work for the Washington National Opera. All the producers and opera promoters she was speaking to were looking for even smaller works, with smaller casts, able to be easily produced in smaller performance spaces and taken on tour.

With this “idea of trying to tell an operatic story with very, very small forces” percolating in her mind, she went to see a concert where, as it happens, two pieces of hers for soprano, cello and piano were being performed by Breckenridge and Haimovitz. “The way they made music together,” she says, “was so electric and just so compelling that I could not look away. They are both intensely creative musicians who have played or sung quite a few of my pieces, and I find that each time, no matter the circuitous path they might follow, it ends up feeling as though they are truly inhabiting the ideas in the music, and finding joy in discovering the musical relationships within what I am writing. Watching them pass this joyful energy back and forth made the music explode even more and inspired me. So, I thought, what if I was writing an opera for the two of them? Well, it’s obvious, the opera for the two of them has to be about Jacqueline du Pré.”

Part of the reason for that, she explained, “is that Marnie has a radiant beauty that transcends time and age and character. I have seen her play dark characters and light characters, I have seen her play young and play old, and there’s something about her that radiates, and that can be said about Jacqueline du Pré to the nth degree. Jacqueline’s essence was that she had this otherworldly glow of talent and energy and personality.”

The other impetus for creating Jacqueline as an opera for these two artists, Woolf says, was “Matt, whom I’ve worked with as composer, performer, and on many other levels of partnership for over 20 years. We had talked about [du Pré] a lot, and I knew, when I first had the idea, that he had met her and spent time with her. What I discovered in the process of working on the opera was that Matt’s connection to Jacqueline is very deep.”

When Matt was just 14 and performing in New York, he met Jacqueline’s husband, the famous pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim, whom she had married at age 21 and with whom she had performed around the world until the time she got sick and could no longer play. Since that time Barenboim had not performed with another solo cellist, but when he heard Matt, as Woolf says, “The musicality, the energy, the spirit, that Matt had as a musician inspired Daniel and he thought ‘I’d like to play with this person, but I have to introduce him to Jackie first.’ So, he brought Matt to London and he spent time with Jackie, played her instruments for her, studied with her, and even watched her videos with her while
she was incapacitated, as it was almost the end of her life. Obviously, that had a great impact on Matt as a young person, and what we learned about her through his experience has been invaluable to the process of making this opera.”

In 2016, at the suggestion of Marnie Breckenridge, Woolf teamed up with Pulitzer Prize-winning Canadian librettist Royce Vavrek, whom she knew but had never worked with, and who, she says, has “a real sense of being able to capture that vibrant innocence that Jacqueline du Pré has.” Tapestry Opera’s artistic director, Michael Mori, also, soon came on board as dramaturge and director, and the development process began, leading to several workshops whenever and wherever the team could gather, and finally to rehearsals at Tapestry. The structure, as well as the music, would be inspired by Elgar’s Cello Concerto, a work synonymous with du Pré’s career, and her most famous recording. Like the concerto, the opera has four movements, four stages in the journey of “delving into what Jacqueline was as a spirit, what made her so otherworldly and so incredible, as well as what it means for a person who is experiencing a life of such international fame and glory to have it all taken away.”

Though roughly chronological, this is by no means a linear biography, more a series of “psychological snapshots” that can, in the later part of the opera in particular, hop between time periods. In the first movement, Woolf explains, “we see what Jaqueline was when she was totally alive, including when she is five years old and falls in love with the cello.” This followed by flash points as her career soars, until there is a “snap” to the second movement where she is at “this matrix of a life that was so intense, with signals that were crossing, the beginning of the disease.” Part of the tragedy was that when she tried to seek help for what was wrong with her, no one knew what it was. “People would tell her that she was exhausted because she was a woman trying to do a man’s job.” The third movement gets more fantastical, as she has to retreat from public view and at the same time is being bombarded by personal betrayals on all sides, to the fourth movement where she is almost incapacitated and can only drag herself around the stage.

“Through this whole thing,” Woolf says, “what we’ve developed is that the cello who is onstage with her is her closest ally. It’s her. The cello is anthropomorphized in Matt. Matt is that ‘person’ who is right next to her, her lover, her friend through her whole life until that moment when she has to split with him because she can no longer play; and, really, that is the moment that Matt, the actual person, actually met her.”

As Woolf was telling me this it sent shivers up my spine.

Toward the end, although Jacqueline can barely move and is separated from her cello – who plays alone as if singing an ode to her – she does begin to realize that she can live on through her recordings. As Woolf says, “this is a complicated ending because we are not happy for her, but we are glad for her, and for us, that her talent, her gift to the world, is still with us.” This points as well, to a theme: to Woolf’s and Breckenridge’s shared belief that part of the purpose of the opera is to say “We all have our spark, we need to use it, and we need to pass it on. Jackie only had ten years to do these things, but look at what she did in that time. We may not all be extraordinary like her, but whatever we have can be launched into the world.”

Jacqueline plays at the Betty Oliphant Theatre, February 19 to 23. Cast – Soprano: Marnie Breckenridge; Cello: Matt Haimovitz; Libretto by Royce Vavrek; Music by Luna Pearl Woolf; Dramaturgy & Direction by Michael Hidetoshi Mori; Set & Costume Design by Camellia Koo; Lighting Design by Bonnie Beecher.

**MUSIC THEATRE QUICK PICKS**

- **FEB 1, 8PM & FEB 2, 2PM**: Lagrime di San Pietro with Los Angeles Master Chorale at Koerner Hall. One chance only to catch acclaimed director Peter Sellars’ new fully staged version of this sweeping Renaissance a cappella work by Orlando di Lasso.
- **FEB 3: 7:30PM**: Garner Theatre Productions. “Downbeat: A Launch Concert.” Hugh’s Room Live. A one-night-only event to launch GTP, Canada’s first theatre company focused solely on producing musicals and plays that lend themselves to the actor-musician concept. A top-notch cast of Canadian actor-musicians will be performing.
- **FEB 14 TO 23**: Theatre Sheridan. Stars of Mars. A great chance to see Sheridan’s
stars of mars

talented students premiere the fun Canadian science fiction musical that has been in development with the Canadian Music Theatre Project.

FEB 15 TO MAR 8: Factory Theatre. Lady Sunrise. The world premiere of a new play by Marjorie Chan inspired by the 1936 Chinese classic, Sunrise, featuring musical theatre star Ma-Anne Dionisio, and promising an exciting electronic music-influenced soundscape by sound designer Debashis Sinha, known for his unique take on the place of sound in storytelling.

FEB 29 TO MAR 7: National Ballet of Canada. New Work by Crystal Pite with Chroma & Marguerite and Armand. This is a not-to-be-missed combination of a new work by phenomenal choreographer Pite, and a rare chance to see Sir Frederick Ashton’s iconic Marguerite and Armand, created for and forever associated with Fonteyn and Nureyev.

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

impeachment polkas and bugles (again!)

here we are on the cusp of the month of February, eager to know what’s in store for us in the year’s shortest month. There is always February 2 to look forward to, namely Groundhog Day, for prognostications about what to expect weather-wise in the coming weeks. However while our trusty Canadian groundhogs, Wiarton Willie and Nova Scotia’s Shubenacadie Sam are renowned for their weather forecasting, they have never told us anything about upcoming community musical events. Where can we turn for such information? Right here, one might hope to say. If we were hearing, with some regularity, from community musical ensembles regarding their coming events. Alas, such communication is rare. We have heard very little so far this year from the band world. Send your listings in, folks, and I will let readers know about them.

novel seasonal celebration

It is quite common for bands to have an end-of-season party before the Christmas break. Such parties provide the opportunity for band members and their families to mix and meet. Spouses or partners get to meet band members other than their mates, and band members get to chat with other band members that they may see from a distance every week, but really don’t know. How often do tuba players chat with clarinet players, after all? This year the Newmarket Citizens Band took a different approach. They decided on a 45-minute open rehearsal where family and friends sat and listened. After that, all in attendance mingled and partook of several tables of tasty goodies arrayed on tables at one end of the band’s rehearsal room. Two birds with one stone, you might say.

bugles again

Just when you thought that we might have a break from the topic of bugles, I received a significant email message from Henry Meredith. As you may recall, Dr. Hank, as he is often known, was for many years music director of the Plumbing Factory Brass Band (PFBB). Although Henry is no longer leading the PFBB, and the band is in hiatus, he has plenty to keep him busy in connection with his massive and remarkable collection of musical instruments, and hoping for a museum to give this collection a proper home.

His most recent message was, in a way, thanking me for bringing up “bugles again,” but it was also a significant commentary on the evolution of bugles in various parts of the world. He knows more than a little on the subject; during a visit to his home in October of 2017, I saw some 300 or so bugles of all kinds in his collection! The main “take away” from his suggestions is that, notwithstanding the ongoing initiative I have been documenting over the past months to adapt trumpet mouthpieces to bugles, the real solution is that “trumpeters should learn to play mouthpieces that fit the instruments, not just their faces!” He mentions that on this past Remembrance Day, he played both vintage bugles and modern trumpets in several different keys with several different mouthpieces for seven different horns, all within a 75-minute period! However, very few trumpeters have such talents, and resort to playing bugle calls on their trumpets rather than risk a poor performance on an unfamiliar instrument.

As Dr. Hank points out, a proper bugle gets its unique mellow sound because it has a true conical bore, as opposed to the straight bore of a trumpet. A flugelhorn gets its mellow tone because its bore is primarily conical, but with a compromise straight section. To be able to play a full chromatic scale the horn must have valves, and there is no way to have valves in a conical section of the instrument. Similarly, the new bugles, which I have been advocating for, are a compromise. Most of the bore is conical, but there is also a short straight section to...
accommodate the trumpet mouthpiece. Having heard one of these instruments, in my opinion, the tone is excellent. In summary, most people would never notice the compromise.

Still on the subject of bugles, I recently received a message from Bernie Lynch of the Orangeville Community Band who refers to himself as “an old bugler.” It’s good to hear from people who still believe that there is a place in the band world for a real bugle. He recounts a bit about his personal band involvement, from Orono around 1946, to Weston in 1950, and Chinguacousy in 2012. “Never a very good performer but always a good participant,” is how he describes himself. We need more good participants. Let us hear from more of you out in the community music world.

Topical Repertoire
Periodically I feel compelled to return to the always important topic of a band’s repertoire, who gets to choose it, and making it appropriate for the occasion. That led me to thinking about what a band’s repertoire might be when they wished to focus on a particular current event or commemorate a significant past event, and a couple of U.S. works came to mind, arising from some non-musical searches for information I was undertaking.

As many readers may know, when the U.S. president arrives for any significant event, he is “serenaded” in to the tune of Hail to the Chief. This has been the tradition for over 200 years. However, there was a time when that was called into question. Chester Alan Arthur, who served as the 21st president of the United States from 1881 to 1885, questioned the suitability of that presidential salutation, and towards the end of his term engaged John Philip Sousa in a conversation about it, during which Sousa revealed that it was actually an old Scottish boating song. Arthur then instructed Sousa to replace it with a more suitable composition, and in 1888, Sousa composed two possible replacements. The first of these, the Presidential Polonaise, was adopted, and used for state affairs at the White House for several years before being abandoned. The other composition, the march Semper Fidelis, was never used for such occasions, but did become the official march of the “The President’s Own” U.S. Marine Band. Now, for important state functions, the president’s arrival, once again, is always heralded with Hail to the Chief.

My recent search for music written for important state occasions coincided with some non-musical searches I was making for current political information south of the border. In other words, I was also looking online for information about current impeachment proceedings. That led me to details of the very first U.S. presidential impeachment – that of President Andrew Johnson. I discovered that composer Charles D. Blake had written a musical composition to commemorate this historically important event. The result was the Impeachment Polka, originally written as a work for solo piano. I have, however, never heard of any arrangement of this epic composition for any instrumental group. Surely it is time for someone to write a full concert band arrangement of the Impeachment Polka. After all, bands should be encouraged to include arrangements of ceremonial works originally written for other instrumentation, especially when they are, for whatever reason, topical.

For those who might be interested, both the Presidential Polonaise, and the Impeachment Polka may be heard online. While the Presidential Polonaise, is performed by a full band, the Impeachment Polka performance is solo piano as originally written. Budding arrangers take note. You can also find the full piano score online! So how about it? The WholeNote can’t commission an arrangement, but we will be sure to talk about it, if you write one!

Coming Events

Normally I would mention all of the coming events which have come to my attention in chronological order. However, there is one event that stands out and warrants special mention. This is a benefit concert that the Encore Symphonic Concert Band is performing on February 28 at 7:30 to provide some assistance for Richard Herriott who was recently the victim of a serious fire. He was living above a restaurant in downtown Toronto where a fire occurred that wiped out everything he owned including manuscripts, clothes and instruments. He lost everything! Herriott is described as a very accomplished pianist and composer. Originally from Newfoundland, he has performed with, and his compositions have been performed by, Orchestra Toronto in the last few years. He is also one of the regular rehearsal pianists for the National Ballet. He is a virtuoso performer, and as well as his substantial classical repertoire, he performs many of his own compositions and is a superb improvisor.

This Encore concert is to be a part of a GoFundMe campaign to help Richard get back on his feet. This campaign, to which the Encore band members have already contributed, has raised some $20,000 for him so far. In the meantime, a friend has provided him with temporary accommodation. At the concert, Richard will be the featured soloist with the band, in a performance of Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue. The Wilmar Heights Event Centre, 963 Pharmacy Ave. has generously donated the venue and the Encore band has donated its time and talent. The entire proceeds from the concert will go to assist Richard. ☝

BANDSTAND QUICK PICKS

- **FEB 6, 7:30PM:** The University of Toronto Faculty of Music presents “Wind Ensemble Concerts: Sharing.” Bïôrk: Overture to Dance in the Dark; Kulesha: Streets of Fire (double trombone concerto); Maslanka: A Child’s Garden of Dreams. Vanessa Fralick and Gordon Wolfe, trombones; Gillian MacKay, conductor. Guest: Central Band of the Canadian Armed Forces; Captain John Fullerton conductor. MacMillan Theatre, Edward Johnson Building, 80 Queen’s Park.

- **FEB 9, 12:30PM:** Don Wright Faculty of Music, Western University Symphonic Band. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London.

- **FEB 10, 7:30PM:** University of Toronto Faculty of Music. U of T Jazz Orchestra. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park.

- **FEB 11, 7:30PM:** Concordia University of Toronto, Conservatory of Music. New Music Ensemble. University of Toronto Faculty of Music. U of T Jazz Orchestra. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park.

- **FEB 12, 7:30PM:** Music at St. Andrew’s. “Going Back to New Orleans: Mardi Gras 2020.” Patrick Tevlin, trumpet; Jordan Klapman, piano; The Happy Pals. St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, 73 Simcoe St.

- **FEB 13, 7:30PM:** The Encore Symphonic Concert Band. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London.

- **FEB 14, 2:00PM:** The Wilmar Heights Event Centre, 963 Pharmacy Ave. has generously donated the venue and the Encore band has donated its time and talent. The entire proceeds from the concert will go to assist Richard.

Jack MacQuarrie plays several brass instruments and has performed in many community ensembles. He can be contacted at bandstands@thewholenote.com.
2020 SUMMER MUSIC EDUCATION DIRECTORY PART 1

It’s never too early to start planning your summer musical activities, whether for yourself or your children. Here is “Part 1” of our annual directory of summer music programs, some of which have early deadlines. The remaining profiles will be published in “Part 2” of the directory in the March issue, and the full up-to-date directory is available online at www.thewholenote.com under the “Who’s Who” tab.

• **Domaine Forget - International Music and Dance Academy**

5 Rang Saint Antoine, Saint-Irénée, QC
May 31 to August 20
Contact: Rachel Tremblay
888-336-7438
admission@domaineforget.com
www.domaineforget.com
Deadline: February 15, 2020
Cost: Depending on session and duration of stay
Residential program

Domaine Forget is an academy of music and dance recognized internationally for its outstanding quality of instruction. It is here, on the heights of Saint-Irénée in the magnificent Charlevoix region, that some 500 young students from around the world gather every summer. On the program: masterclasses, individual lessons, chamber music, lectures, special workshops and concerts for every taste.

• **Great Lakes International Summer Music Institute**

Sault Ste. Marie, ON
July 19 to August 1
Contact: Frank Deresti
(705)206-1845
frank.deresti@algomau.ca
http://www.algomau.ca/music-institute
Deadline: June 1, 2020
Cost: $2000 - includes room and board
Residential program

We are a 2-week summer program catering to advanced string, piano and voice students in late high school or university. Through a holistic and collaborative approach, our intensive program aims to provide students with a transformative experience that will positively impact their futures as musicians and as inspired leaders in their fields. Students will arrive playing at a high level on their instruments, and will leave with a wealth of new knowledge, skills, perspective and inspiration. Students will receive lessons from highly-skilled faculty as well as collaborating in daily chamber music rehearsals, performing in masterclasses and recitals, attending workshops and presentations on various topics, attending faculty concerts, and exploring Lake Superior Park and other local attractions.

Don’t miss the March 2020 edition!
Deadline: Saturday February 8, 2020
karen@thewholenote.com or 416-323-2232 ext 26
Summer@Eastman

Eastman School of Music, 26 Gibbs Street, Rochester, NY
June 29 to August 7
Contact: Andrea Schuler
585-274-1564
summer@esm.rochester.edu
Deadline: May 15, 2020
Cost: varies by program
Day program

The Eastman School of Music’s Summer at Eastman program offers students and the community an individualized and world-class music education experience. Choose between residential music programs for high-school students (Summer Jazz Studies and Summer Classical Studies), week-long institutes devoted to various instruments or specialties (for students and adults), and collegiate classes in music education, music history, and music theory. New programs this year include The Unbroken Circle: Native American Song and Dance Workshop, Eastman Percussion Festival, Professional Development for the Orchestral Clarinetist, and online courses in Russian Lyric Diction and Spanish Lyric Diction. Visit our website for course information, schedules and registration details.

Tafelmusik Baroque Summer Institute

Faculty of Music, University of Toronto
May 31 to June 13
Contact: Laëtitia Lancellotta
416-964-9562 x241
llancellotta@tafelmusik.org
Deadline: March 1, 2020
Cost: $1,395
Residential program

The Tafelmusik Baroque Summer Institute (TBSI) is a world-renowned training program in instrumental and vocal baroque performance practice, led by some of the world’s finest musicians in the field. Since its inception in 2002, TBSI has continued to attract high-calibre musicians from far and wide. Consider joining an amazing group of musicians to delve into the world of baroque music: we promise you an intensive learning experience and lots of wonderful music-making. The TBSI program includes orchestra and choir rehearsals, masterclasses in solo repertoire, chamber ensembles, opera scene study for vocalists, private lessons, lectures and workshops, classes in baroque dance and public concerts by both participants and faculty.

Vancouver Symphony Orchestral Institute

University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC
June 27 to July 6
Contact: Ryan Kett
604-684-9100 x246
education@vancouversymphony.ca
Deadline: March 11, 2020
Cost: $1,515
Residential program

The Vancouver Symphony Orchestral Institute (VSOI) offers students a comprehensive and nurturing orchestral training program. Our faculty is comprised of musicians from the renowned Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of VSO music director, Maestro Otto Tausk. Musical opportunities abound, as all of our students play in the Institute Orchestra, rehearse and perform in chamber ensembles, and participate in masterclasses and repertoire classes. The VSOI offers fantastic performance opportunities, including student and faculty recitals, a concerto competition, as well as chamber music performances. The VSOI culminates with performances by the Institute Orchestra in iconic Vancouver settings, including the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts, one of Canada’s finest concert halls.

Westben’s Performer-Composer Residency

6698 County Road 30 North, Campbellford, ON
July 5 to July 12
Contact: Ben Finley
705-653-5508
westbenperformercomposers@gmail.com
www.westben.ca/pcr
Deadline: February 1, 2020
Cost: $0
Residential program

The Performer-Composer Residency at the Westben Centre for Connection & Creativity is an intergenerational and international gathering of creative risk-takers whose practice involves some combination of performance and composition. It is an intensive, week-long collaborative environment, with peer-led workshops culminating in a final performance—deeply woven into the beautiful rolling hills of Canada’s Northumberland County. This is not a typical summer music program; it is not based on teacher-student divisions, tuition or competition. Designed for leading professional, dedicated emerging musicians from Canada and beyond, it encourages perspectival exchanges within a plurality of approaches to music-making, while sharing a commitment to building communities through music.
A.  Concerts in the GTA

Saturday February 1

- 2:00: St. Anne’s Music and Drama Society. Patience. Music by Arthur Sullivan, libretto by W.S. Gilbert. Laura Schatz, artistic director; Jennie Garde, choreographer. St. Anne’s Parish Hall, 651 Dufferin St. 437-233-MADS (6237) or stannesmads.com (contact: $30; $25(1st st)). Also Jan 24(7:30pm); 25(2pm, 7pm); 30(7:30pm); Feb 2(7:30pm).

- 4:30: Beach United Church. Jazz and Reflection. Colleen Allen, sax; Alana Bridge-water, vocals; Steve Hunter, piano. 140 Wineva Ave. 416-691-8082. Freewill offering.


- 8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Power Corporation Vocal Concert Series: Lagrima di San Pietro. Orlando di Lasso. Los Angeles Master Chorale, Staged by Peter Sellars. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. $50; $85. Pre-concert talk by Peter Sellars and Grant Gershon. Also Feb 23 (7pm).


- 8:00: Unitarian Congregation in Missisauga. Fair Trade Coffee House Folk Night. High-energy East Coast Celtic music, acoustic favourites and dancing music. A Piece of the Rock. 84 South Service Rd., Mississauga. 905-278-5622 or Eventbrite. $20 or PWYC. Fair trade coffee and desserts included, cash bar.


Sunday February 2

- 9:30am: Toronto Mass Choir. In Concert. Bayview Glen Church, 300 Steeles Ave. E., Thornhill. info@tmc.ca. Free. Also 11:30am.

- 11:30am: Toronto Mass Choir. In Concert. Bayview Glen Church, 300 Steeles Ave. E., Thornhill. info@tmc.ca. Free. Also 9:30am.


- 2:00: Canadian Opera Company. The Barber of Seville. Seville. Music by Gioachino Rossini, libretto by Cesare Sterbini. Emily D’Angelo, mezzo (Rosina); Vito Priante, baritone (Figaro); Santiago Ballerini, tenor (Almaviva); Élégance Diouf, Percussion; George the Martyr, Toronto – concert only). 416-363-8231 | coo.ca


- 8:00: Unitarian Congregation in Mississauga. Fair Trade Coffee House Folk Night. High-energy East Coast Celtic music, acoustic favourites and dancing music. A Piece of the Rock. 84 South Service Rd., Mississauga. 905-278-5622 or Eventbrite. $20 or PWYC. Fair trade coffee and desserts included, cash bar.


B.  Beyond the GTA

Starts on page 52.

C.  Music Theatre

Starts on page 55.

A GENERAL WORD OF CAUTION.

A phone number is provided to list your event, but you can call 416-323-2232 x27 for further information.

HOW TO LIST.

Listings in The WholeNote in the four sections above are a free service available, at our discretion, to eligible presenters. If you have an event, send us your information no later than the 8th of the month prior to the issue or issues in which your listing is eligible to appear.

LISTINGS DEADLINE. The next issue covers the period from March 1 to April 7, 2020. All listings must be received by 11:59pm, Saturday February 8.

LISTINGS can be sent by email to listings@thewholenote.com or by using the online form on our website. We do not receive listings by phone, but you can call 416-323-2232 x27 for further information.

LISTINGS ZONE MAP. Visit our website to search for concerts by the zones on this map: thewholenote.com.

IN THE CLUBS (MOSTLY JAZZ)

is organized alphabetically by club.

Starts on page 56.

THE ET CETERAS

is for galas, fundraisers, competitions, screenings, lectures, symposia, masterclasses, workshops, singalongs and other music-related events (except performances) which may be of interest to our readers.

Starts on page 58.

42 | February 2020
thewholenote.com
Hall, 651 Dufferin St. 437-333-6236 (8237) or stannemads.com/contact. $30; $25(acr./st). Also Jan 24(7:30pm); 25(2pm); 26(2pm); 30(3:30pm); 31(3:30pm); Feb 1(2pm).


5:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Power Corporation Vocal Concerts Series: Lagrime di San Pietro. Orlando di Lasso. Los Angeles Baroque Orchestra; Kaleo Skarr, conductor. Koerner Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-408-2028. $50; $105; 2pm. Pre-concert talk by Peter Sellers and Grant Gershon. Also Feb 1(8pm).

4:00: Church of St. Mary Magdalene (Toronto). Organ Music for Candlemas. Andrew Adair; organ. 471 Manning Ave. 416-531-7955. Free.

4:00: Georgetown Bach Chorale. Duetting Sopranos. Works by Mendelssohn; Opera arias; Brahms; Neue Liederbinder. The Piano Hall, 157 Main St., Georgetown. 905-973-9909. $45 in advance or $40 at door. Meal to follow.


8:00: Arraymusic. Rat-dripping: Karen Ng. Array Space, 155 Walnut Ave. 847-385-2068. $15 or $120; $65 for season pass. $6 for students. $12.50 with a valid TCard, space permitting.


8:00: Toronto Improvisors Trio. 70 Celebrates Mike Hansen. A series of improvised pieces conducted by Mike Hansen. Mike Hansen, sound artist and turntablist; members of Toronto Improvisors Orchestra. Arras Space, 155 Walnut Ave. 416-830-2653. $10.

Tuesday February 4


12:30: Canadian Opera Company. The Barber of Seville. See Feb 1. Also Feb 2.


7:30: York University Department of Music. Concerto Competition Winners in Concert. York University Symphony Orchestra; Mark Chamber, conductor. Tribute Communities Recital Hall, Accolade East Building, York University, 4700 Keele St. 416-736-5888. $15; $10(st). Ticket There will be no late seating.

February 5


8:00: Opera Revue. Opera Revue. A night of opera, art song and comedy in a casual bar setting. Works by Mozart, Donizetti and Handel. Danie Friesen, soprano; Claire Harris, piano. The Emmett Ray, 924 College St. 416-837-7461. PWYC.

Thursday February 6


A. Concerts in the GTA

McDonald, Buhr and Jokic. Ekleipsis Gui-
tar Trio. St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church
(Toronto), 73 Simcoe St. 416-593-5600 x231.
Free.  
● 7:30: Canadian Opera Company. The Bar-
er of Seville. See Feb 1.  
● 7:30: Ebene. Un Voyage Audacieux. Jae-
gerhuber: String Quartet “Suite Folk-
lorique”; Beethoven: Piano Concerto No.1 in C
Op.15; Piano Concerto No.4 in G Op.58; Bont-
temps; Piano Sonata No.1 e flat. “Marron
inconnu”; Sean Sutherland, Eldred Marshall,
David Bontemps, piano; Odin Quartet. Law-
rence Park Community Church, 2180 Bayview
Ave. 437-863-7387 or Eventbrite. $30. Also
Feb 4/7:45pm, A Different Booklist), 6(Church
of the Incarnation, Oakville).

Saturday February 8

10:00am: Temple Sinai. Shabbat Shirah:
Tizmoret. Temple Sinai Congreg-
tion of Toronto, 210 Wilson Ave. 416-487-4161
or templesinai.net or programs@temple-
sinai.net. Free.  
● 2:00: Amadeus Choir. Amadeus Commu-
unity Chorus: “Amadeus.  
● 7:30: Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orches-
tra. Dvořák and Gershwin. Gershwin: Rhaps-
sody in Blue; Dvořák: Symphony No.5 in F;
Weinzeig: Red Ear of Corn Suite. Brett
Kingsbury, piano; Martin Macdonald, guest
conductor. P.O. Ho Theatre, Chinese Cultural
Centre of Greater Toronto, 5183 Sheppard
Ave. E., Scarborough. 416-879-5566 or cath-
edralbluffs.com. $35-$45; $30-$45(st/st);
free(under 12). 7:30pm. Pre-concert talk.  
● 8:00: Kindred Spirits Orchestra. Rach-
mannov’s Third. Bruch: In Memoriam. Ada-
gio for violin and orchestra, 6:45; Bartók:
Piano Concerto No.3; Rachmaninoff: Sym-
phony No.2. Dmitri Levkovich, piano; Nakwon
Choi, violin; Kristian Alexander, conductor;
Michael Borec, host. Flato Markham Theatre,
171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. 905-604-
3339. $15-$40. 7:15pm pre-concert recital;
7:30pm pre-concert talk; intermission discus-
sion; post-concert champagne reception.

February 9th

The Four Seasons by Vivaldi and Piazzolla
Violinist Mark Fewer and orchestra.
February 9th

www.kruc.ca

Cathedral Bluffs SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Norman Reintamm Artistic Director/Principal
Martin Macdonald Guest Conductor

Saturday February 8, 2020  8 pm
DVOŘÁK & GERSHWIN
Weinzeig: Red Ear of Corn Suite
Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue
with pianist Brett Kingsbury
Dvořák: Symphony No. 5 in F major

Tickets: from $35 (30 student/senior; children under 12 are free)
Order online cathedralbluffs.com by phone 416.879.5566
C.P. Ho Theatre 5183 Sheppard Ave East
(1 block east of Markham Rd), Scarborough
the whole note.com

SUN 9 FEB AT 4
Choral Evensong
for the Queen’s Accession

with Schola Ecclesiae
plus Royal Festive Tea and
BEETHOVEN AND THE VIENNESE SCHOOL
An illustrated music feature with The Choir’s director
Clement Carelse

Flights of Fancy
Spontaneity, Baroque-style!
Feb 9, 2pm
rezonanceensemble.com
2:00: Rezonance Baroque Ensemble. Flights of Fancy. Improvisations in the Baroque style. Works by Bertali, Frescobaldi, Ortiz, Rognoni and others. Rezan Oner-Lapointe, baroque violin; Benjamin Stein, lute and theorbo; David Podgurski, harpsichord; Erika Nielsen, baroque violin. Barnabas Anglican Church, 361 Danforth Ave. 647-779-5696 or rezonanceensemble.com/concerts. $25/$20(online); $15(st).

2:00: Royal Conservatory. GGS Concerto Competition Finals. Performers from the Glenn Gould School compete to perform with the Royal Conservatory Orchestra during the 2020/21 season. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. Free.


2:00: Visual and Performing Arts Newmarket. Young Artists’ Showcase. Alessandro Calicchia, saxophone; Festival Fiddlers (James Law, Jenny Liu, Kasey Huang, Christina Zhang, Harrison Vandikas); Tricia Wrigglesworth, soprano; Antaní Jiang, piano. Old Town Hall, 460 Botsford St., Newmarket. 905-953-5122. $30 (family); $20 (students); $10 (seniors).

3:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Chors in Concert: In High Voice. Works by Hagenberg, Celma-Kursieta, Watson Henderson and others. Women’s Chorus; Women’s Chamber Choir; Elaine Choi and Lori-Anne Dooloff, conductors. Grace Church on-the-Hill, 300 Lonsdale Rd. 416-408-0208. $30; $20 (students); $10 (seniors). U of T students admitted free with a valid TC Card, space permitting.

5:00: Amici Chamber Ensemble, Bohemian Rhapsody. Dvořák: Serenade in D Op. 44; Songs My Mother Taught Me Op. 55; Sarasate: Zigeunerweisen Op. 20; Serouj Kradjian: Dracula’s Ballad; Ravel: Tzigane; and other works. Karson Leong, violin; Joel Quarrington, viola; Double bass; Joaquin Valdepeñas, clarinet; David Hetherington, cello; Serouj Kradjian, piano; and others. Mazzoleni Concert Hall, Royal Conservatory, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. $50; $45 (students); $30 (students and under); $15 (st).

5:00: Burdock Music Hall. Record Release - The Henrys. Empty Nesters; Settle on the Ocean Floor; Loretta; That Was Then; Deer Park. Joseph Phillips, bass; John Sheard, keyboards; Don Rooke, dobro/lap steel; Joe Wright, guitar/mandocello; Davide Difrenzo, percussion. 1184 Bloor St. W. 416-546-4033. $20/$15 (adv).

5:00: Greater Toronto Philharmonic Orchestra. Winter Classics. Haydn: Cello Concerto in D; Beethoven: Symphony No. 6 “Pastoral”; Weber: Overture to Der Freischütz. Eina Yoon, cello; David Flallis, conductor. Dalvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave. 647-238-0015 or gtop.ca. $30; $25 (sr); $15 (st).

5:00: Hannaford Street Silver Band. Festival of Brass. Guest: Gábor Tarkóvi, trumpet. Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. 416-366-7723 or 1-800-708-6754 or host.ca. $22.50 - $44.75.

5:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. TAYO & Claire Hur. Beethoven: Leonore Overture No.3; Glazunov: Violin Concerto; Dvořák: Symphony No.9 “From the New World”. Claire Hur, violin; Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra; Simon Rvard, conductor; Moonlight Arts Centre (formerly Toronto Centre for the Arts), 5040 Yonge St., North York. 416-872-4255. $28; $23 (sr/st).


6:00: Elmer Iseler Singers. The Spirit of Peace and Reconciliation. Music by Mark Sirèt; poetry by Vera Wabejigijj; Mark Sirèt and Vera Wabejigijj: Words, Stories, Truth - A Trifoly in Honour of Canada’s Indigenous Peoples; and works by Peter Togni, Elena Daly, Surl Irving Glick, Eric Whitacre and James MacMillan. VIVAI Singers of Toronto Chamber Choir; Carol & Brad Ratzlaff, conductors. Eglinton St. George’s United Church, 35 Lytton Blvd. 416-217-0537. $45; $40 (sr); $25 (under-30).

6:00: St. Olave’s Anglican Church. Choral Evensong for the Queen’s Accession. Schola Ecclesiae; Clement Carelse, director. 360 Windermere Ave. 416-769-5686 or stolas.ca. Free. Donations welcome. Families welcome. Refreshments included.

6:00: VIVAI! Youth Singers of Toronto. Spirit of Peace and Reconciliation. Elmer Iseler Singers; VIVAI Singers Chamber Choir. Eglinton St. George’s United Church, 35 Lytton Blvd. 416-788-8482. $25; $20 (sr/st).


7:00: Rosedale United Church. Rosedale in Love 2: Amor e Saldade (Love and Longing). Music from Portugal, Brazil and other countries of the Portuguese Diaspora. Jessica Lloyd, vocals; Wagner Petrilli, guitar; Louis Simão, guitar/piano/accordion; Paul McCulloch, cello. 159 Roxborough Dr. 905-525-6567. $40/$35 (adv). Tickets available at eventbrite.

7:00: Continuum Contemporary Music / Music Gallery. Inside Us. Juliet Palmer: The Choreography of Trauma; Martin Voorvelt: Frederick’s Doctor. Element Choir (Christine Duncan, director); Laura Swarkey, jazz soprano; Christopher Mayell, tenor. The Music Gallery, 918 Bathurst St. 416-204-1080 or musicgallery.org. $20; $15 (st/arts/sr/members). Online: $18; $12 (st/arts/sr/membes).


Monday February 10


February 2020

45
Acta in the GTA

- 7:30: Canadian Opera Company. Hansel and Gretel. See Feb 6. Also Feb 15, 16(2pm), 19, 21.
- 7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. What Makes & Great?: Mendelssohn String Octet; U of T Strings (Timothy Ying, violin; Erika Raum, violin; Masumi Rosstad, viola; Shauna Rolston, cello); Rolston String Quartet; Rob Kapilow, conductor. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-408-0208. $40; $25(art); $10(st). U of T students admitted free with a valid TCard, space permitting.

Wednesday February 12

- 12:30: Yorkminster Park Baptist Church. Noontime Recital: Andrew Tice, piano; Ron Johnston, bass. St. Andrew’s Wills, vocals; Bill Bridges, guitar; Jordan Klapman, piano; Ron Johnston, bass. St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church (Toronto), 73 Simcoe St. 416-593-5600 x231. Free.

- 7:30: Opera by Request. Das Rheingold. Music by Richard Wagner. Michael Young, baritone (Wotan); Peter Bass, baritone (Alberich); Angela Gibbon, soprano (Frigga); Natalie Wong, soprano (Gretel); Joel Allison, bass-baritone (The WITCH); Lauren Margison, soprano (Sieglinde); Peter Furlong, tenor (Siegmund); Jillian Yelen, mezzo (Fricka); Gene Wu, bass (Hunding); and others. William Shookhoff, music director. College St. United Church, 5040 Yonge St., Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, 5040 Yonge St., 1-855-366-7723 or stlc.com. $45. 416-366-7723.

- 8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. RCO Concerts Series: Oscar Peterson’s AFRICA. Benny Green, piano; Christian McBride, bass; Lewis Nash, drums; All Star Big Band; John Clayton, conductor. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. 865-8135.

Thursday February 13

- 10:30am: Canadian Opera Company. Opera for Young Audiences: Hansel and Gretel. Music by Engelbert Humperdinck, libretto by Adelheid Wette. Sung in English. Jamie Groote, mezzo (Hansel); Anna-Sophie Neher, soprano (Gretel); Joel Allison, bass-baritone (Peter); Simona Genga, mezzo (Gertrude); Matthew Cairns, tenor (The Witch); Lauren Margison, soprano (Sandman/Dew Fairy); Johannes Debuss, conductor; Joel Ivory, stage director. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. 416-363-8231. Free. First come, first served.


- 7:00: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. U of T Jazz Ensembles. Upper Jazz Studio, 90 Wellesley St. W. 416-678-3750. Free and open to the public. Set 2 starts at 8pm.

- 7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Vocalini. Graduate singers. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-378-3750. Free and open to the public.

- 8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. TD Jazz Concerts Series: Oscar Peterson’s AFRICA. Benny Green, piano; Christian McBride, bass; Lewis Nash, drums; All Star Big Band; John Clayton, conductor. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. 865-8135.

Friday February 14

- 12:10: Music at St. Andrew’s. Noontime Recital: A Time for Love and a Time for Song. Romantic love songs from the Great American Songbook. Tanya Willis Quartet (Tanya Willis, vocals; Bill Bridges, guitar; Jordan Klapman, piano; Ron Johnston, bass). St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church (Toronto), 73 Simcoe St. 416-593-5600 x231. Free.

- 7:30: Opera by Request. Das Rheingold. Music by Richard Wagner. Michael Young, baritone (Wotan); Peter Bass, baritone (Alberich); Erin Armstrong, mezzo (Fricka); Oliver Dawson, tenor (Mime); Lanard Whitting, tenor (Lope); and others; William Shookhoff, music director. College St, United Church, 452 College St. 416-455-2365. $30/$25(adv); $70(Cycle). In concert with English super titles accompanied by piano and selected orchestral instruments.

Saturday February 15

- 2:00pm: Canadian Opera Company. Opera for Young Audiences: Hansel and Gretel. Music by Engelbert Humperdinck, libretto by Adelheid Wette. Sung in English. Jamie Groote, mezzo (Hansel); Anna-Sophie Neher, soprano (Gretel); Joel Allison, bass-baritone (Peter); Simona Genga, mezzo (Gertrude); Matthew Cairns, tenor (The Witch); Lauren Margison, soprano (Sandman/Dew Fairy); Johannes Debuss, conductor; Joel Ivory, stage director. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. 416-363-8231. $39-$109. Tickets half-price for children under 16. Suitable for Grades 4 and up. Also Feb 15(10:30am).

Concerto. New Music Concerts Ensemble; Eve Agoyan, piano; Rolston String Quartet; Brian Current, curator & director. Harbourfront Centre Theatre, 255 Queens Quay W. 416-861-9594. $35; $25(sr/artworks); $10(st). 7:15pm: pre-concert talk.

Opera by Request in collaboration with Berlin Wagner Gruppe.

February 14 - 17, 2020

Toronto Symphony Orchestra:

RACHMANINOFF & SCHEHERAZADE

THU.FEB.13 HARBOURFRONT THEATRE
www.NewMusicConcerts.com

7:30: Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Rachmaninoff & Scheherazade. Opus: as though birds (Canadian premiere); Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No.2; Rimsky-Korsakov: Scheherazade. Stephen Hough, piano; Jonathan Crow, violin; Elim Chan, conductor; Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. $35. Also Feb 15(19pm), 16(19pm). 7:30:


Caliban Arts/Trave Live Events. Trilogy Part 3 - Raise the Spirit Tour 2020. Kahl El Zabar, percussion; Corey Wilkes, trumpet; Alex Harding, saxophone. 918 Bathurst Centre for Culture, Arts, Media and Education. 918 Bathurst St. 918bathurst.com. $40; $30(under 15). Thu.Feb.13 Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, 10268 Yonge St. Richmond Hill. 905-787-2365. $30/$25(adv); $70(Cycle). In concert with English super titles accompanied by piano and selected orchestral instruments.


8:00: Richard Hill Philharmonic Orchestra. Broadway. Works by Berlin, Porter, Sonderheim and Larson. Heather Bambrick, Julie Michels; Diane Leah; Jessica Kun, conductor. Richard Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, 10268 Yonge St., Richmond Hill. 905-787-8511. $34; $29(sr); $20(st); $9(child). rhpco.ca.

8:00: Quiana Lynell. Livewire. Pullums and co. Thessaloniki. Opera for Young Audiences: Hansel and Gretel. See Feb 6. Also Feb 16(2pm), 19, 21.

8:00: Richard Hill Philharmonic Orchestra. Broadway. Works by Berlin, Porter, Sonderheim and Larson. Heather Bambrick, Julie Michels; Diane Leah; Jessica Kun, conductor. Richard Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, 10268 Yonge St., Richmond Hill. 905-787-8511. $34; $29(sr); $20(st); $9(child). rhpco.ca.

8:00: Quiana Lynell. Livewire. Pullums and co. Thessaloniki.
Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. $35. Also Feb 14(7:30pm), 16(3pm).

**February 18 at 8 pm**

**FRANCISCO PIMONTESE pianist**

- **8:00: Music Toronto. Francesco Pimonentesi. Piano. Bach/Boismort Prelude in E-flat “Nun komm der Heiden Heiland” BWV659. Cantata No.140 “Wachen auf, ruft uns die Stimme”. Italian Concerto, BWV971; Bach/Kempff: Siciliano from Flute Sonata in E-flat BWV1023; Fugue in E-flat; Debussy: Images Book II; Liszt: Sonata in b. Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. 416-386-7723 or 1-800-708-6754 or stcm.ca. $30/$25(adv); $70(Cycle). In concert with English supertitles with piano accompaniment and selected orchestral instruments.**

**February 19 Sunday**


**February 20 Thursday**

- **12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company. Majestic Bruckner. Wagner: Siegfried Idyll; Bruckner: Symphony No.7. Donald Runnicles, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. $35. Also Feb 22. Feb 20 only: 6:45pm pre-concert performance by TSO Chamber Solists.**

**Sunday February 16**

- **2:00: Canadian Opera Company. Hansel and Gretel. See Feb 6. Also Feb 18, 21.**

**Monday February 17**

- **5:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Rachmaninoff & Scheherazade. Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No.2, Rimsky-Korsakov: Scheherazade. Stephen Hough, piano, Jonathan Crow, violin; Elim Chan, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. $32. Also Feb 14(7:30pm), 15(8pm).**

**Tuesday February 18**

- **12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company. Hansel and Gretel. See Feb 6. Also Feb 27.**

**February 21 Friday**

- **12:10: Music at St. Andrew’s. Noontime Recital. Schumann: Bilder aus Osten Op.66; Fauré, Dolly Suite; and works by Beethoven. Emily Chia-Lin Chiang & Nicole Agostino, piano (four hands). St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church (Toronto), 73 Simcoe St. 416-593-5600 x231. Free.**

**February 22 Saturday**


- **1:00: Winterfolk XVIII Blues and Roots Festival. Two venues, five stages. More than 100 blues, rock, jazz, country, folk, and roots artists including Lynn Miles, Jack of Keyzers, Swamper-ella, Wendell Ferguson, Tony Quarrington, and many more. The Tranzac Club, 292 Brunswick Ave; The Annex Hotel, 296 Brunswick Avenue. Festival wristbands $25. www.winterfolk.com. From 9am to noon; also Feb 21 (from 10am to 4pm) and Feb 23 (from 10am to 4pm).**
Thanks to Dr. Suzuki Concert
Celebrating the Life and Teachings of Dr. Shinichi Suzuki
Saturday Feb. 22, 7pm

A. Concerts in the GTA

John William Trotter conducts TMChoir.
Free Concert Thursday February 22


Ebe, dancer; Hanna Kiel and Brandon Saye, choreographers. Enoch Turner Schoolhouse, 106 Trinity St. 647-892-8251. $30-$40. Also Feb 23.
- 8:00: Aga Khan Museum/Embassy of the Republic of Senegal in Canada. Baaba Maal: Dunya Salaam. Aga Khan Museum, 77 Wynford Dr. 416-646-4677. $60-$85; $45-$50/stub. Also Feb 18 (2pm).
- 8:00: Art of Time Ensemble. Take This Waltz. J. Strauss II: Emperor Waltz; Shostakovich: Waltz from Film Suite No.1. Liszt: Mephisto Waltz; Bill Evans: Waltz for Debbie; Ravel: La valse; and other works. Sarah Sloan, singer; Siera Raum, singer; Rob Pitch, guitar; Juan Gabriel Olivas, clarinet; Aaron Burashko, piano; and others. Harbourfront Centre Theatre, 225 Queens Quay W. 416-872-4000 or artoftimeensemble.com. $25-$64. Also Feb 20 & 21.
- 8:00: Confluence Concerts. Bullet Train/ Witches on Thin Ice. Madeleine Thien: Bullet Train (dramatic reading); Alice Ping Ye: Witches on Thin Ice, Courtney O’Hara, narrator; Gregory Oh, piano; Beverley Johnston, percussion. Aki Studio, Daniels Spectrum, 585 Dundas St. E. 416-678-4923. $30-$45/adv. $20/30 and under. Pre-concert talk (7:15pm). Also Feb 21.
- 8:00: Oriana Women’s Choir. Ensemble Encore. Vox Femina; Double Treble. Church of St. Mary Magdalen (Toronto), 477 Manning Ave. orianachoir.com. $25; $20/stub (under 35); $10/stub. Also Feb 22 (2pm, Midday).
- 8:00: Sinfonia Toronto. Musical Bridges. Komitas? ISO. Komitas: Two Songs; Sharafyan: Concerto Serenatea; Inciri: Three Songs; Mirzoyan: Elegy; Skalkottas: Five Greek Dances; and other works. Nune Noyik, violin; Beste Kalender, mezzo; Nurin Armian, conductor: Meridian Arts Centre (formerly Toronto Centre for the Arts), 5040 Yonge St., North York. 705-726-1181. $42; $35/adv. $15/stub.
- 8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Maestro Bruckner: Wagner: Siegfried Idyll; Bruckner: Symphony No.7. Donald Runnicles, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. $35. Also Feb 20. Feb 20 only. 8:45pm pre-concert performance by TSO Chamber Soloists.

Federal wristbands $25. winterfolk.com. From 1pm to 10pm; also Feb 21 (7pm to 1am) and Feb 22 (7pm to 1am).
- 2:00: Mississauga Big Band Jazz Ensemble. Jazz at the Legion. Port Credit Legion, 35 Front St. N., Port Credit. 905-270-4771. PWYC.
- 3:00: Intraidea Brass of Oakville. Ladies and Gentlemen: “A Night of Stage and Screen”. St. Paul’s United Church (Oakville), 454 Rebecca St., Oakville. 905-827-0561. $15; $10/stub; free (under 10).
- 3:00: Orchestra Toronto. Telling a Tale, with Tom Allen. Sibelius: En Saga; Raum: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight; Dvorak: Noonday Witch; Prokofiev: Selections from Romeo and Juliet (Suites 1 and 3). Tom Allen, narrator. George Weston Recital Hall, Meridian Arts Centre (formerly Toronto Centre for the Arts), 5040 Yonge St. 416-477-7142. $25-$45; $39/stub; $19 (OTOPus); $15/under 13.
- 3:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Chamber Music Concert Series: Takacs Quartet. Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel: String Quartet in E-flat; Bartok: String Quartet No. 4 in G; Shostakovich: String Quartet No. 9 in C. op. 59, No. 3. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. $40-$95. 7:00: Toronto Mas Choir. Powerup Workshop: Finale Concert. Global Kingdom Ministries, 1250 Markham Rd., Scarborough. info@tmcc.ca. $20; $10/stub.

Sunday February 23

- 1:00: Winterfolk XVII Blues and Roots Festival. Two venues, five stages. More than 100 blues, rock, jazz, country, folk, and roots artists including Lynn Miles, Jack de Keyzer, Swamparella, Wendell Fergusson, Tony Quarrington, and many more. The Tranzac Club, 292 Brunswick Ave.; The Annex Hotel, 236 Brunswick Avenue.
- 3:00: Weston Silver Band. All That Jazz. Kevin Turcotte, trumpet. Glenn Gould Studio, 250 Front St. W. 1-866-909-0930 or ticketpro.ca. $25; $20/stub; $15/stub.
- 4:00: Wychwood Clarinet Choir. Midwinter Suite. Rossini: Overture to Barber of Seville; Van der Roost: Rikidum: Mournant: Piec
and Gelato, 1006 Dundas St. W. 647-896-8295. $30; $15(youth/child).

Tuesday February 25
* 7:30: Canadian Music Centre. CMC Presents: Amahi Arulanandam & Sara Constant. Amahi Arulanandam, cello; Sara Constant, flute. 20 St. Joseph St. 416-361-6601 x202. $20/$15(st/adv); $10(st); $15/$12(adv members/art workers).

Wednesday February 26
* 7:00: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. U of T Jazz Ensembles. Upper Jazz Studio, 80 Wellesley St. W. 416-978-3750. Free and open to the public. Set 2 starts at 8pm.
* 7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Celebrating Our Diversity. Voice Studies students; Korin Thomas-Smith, curator. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, Queen’s Park. 416-923-7052 or musicgallery.org. $20-$45. wheelchair accessible.

Thursday February 27

Friday February 28

Saturday February 29
A. Concerts in the GTA

**North York**
District School Board of York Region.保健。

**Oakville**
130 Navy St., chur, violin; Charles Demuynck, conductor. Seasons; Rebel: Les Éléments. Veronica Man.

**Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts**, 145 Queen St. W. 416-345-9595. $41 and up. 

**Saturday, February 29, 8pm**
2:00: Interludes Series: Alison Young, Mazzoleni Concert Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. Free (ticket required). Tickets available a week prior to concert date. 
3:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. The Composer Is Dead. Stookey: The Composer Is Dead. Kevin Frank, host; Eugene Ye, cello; Simon Rivard, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. $22. Also Feb 22 (I am relaxed performance), Mar 14(4pm).

**Sunday, March 1**
1:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Sunday Interludes Series: Alison Young, Mazzoleni Concert Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. Free (ticket required). Tickets available a week prior to concert date. 
2:00: National Ballet of Canada. New Work. By Crystal Pite & Chroma & Marguerite and Armand. See Feb 29. Also Mar 4, 7(2pm & 7:30pm).

**Monday, March 2**

**Sun, Mar 1 at 4**
Choral Evensong
with the Healey Willan Singers plus refreshments and at 5:

**Toronto Beach Chorale.** Carmina Burana. Music by Carl Orff. TorQ Percussion Quartet; 2 pianos; Christina Lamoureux, sopranos; Michael Dodge, tenor; Matthew Casillis, baritone; Mervin F. Wick, conductor. St. Anne’s Anglican Church, 270 Gladstone Ave. 416-812-3609. $30 (adult), $20 (student, senior, child). 

**Toronto Beach Chorale.** Carmina Burana. Music by Carl Orff. TorQ Percussion Quartet; 2 pianos; Christina Lamoureux, sopranos; Michael Dodge, tenor; Matthew Casillis, baritone; Mervin F. Wick, conductor. St. Anne’s Anglican Church, 270 Gladstone Ave. 416-812-3609. $30 (adult), $20 (student, senior, child).

**From Plainsong to Anglican Chant**
with Dr. Jesse Billett (above)

**Choral Evensong**
with the Healey Willan Singers plus refreshments and at 5:

**Toronto Beach Chorale.** Carmina Burana. Music by Carl Orff. TorQ Percussion Quartet; 2 pianos; Christina Lamoureux, sopranos; Michael Dodge, tenor; Matthew Casillis, baritone; Mervin F. Wick, conductor. St. Anne’s Anglican Church, 270 Gladstone Ave. 416-812-3609. $30 (adult), $20 (student, senior, child).
Sankaran, choral director: George Weston Recital Hall, Meridian Arts Centre (formerly Toronto Centre for the Arts), 5040 Yonge St. 416-964-8337 or 1-855-985-2787. From $39. Discounts for seniors under 59 & under 19. Also Feb 27, 28, 29, Mar 1 (mat).

10:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Music of John Williams. Themes from Jaws, Indiana Jones, Hook, Schindler’s List and others. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. $52. Also Mar 4 (2pm & 8pm). WEDNESDAY MARCH 4


12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company. Opera Connect: Music in the Atium of Princess Margaret Cancer Centre. Howard Bashaw: 15 for Piano; and works by Liszt and Shostakovich. Lauren Margison, soprano; Matthew Cairns, tenor; Joel Allison, bass-baritone; Alex Sulewsky, piano. Princess Margaret Cancer Centre Atium, 810 University Ave. 416-363-8231. Free and does not require a ticket.


12:10: Toronto Beach Chorale. Featuring the TorQ Percussion Quartet and Two Pianos. Sun 3pm. www.torontobeachchorale.com

Thursday March 5

12:10: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Thursdays at Noon: Opera Spotlight. www.rcmusic.com/performance

Friday March 6


17:30: National Ballet of Canada. New Work by Crystal Pite & Chroma & Marguerite and Armand. See Feb 29. Also Mar 6, 7 (7pm & 7:30pm).


19:00: Cortkown Chamber Orchestra. All the Threes. Beethoven: Symphony No.3 in E-Flat Op.55; “Eroica”; Beethoven: Leonora Overture No.3 Op.72b; Sibelius: Symphony No.3 in C Op.52. Little Trinity Anglican Church, 425 King St. E. cortkownorchestra@gmail.com. From $20. Free wine at intermission.

20:30: UofT 12tet. Edward Johnson Building, New Work by Crystal Pite & Chroma & Marguerite and Armand. See Feb 29. Also Mar 7 (7pm & 7:30pm).

20:30: Aga Khan Museum. Amata Siria. Stories Through Music. 77 Wyndford Dr. 416-846-4677. $40; $30 (or/st.).

20:30: De Bouche / À Orelle. In Concert. Philippe B. with Jonno Lightstone, clarinet/flute; Rebecca Hennessy, trumpet; Paul Tarusss, trombone; Peter Lutek, bassoon/clarinet. Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave. 416-892-7837 or dbaoproductions.ca. $30.

21 Old Mill Rd. 416-788-8482. $150. MARCH 4(8pm), 5.

Saturday March 7

20:00: National Ballet of Canada. New Work by Crystal Pite & Chroma & Marguerite and Armand. See Feb 29. Also Mar 7 (7pm-7:30pm).

7:30: Canadian Celtic Choir. An Irish Celtic Celebration. Guests: Anne Lindsay, fiddle; Sharlene Wallace, harp; Jean Willadsen, accompanist; Paul Grambo, conductor. Grace Church on-the-Hill, 300 Lonsdale Rd. celtichoir.ca. $30/$35 (adv.). Also Mar 14 (Royal York United Church, London).

7:30: Jubilate Singers. The Sea: Music Inspired by the Sea. Settings of “Ave maris stella”; A selection of sea shanties; and works by Elgar, Grieg, Rheinberger, Halley, Stan}

Soprano: Rosalind McArthur; mezzo: Ryan Downey, Bradley Christensen, Gregory Finney, baritones; Derek Bate, conductor; Gilll o-Silva-Marín, stage director. St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. 416-366-7723. $55-$95. Also Mar 4, 7 (8pm).

JAMES RHODES, PIANO

THE BEETHOVEN REVOLUTION

THURS, MARCH 5, 8PM

www.glenngould.ca


8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Music of John Williams. See Mar 3.

JOHN WILLIAMS

THE BEETHOVEN REVOLUTION

MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2020 8PM

KOERNER HALL

TICKETS ON SALE NOW! 416-408-0208 www.rcmusic.com/performance


8:00: Toronto Operaetta Theatre. H.M.S. Pinafore. Gilbert & Sullivan. Holly Chaplin, Carl Orff

CARMINA BURANA

Featuring the TorQ Percussion Quartet and Two Pianos

SUNDAY MARCH 1 3 pm

ST. ANNE’S ANGELIC CHURCH

(270 Gladstone Ave, Toronto, near Dufferin & Dundas)

www.torontobeachchorale.com

the whole note

February 2020 | 51
A. Concerts in the GTA


Saturday February 1

• 2:00: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Opera at Western: The Mikado. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London, 519-661-3767. $30/$20(adv). Also Jan 31, 2:00pm. Free pre-concert activities from 1:15pm.

• 8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Youth Orchestra. Land and Wind. Jane Maness, tuba. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4771 or 1-888-745-4771 or kwsymphony.ca. $5. 7:30pm.

Sunday February 2

• 2:30: Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts. Gilbert & Sullivan. Holly Chaplin, soprano; Rosalind McArthur, mezzo; Ryan Taylor, tenor. Art of Time Ensemble; Ralston String Quartet. 350 Queens Ave., Kitchener. 519-579-5477. $25/$20(adv). Also Jan 31, 2:30pm.

• 2:30: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. The Magic of Music. Works by Mozart, Kreisler, Bartok, and others. Von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. $30/$20(adv). Also Jan 31, 2:30pm.

Friday February 7

• 12:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Friday Lunchtime Concert Series. Leslie Kinton, piano. Von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. Free. Also Jan 31, 12:30pm.

Saturday February 8


• 10:30am: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Sun and Moon. Yo Yo Ma, viola. TELUS Centre, Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4711. $15; $11(child). Also Jan 25(Woolwich Memorial Centre, Elmlira), Feb 22(Conrad Centre, Kitchener). 11:00am: Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts. Selkies to She-Wolves: Storytelling Without Borders. Recommended for ages 6 to 12. Ysgo Ogodda and Selena Chiarelli. Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, Rehearsal Hall, 590 King St. W., Kingston. 613-533-2424 or queenus.ca/theisabel/tickets. $12; $6(faculty/staff). Also Jan 31, 10:30am. Free.

B. Concerts Beyond the GTA


7:30: Music at Metropolitan. Spreeza-sural: Music of the Forgotten Galant. Works by Galuppi, Scarlatti, Leo, Handel and others. Rezonance Baroque Ensemble; Musicians on the Edge; Emily Klassen, soprano, Metropolitan United Church (Toronto), 56 Queen St. E. muenited.ca/music. $20; $10(st).


7:30: Opera by Request. Puccini’s Turandot. Naomi Eberhard, soprano (Turandot); Corey Arnold, tenor (Calaf); Amanda Daigle, soprano (Liù); Kyle McDonald, bass-baritone (Timur); Lawrence Shiraki, baritone (Pings) and others. College St. United Church, 452 College St. 416-355-2936. $20.

7:30: Tallis Choir. Palm Sunday to Easter. Tallis: Lamentations; works by Weelkes, Lotti and others. Peter Mahon, conductor. St. Patrick’s Church, 135 McCaul St. 416-266-9780. $30; $25(adv); $10(st with ID); talliscoir.com. 8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. TD Jazz Concerts Series: Branford Marsalis Quartet. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0206. $50-$105.

8:00: Toronto Operaetta Theatre. H. M. S. PINAFORE, Gilbert & Sullivan. Holly Chaplin, soprano; Rosalind McArthur, mezzo; Ryan Downey, Bradley Christensen, Gregory Finney, baritones; Derek Bate, conductor; Guillermo Silva-Marín, stage director. St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 77 Front St. E. 416-395-7723. $55-$95. Also Mar 4, 6, 8(3pm).

Tuesday February 4

• 7:30: Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts. Reading, Writing and Performing. The Mikado. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London, 519-661-3767. $50/$20(adv). Also Jan 31, 7:30pm, Feb 1, 7:30pm. 8, 9.

• 7:30: Elora Singers. Soup & Song: Early Bach Cantatas. St. John’s Anglican Church (Elora), 36 Hendon Street, Elora. 519-846-0331 or elorasingers.ca. $45; $20(st w/ID); $10(child). Also Jan 31, 7:30pm, Feb 1, 7:30pm.

Wednesday February 5

• 12:00 noon: Midday Music with Shipger. Soprano Ellen McAteer & Pianist Geoffrey Coniver. Works by Mozart, Debussy and Britten. Hayway Pentecostal Church, 50 Anne St. N., Barrie. 705-726-1181. $10; free(st).

• 6:00: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Western Performers Concert Series. Weldon Library Atrium, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. Free.

• 8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society. Association of Musical Creators (WLU Faculty of Music). Works by Verdonk, Harton and Kyriakides. Morgan Lovell, cello; Max Lindsay, vibraphone/percussion; Andrew Rinckhart, harp. KCWMS Music Room, 57 Young St. W., Waterloo. 519-569-1809. $30; $20(st).

Thursday February 6

• 7:30: Cuckoo’s Nest Folk Club. Paul Langille & Paul Simc: Blue Valentine. 3 Chaucer’s Pub, 322 Carling St., London. 519-319-5477. $25/$20(adv).

Friday February 7


• 10:30am: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Sun and Moon. Yo Yo Ma, viola. TELUS Centre, Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4711. $15; $11(child). Also
Tuesday February 11

12:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Western University Wind Ensemble. Works by Grainger, Jenkins, Nelson and Danyew. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. Free.

Wednesday February 12

12:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Western University Symphonic Band. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. Free.

Thursday February 13

12:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Western University Jazz Ensemble. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. Free.

Friday February 14

7:30: Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts. Valentine’s Day with Miss Emily. 330 King St. W., Kingston. 613-533-2424 or queenus.ca/theisabel/tickets. $42-$45; $39-$35(faculty/staff); $19-$23(st). Free.

8:00: Bravo Niagara! Festival of the Arts. Kurt Elling. Works by Kurt Elling, Kurt Elling, vocals; Mitch Mitchell, piano; Clark Sommers, bass; Ulysse Owens Jr., drums; Troy Roberts, sax. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre Partridge Hall, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 289-888-9177 or music@bravoniagara.org. $25-$35.

February 14, 8pm
FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre St. Catharines
bravoniagara.org | 289-888-9177

8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Stabat Mater: Beethoven: Symphony No.3 in C; Rossini: Stabat Mater: Aida. Fortunata, soprano; Paula Murthy, mezzo; Andrew Haj, tenor; Stephen Hegedus, baritone; Andrei Fehr, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-857-4711 or 1-888-745-4717 or kw symphony.ca. $20-$87. Also Feb 15.

Saturday February 15

7:30: L’Estoile: Chamber Orchestra. Music of the Knights. Works by Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, Sir Paul McCartney and Sir Elton John. Spot On! Entertainment; Bradley Thachuk, conductor. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 905-857-0222 or 1-855-515-0722. $69; $64(sr); $33(30 and under); $20(arts worker); $17(st/child); $5(ejogo). Also Feb 15(7:00pm).

8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Stabat Mater: Beethoven: Symphony No.3 in C; Rossini: Stabat Mater: Aida. Fortunata, soprano; Paula Murthy, mezzo; Andrew Haj, tenor; Stephen Hegedus, baritone; Andrei Fehr, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717 or kw symphony.ca. $20-$87. Also Feb 15.
Concerts Beyond the GTA

**February 2020**

**North.** Works by Ugoi Praulins, Bengt Olånn, Urmas Sisaak, Vytautas Miskinis, Ola Geljo and others. Rachel Rensink-Hoff, conductor; Lesley Kingham, piano. St. Thomas Anglican Church (St. Catharines), 59 Ontario St., St. Catharines. 905-688-0722 or 1-855-515-0722 (adv); $20 (sr); $10 (stu-university); $5 (youth/child).

- **8:00:** Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society. Chamber Music Concert. Bach: Sonata No. 2 in B flat major; Rodrigo: En los trigales. Invocation et danse, Treis piezas espaciosas; Debussy: Children’s Corner Suite (complete); Rimsky-Korsakov: Capriccio espagnol Op.34. Jorge Caballero, guitar.

**Sunday February 23**

- **2:30:** FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. Leonard Cohen’s Dance Me. Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal. 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 905-688-0722 or 1-855-515-0722 or FirstOntarioPAC.ca. $59; $49 (Hot Ticket members); $25(st-university); $5 (high school). Also 2:30pm.

- **8:00:** Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society. Chamber Music Concert. Mozart: Sonata in G K 379; Prokofiev: Sonata No. 2 in D Op.94a; Elgar: Sonata in e Op.82. Bénédicte Lauceuri, violin; Angela Park, piano. KWCMS Music Room, 57 Young St. W., Waterloo. 519-589-1809. $35; $20 (ht).

**Wednesday February 26**

- **8:00:** Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society. Chamber Music Concert. Mozart: Sonata in G K 379; Prokofiev: Sonata No. 2 in D Op.94a; Elgar: Sonata in e Op.82. Bénédicte Lauceuri, violin; Angela Park, piano. KWCMS Music Room, 57 Young St. W., Waterloo. 519-589-1809. $35; $20 (ht).

**Thursday February 27**


**Friday February 28**

- **12:30:** Don Wright Faculty of Music. Friday at 12:30 Concert Series. The Camryx Trio. Von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-688-0717. Free.

**Saturday February 29**

- **2:00:** Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Youth Orchestra. Concert 2. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717 or kwsymphony.ca. $11 (child).
- **2:00:** Peterborough Singers. Canadian Legends. Anka: Diana; Mitchell: Both Sides Now; Lightfoot: Early Morning Rain; Page/Roberson: IF I Had A Million Dollars; Lang: Constant Craving. Aadin Church, baritone; Kate Suhr, soprano; Barry Haggerty, guitar; Steve McCracken, sax; Curtis Cranorkwitt, drums. Calvary Church Peterborough, 1421 Lansdowne St. W., Peterborough. 705-745-1820. $15; $10 (st).

**March 1**

- **3:00:** A Life and Legacies. Schubert “The Trout”. Rossini: Duo; Schubert: Quintet in A DE667 “The Trout”. Angela Park, piano; Mayumi Seiler; violin; Yehonatan Berick, viola; Rachel Mercer, cello. Joel Quarrington, bass. First Unitarian Church (Hamilton), 170 Dundurn St. S., Hamilton. 905-399-5125. $20; $15 (sr); $10 (st).

**Saturday March 7**

**Sunday March 1**

- **12:30:** Don Wright Faculty of Music. Dance in Motion. Studio in Motion. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-688-0717. Free.

**March 8**

- **2:00:** Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Mendelssohn & Schumann. Enescu: Pastoral; Fantaisies; Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto in e minor; Schumann: Symphony No.3 in E flat “Rhenish”. Liza Fertschman, violin; Gabriel Bebeleska, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717 or kwsymphony.ca. $20-$85. Also Mar 7.

**Saturday March 7**

**Thursday March 5**

- **8:00:** TD Sunfest World Music & Jazz Series. Derwish. Aeolian Hall, 795 Dundas St. E., London. sunfest.on.ca. $40/$35 (adv).

**Friday March 6**

- **12:30:** Don Wright Faculty of Music. Fridays at 12:30 Concert Series. Erika Raum, violin; Thomas Wiebe, cello. Von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-688-1767. Free.

**Saturday March 7**

**Sunday March 8**

- **2:00:** Barrie Concert Band. Barrie Concert Rock Band. Collier Street United Church, 112 Coller St., Barrie. 705-735-0720. $25; $10 (child); free under 13.
- **7:30:** Chorus Niagara. Touch the Earth Lightly. Gjeilo: Sunset: A Symphonic Mass; Olson: Eolian Suite in E major. Chorus Niagara. KUNÉ, multi-instrumentalists. Aadin Church, baritone; Kate Suhr, soprano; Barry Haggerty, guitar; Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-688-0717. Free.

**March 9**

- **2:00:** Niagara Symphony Orchestra. A Job in the Library. Kevin Lau, soloist. Cards from a Blue Planet (selections); Good: An Ocean Called Owen. NACO Arts & Winds Wind Trio; Dwek: Sinfonia; author, artist, songwriter; Scott Good, composer; arranger; narrator: Bradford Thachuck, conductor. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 905-688-0722 or 1-855-515-0722. $29; $20 (st); $15 (ht). $10 (under 15 valid id); $5(eyeGO high school student id valid).
- **8:00:** Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society. Mendelssohn’s Barcarolle-Fantaisie; Mendelssohn: Le Rhenish; Enescu: Pastoral; Fantaisies; Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto in e minor; Schumann: Symphony No.3 in E flat “Rhenish”. Liza Fertschman, violin; Gabriel Bebeleska, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717 or kwsymphony.ca. $20-$85. Also Mar 7.

**Wednesday March 4**

- **12:00 noon:** Midday Music with Shigeru. Keyboard only. Don Wright Faculty of Music. Fridays at 12:30 Concert Series. Erika Raum, violin; Thomas Wiebe, cello. Von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-688-1767. Free.

**FirstOntario PAC**

- **Sunday March 1:**
  - **8:00:** Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Mendelssohn & Schumann. Enescu: Pastoral; Fantaisies; Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto in e minor; Schumann: Symphony No.3 in E flat “Rhenish”. Liza Fertschman, violin; Gabriel Bebeleska, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717 or kwsymphony.ca. $20-$85. Also Mar 6.

---
C. Music Theatre

These music theatre listings contain a wide range of music theatre types including opera, operetta, musicals and other performance genres where music and drama combine. Listings in this section are sorted alphabetically by presenter.

- **Blackrose Entertainment.** Songs of Pride Land: Music of The Lion King. Regent Theatre, 50 King St. E., Oshawa. 905-721-3399. $25. Feb 17, 2pm.


- **Canadian Opera Company.** Opera Connect: Music in the Atrium of Princess Margaret Cancer Centre. Princess Margaret Cancer Centre Atrium, 610 University Ave. 416-383-8231. Free and does not require a ticket. Mar 4, 12pm.


- **Canadian Stage.** The Barber of Seville. Music by Gioachino Rossini, libretto by Cesare Sterbini. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 10268 Yonge St., Richmond Hill. 905-885-1071. $32.50-$70(Cycle). In concert with English Surtitles and Orchestra. Feb 14, 7:30pm. Also Feb 15(2pm/7:30pm).

- **Canadian Opera Company.** Hansel and Gretel. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. 416-383-8231. $28; $20(sr); $15(st). Opens Feb 28, 8pm. Runs to Mar 7. Wed-Sat(8pm), Centre Performance. Feb 29(2pm), Centre Performance.

- **Kampong Community Players.** Mamma Mia! Music and lyrics by Benny Anderson, Björn Ulvaeus, and some songs with Stig Anderson, book by Catherine Johnson. Geor- gian Theatre, 1 Georgian Drive, Georgian College Campus, Building C, Barrie. 705-729-4229. $25.97-$32.95. Opens Feb 6, 8pm. Runs to Feb 16. Thur-Sat(8pm), Sun(2:30pm).

- **Lowther Ossington.** Motherhood: The Musical. Written by Sue Fabish. Lower Ossington Theatre, 100A Ossington Ave. 1-888-524-6292. $59.99. Opens Jan 17, 7:30pm. Runs to Feb 16. Fri/Sat(7:30pm), Sat/Sun(3:30pm).

- **Lower Ossington.** Beauty and the Beast. Music by Alan Menken, lyrics by Howard Ashman and Tim Rice, book by Linda Woolvorton. Randolph Theatre, 736 Bathurst St. 1-888-324-6282. $54-$99.79.99. Opens Mar 5, 7:30pm. Runs to Apr 5. Thurs-Sat(7:30pm), Sun(3:30pm), Sun(2:45pm). Apr(1pm).

- **City Youth Male Vocal Productions.** The Hunchback of Notre Dame. Music and lyrics by Andrew Schwartz, based on the novel. Meadowvale Theatre, 6315 Meadowvale Rd. 905-615-4720. $35; $23(sr); $31(st). Opens Mar 8, 8pm. Runs to Mar 15. Thurs-Sat(8pm), Sun(2:30pm). Also Mar 14(2pm).

- **City Youth Players/Electric Moon The- atre Company.** The Addams Family. Music and lyrics by Andrew Lippa, book by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elise. City Playhouse Thea- tre, 1000 New Westminister Dr., Thornhill. 416-500-2721. $29; $25(sr); $22(ch). Opens Feb 21, 8pm. Runs to Feb 23. Fri/Sat(8pm), Sun(2:30pm).

- **Don Wright Faculty of Music.** Opera at Western: The Mikado. Music by Arthur Sulli- van, libretto by W. S. Gilbert. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-5767. $30-$200. Also Feb 15(2pm), 7:30pm, 9:20pm. Opens Jan 30, 2pm. Runs to Feb 9. Fri(7:30pm), Sat(2pm). Also: note also Feb 9(2pm).

Beat by Beat | Mainly Clubs, Mostly Jazz!

On February 7, the American guitarist Russell Malone plays at Hugh’s Room Live. For those unfamiliar with his work, Malone is a swinging, bluesy player, steeped in the hard bop tradition, who has worked with many of jazz’s leading names, including bassists Ron Carter, Ray Brown and Christian McBride, keyboardists Benny Green, Jimmy Smith and Monty Alexander, and crossover star vocalists Harry Connick, Jr. and Jana Krell. It is unusual to see someone of Malone’s stature playing in Toronto outside of a major festival setting; to see him in a club, as opposed to a soft-seat theatre, is more unusual still, and speaks to the singular nature of this event. Malone favours large, hollow-body guitars, minimal effects and clear, articulately hand technique. He is representative of a jazz guitar tradition that extends back to George Benson, Wes Montgomery and Charlie Christian, and he is an expert interpreter of the Great American Songbook. A highly recommended show, for fans of the guitar generally, Malone specifically and, really, anyone who has an interest in the living history of jazz.

A day before Russell Malone, JV’s Boogalo Squad – a classic-format organ trio led by keyboardist Joel Visentin, with guitarist Adam Beer-Colacino and drummer Jeff Halischuk – plays at Hugh’s Room Live. The theme of this particular evening? The Squad “does the Beatles.” There is a rich history of jazz musicians playing Beatles repertoire, from Grant Green’s 1965 album I Want To Hold Your Hand, with

D. In the Clubs (Mostly Jazz)

2.0, 9:30pm Fawkes & Howd w/ Andrew Machum. Feb 3 9pm Emile D’On. Feb 8 9:30pm James Hill Presents: Local Talent. Feb 9 9pm The Henrys. Feb 14 9:30pm Naomi Frosio: A Sad Valentine’s Show, 9:30pm Danielle Knibbe and Major Love. Feb 16 9:30pm Nathan Smith. Feb 16 6:30pm Prude. Feb 20 8pm Zachary Lively w/ Melanie Brakle. Feb 23 10pm Dark Monday. Feb 28 6:30pm Les Fil’s FACTor, 9:30pm Delta Will and Year of Glad. Feb 28 9pm Jacob Moon.

Castro’s Lounge 216 Queen St. E. 416-689-8272 castroslounge.com All shows: No cover/PWYC.

C’est What 67 Front St. E. (416) 867-9499 cestwhat.com (full schedule) All concerts are PWYC unless otherwise noted.

Emmet Ray, The 924 College St. 416-792-4437 theemmetray.com (full schedule) All shows: No cover/PWYC.

Grossman’s Tavern 379 Spadina Ave. 416-977-0700 grossmantavern.com (full schedule) All shows: No cover (unless otherwise noted).

The Blue Goose Tavern 1 Blue Goose St. 416-255-2442 thebluegoostavern.com (full schedule)

Bloom 2315 Bloor St. W. 416-767-1315 bloomrestaurant.com (full schedule) All shows 7pm 19 - Call for reservations.

Burdock 1814 Bloor St. W. 416-546-4033 burdockto.com Ticket prices vary by show, but typically $10-$20; check website for individual show prices.

Feb 1 5:30pm Oscar Presents: Coffeehouse Runs to Feb 1 Thurs-Sat(8pm).


western. Chocolate Voices Experience. Come taste the music with us! Join the multiple award-winning chocolatier Angela Ross, chocolatier; Chris Cameron, opera singer/author; Brian Finley, piano. Clock Tower Cultural Centre, 36 Front St. S., Campbellford. 705-653-5508 or 1-877-883-5777. $65. Feb 15, 7pm.

C. Music Theatre

Vera Causa Opera. Rapunzel & The Dino Opera by Dylan Langan. Parkwood Gardens Church, 501 Whitelaw Rd., Guelph. 519-277-8277. $15; free (st/eh). Feb 15, 2pm. Also Feb 15(7pm, Cambridge), 16(2pm, Waterlooo).

Vera Causa Opera. Rapunzel & The Dino Opera by Dylan Langan. Cambridge Centre for the Arts, 60 Dickson St., Cambridge. 519-277-8277. $15; free (st/eh). Feb 15, 7pm. Also Feb 15(2pm, Guelph), 16(2pm, Waterlooo).

Vera Causa Opera. Rapunzel & The Dino Opera by Dylan Langan. First United Church Waterlooo, 16 William St. W., Waterloo. 519-277-8277. $15; free (st/eh). Feb 16, 2pm. Also Feb 15(2pm, Guelph), 16(7pm, Cambridge).

Victoria College Drama Society. 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. Music and lyrics by William Finn, book by Rachel Sheinkin, conceived by Rebecca Feldman. Isabel Bader Theatre, 93 Charles St. W., vcds. $15; $12(r); $10(st). Opens Jan 30, 8pm.


Feb 27 9pm The Great American Songbook. A highly recommended show, for fans of the guitar generally, Malone specifically and, really, anyone who has an interest in the living history of jazz. There is a rich history of jazz musicians playing Beatles repertoire, from Grant Green’s 1965 album I Want To Hold Your Hand, with
saxophonist Hank Mobley, organist Larry Young and drummer Elvin Jones, to Brad Mehldau’s ever-popular 1996 cover of Blackbird, amidst innumerable other examples. Visentin and company have been steadfast in their commitment to the organ trio, a format which – in Canada, at least – remains something of a rarity. Also happening at Hugh’s Room Live, on February 24, is “The Sweetest Noise: A Birthday Celebration of Justin Haynes.” Haynes, one of Canada’s leading avant-garde musicians, passed away early last year at the age of 46. The proceeds from this show will go towards the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, a resident-led community land trust that seeks to “acquire land and use it to meet the needs of Parkdale by leasing it to non-profit partners who can provide affordable housing, furnish spaces for social enterprises and non-profit organizations,” and create a sense of balance for the Parkdale community in the midst of development and gentrification. (Haynes was a longtime Parkdale resident, and lived there at the time of his passing.)

**The Rex**

At The Rex on February 20 and 21, George Garzone – another preeminent American jazz musician – plays with JabFung. JabFung is an ongoing partnership between Toronto bassist Julian Anderson-Bowes and Toronto-born, LA-based drummer Anthony Fung, that has evolved into one of the city’s most interesting collaborative projects. Typically presenting a handful of events each year, the mandate for JabFung is to bring special guest artists into the fold for specific shows, with the constant being the synergy between Anderson-Bowes and Fung. Recent concerts have included a Wayne Shorter tribute, with saxophonist Leland Whitty and pianist Brian Dickinson in December, and a show with vocalist Mingla Chen, saxophonist Luis Deniz, and guitarist Andrew Marzotto, last April. This month will mark the second time that the group has appeared with Garzone at The Rex; the three musicians played for two nights in July, 2017. Garzone is a masterful tenor player in the post-Coltrane style, with a far-reaching

---

**D. In the Clubs (Mostly Jazz)**

- **Jazz Room, The**
  Located in the Huether Hotel, 59 King St. N., Waterloo. 226-476-1565
  kwjazzroom.com (full schedule)
  Attendees must be 19+. Cover charge varies (generally $12-$25)
  Feb 18:30pm Amos Hoffman & Noel Lemen Quartet. Feb 6 8pm Bernie Senesney Trio feat. Eric Alexander. Feb 7 8:30pm Tim Moher Octet. Feb 8 3pm Saturday Afternoon Jazz Jam. 9:30pm Kevin Brett and The Sisters Euclid.
  Feb 14 8:30pm Jon Nebra. Feb 15 8:30pm Remy Le Boeuf Group. Feb 21 8:30pm New Vibes. Feb 22 8:30pm Patrick Boyle Group.

- **Lula Lounge**
  1585 Dundas St. W. 416-588-0307
  lulalounge.ca (full schedule)
  Every Fri 7:30pm Afterwork Global Party Series free before 8pm; Every Fri 8:30pm Havana Club Fridays $10; Every Sat 10:30pm Salxa Saturdays $10.
  Feb 2 12pm Lula’s Drag Brunch Extravaganza, 4:30pm TDot Batsu Fundraiser. Feb 6 8pm One-Stop Jazz Safari. Feb 9 5pm Songs from the Heart. Feb 13 8:30pm The Tiki Collective.
  Feb 16 7pm The Salida Project. Feb 17 8pm Storytellers. Feb 18 9pm Shuffle Demons CD Release Party.

- **Manhattans Pizza Bistro & Music Club**
  951 Gordon St., Guelph 519-767-2440
  manhattans.ca (full schedule)
  Feb 10 9pm The Lila Project. Feb 11 9pm East to West.

- **Mezzetta Restaurant**
  681 St. Clair Ave. W. 416-658-5687
  mezzettarestaurant.com (full schedule)
  Feb 13 9pm The Jim Heineman Trio.

- **Monarch Tavern**
  12 Clinton St. 416-531-5833
  themonarchtavern.com (full schedule)
  Feb 14 10pm Belleville-Ville.
  Feb 15 10:30pm Martin Loomer & His Orange Devils Orchestra.
  Feb 16 11pm Belleville-Ville. Feb 19 11pm The Spinners. Feb 20 11pm The Shivas. Feb 29 8pm The Mattson 2.

- **N’awlins Jazz Bar & Dining**
  299 King St. W. 416-595-1958
  nawlins.ca
  All shows: No cover/PWYC.

- **Nice Bistro, The**
  117 Brock St. N., Whitby. 905-688-8355
  nicelive.com (full schedule)
  Live jazz and dinner; $45.00 per person. Dinner from 6pm and music from 7pm to 9pm.
  Feb 12 9pm Paper Moon. (Zoey Adams & Tony Quarrrington).

- **Old Mill, The**
  21 Old Mill Rd. 416-236-2641
  oldmilltoronto.com (full schedule)
  The Home Smith Bar: No reservations. No cover. $20 food/drink minimum. All shows: 7:30-10:30pm unless otherwise listed.

- **Only Café, The**
  972 Danforth Ave. 416-463-7843
  theonlycafe.com (full schedule)
  Feb 17 7pm John Sherwood.
  Feb 21 7pm Ken Meurs.

- **The Pilot Tavern, The**
  22 Cumberland Ave. 416-923-5716
  thepilot.ca
  All shows: 2:30pm. No cover.

- **The Poetry Jazz Café**
  224 Augusta Ave. 416-532-6-747
  poetryjazzcafe.com (full schedule)
  Poetry Slams. Every Thurs 8pm.

- **The Reservoir Lounge, The**
  136 Ossington Ave. 416-532-6-747
  reposodabar.com (full schedule)
  The Reservoir Lounge, The.
  Feb 28 8pm Brian Blain’s Blues Campfire Jam. Feb 29 Alana Bridge-water.

- **The Rex Hotel Jazz & Blues Bar, The**
  194 Queen St. W. 416-588-2475
  there.ca (full schedule)
  Call for cover charge info.
command of harmony, tone, and time, and a penchant for sustained melodic intensity, all of which will likely be on full display in the chordless trio format, in which the saxophonist will have both the extra timbral space afforded by the lack of a comping instrument and the rhythmic support to swing for the fences.

On February 6 and 7, also at The Rex, Mike Murley – another tenor player with chops, vision and a sophisticated harmonic palate – leads his saxtet, which is, in fact a septet. The saxtet features Murley, Tara Davidson, Allison Au and Chris Gale on saxophones, with a rhythm section of pianist Nancy Walker, bassist Jim Vivian and drummer Nick Fraser. Murley is a skilful arranger, and the music that he prepares for this intergenerational ensemble is sure to showcase his sense of musicality, rather than simply being a blowing vehicle for his technically accomplished accomplices. Whenever two or more saxophonists occupy space on the same bandstand, (as anyone who has ever attended a jazz jam session can confirm) there is an undeniable danger of unrestrained virtuosic one-upmanship. The likelihood of this occurring with this particular group of mature, tasteful saxophonists, however, is low. In addition to Murley and Garzone’s respective stints, The Rex will be hosting an additional two-night residency in February for bassist Mark Godfrey’s album release with his quintet, on February 26 and 27. Godfrey is joined by Au, Fraser, saxophonist Matt Woroshyl and pianist Chris Pruden, all in support of his new album, Square Peg.

### D. In the Clubs (Mostly Jazz)

**Feb 1** 12pm Adam & Adam’s Remnants, 3:30pm Swing Shift Big Band, 7pm Neon Eagle, 9:45pm Dave Young Quintet. **Feb 2** 12pm Excelsior Dixieland Jazz Band, 3:30pm Club Django, 7pm Patrick Smith Quintet. **Feb 3** 6:30pm U of T Student Jazz Ensembles, 9:30pm Terry Promane’s U of T Tzet. **Feb 4** 6:30pm Marie Goudy / Jocelyn Barth Quintet, 9:30pm Classic Rex Jazz Jam. **Feb 5** 6:30pm Trevor Giancola Quartet, 9:30pm Vaughan Misener Trio. **Feb 6** 6:30pm Victor Bateman Trio, 9:45pm Mike Murley Sextet. **Feb 7** 7pm Hogtown Syncopators, 6:30pm Jenna Marie R&B, 9:45pm Mike Murley Saxet. **Feb 8** 12pm Adam & Adam’s Remnants, 3:30pm Laura Hubert Band, 7pm Triple Bari Ensemble, 9:45pm Andy Ballantyne. **Feb 9** 12pm Excelsior Dixieland Jazz Band, 3:30pm Red Hot Ramble, 7pm Patrick Smith Quintet, 9:30pm Harrison2. **Feb 10** 6:30pm U of T Student Jazz Ensembles, 9:30pm Bill Todd Quartet. **Feb 11** 6:30pm Marie Goudy / Jocelyn Barth Quintet, 9:30pm Classic Rex Jazz Jam, 12pm Trevor Giancola Quartet, 9:30pm Hannah Barstow Trio. **Feb 13** 6:30pm Victor Bateman Trio, 9:30pm Remi-Jean LeBlanc. **Feb 14** 4pm Hogtown Syncopators, 6:30pm Jenna Marie R&B, 9:45pm Alex Dean Quartet. **Feb 15** 12pm Adam & Adam’s Remnants, 3:30pm Big City Big Band, 7pm Neon Eagle, 9:45pm Marito Marques. **Feb 16** 12pm Excelsior Dixieland Jazz Band, 3:30pm Dr. Nick & The Rokkertcoasters, 7pm Patrick Smith Quintet, 9:30pm Jesse Malone Quintet. **Feb 17** 10pm U of T Student Jazz Ensembles, 9:30pm Christian Overton’s Composers Collective. **Feb 18** 6:30pm Marie Goudy / Jocelyn Barth Quintet, 9:30pm Classic Rex Jazz Jam. **Feb 19** 6:30pm Trevor Giancola Quartet, 9:30pm Aimee Claxton’s Joni Mitchell Tribute. **Feb 20** 6:30pm Jv’s Boogalo Squad, 9:45pm JabFung w/ George Garzone. **Feb 21** 4pm Hogtown Syncopators, 6:30pm Jenna Marie R&B, 9:45pm JabFung w/ George Garzone. **Feb 22** 12pm Adam & Adam’s Remnants, 3:30pm Paul Reddick, 7pm Neon Eagle, 10pm Soul Stew. **Feb 23** 12pm Excelsior Dixieland Jazz Band, 3:30pm Doghouse Orchestra, 7pm Patrick Smith Quintet, 9:30pm Barry Romanberg Group. **Feb 24** 6:30pm U of T Student Jazz Ensembles, 8:30pm John Macleod’s Rex Hotel Orchestra. **Feb 25** 6:30pm Marie Goudy / Jocelyn Barth Quintet, 9:30pm Classic Rex Jazz Jam. **Feb 26** 6:30pm Trevor Giancola Quartet, 9:30pm Mark Godfrey Quintet CD Release. **Feb 27** 6:30pm Jv’s Boogalo Squad, 9:30pm Mark Godfrey Quintet CD Release. **Feb 28** 4pm Hogtown Syncopators, 6:30pm Jenna Marie R&B, 9:45pm Way North, Feb 29 12pm Adam & Adam’s Remnants, 3:30pm Chris Hunt Tenet + 2, 7pm Neon Eagle, 9:45pm Dave Turner. **Salty Dog Bar & Grill, The**

- **1980 Queen St. E. 416-849-5064 thesaltydog.ca (full schedule)**
  - **Feb 10** Every Tue 10-10pm Jazz Night. Every Thu 8:30pm Karaoke. Every Fri 9:30pm Blues Jam - house band with weekly featured guest. Every Sat 3pm Salty Dog Saturday Matinée.

**Sauce on Danforth**

- **1376 Danforth Ave. 416-748-1376 sauceondanforth.com**
  - **Feb 13 & 14** All shows: no cover. Every Mon 9pm Gareth Parry’s Book Club. Every Tue 8pm Julian Faust. Every Wed Paul Reddick & Friends. Every Thu 8pm Steve Koven and Arielle Roth. Sat and Sun Matinees 4pm various performers.

- **The Senator Winebar**

- **249 Victoria St 416 364-7517 thesenator.com (full schedule)**

**Tranzac**

- **292 Brunswick Ave. 416-923-8137 tranzac.org (full schedule)**
  - 3-4 shows daily, various styles, in three different performance spaces. Mostly PWYC.

### Elsewhere

In other parts of Toronto, February also brings some promising musical events. At Burdock on February 8, keyboardist James Hill leads his new project Local Talent, whose debut album, Higiennopolis, is reviewed in this issue of The WholeNote. In addition to Hill, Local Talent features drummer Ian Wright and electric guitarist Rich Brown, both of whom possess some of the most exciting voices on the Canadian jazz scene. Burdock will also host the singer/songwriter Danielle Knibbe, an artist whose work, while falling broadly under the genre of folk, intelligently incorporates sophisticated elements of jazz, pop and other musical styles in a cross-pollinatory practice that is representative of a welcome trend in Canadian music.

I would be remiss if I didn’t mention at least one holiday-specific event in February; for those who wish to venture bravely forth on Valentine’s Day, June Garber and Stu Mac will be singing at Jazz Bistro that evening. Whether you yearn to publicly display your affection for your significant other, to have a night out with friends in active protest to the day’s romantic mandate, or to make the grave mistake of presuming that your Tinder date “will honestly, like, really enjoy jazz,” Jazz Bistro’s red piano, elaborate crystal chandeliers and neo-Jazz-Age atmosphere should provide the perfect backdrop for your Valentine’s Day venture.

### MAINLY CLUBS, MOSTLY JAZZ QUICK PICKS

- **Feb 7, 8PM:** Russell Malone, Hugh’s Room Live. American jazz guitarist Russell Malone, whose collaborators have included Ray Brown, Ron Carter, Benny Green and Diana Krall, makes a rare appearance in a club setting in Toronto.

- **Feb 8, 9:30PM:** James Hill’s Local Talent, Burdock. Local Talent celebrates the release of their debut album, Higiennopolis, at Burdock, with Hill on keyboards, Rich Brown on bass and Ian Wright on drums.

- **Feb 14, 9:30PM:** June Garber and Stu Mac, Jazz Bistro. Head to Jazz Bistro on Valentine’s Day if you crave classic standards, full dinner service, and the knowledge that you at least, did everything that you could to save your marriage.

- **Feb 20 & 21, 9:45PM:** JabFung with George Garzone, The Rex. Leading American saxophonist George Garzone, whose unique approach to harmony and linear improvisation has cemented his place in modern jazz history, plays at The Rex with Julian Anderson-Bowes and Anthony Fung.

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

- **Competition**
  - **DEADLINE Feb 18:** Yip’s Music Festival Competition. Piano, violin, musical theatre and chamber music. Competition dates: Apr 18, 19, 25, 26, May 2, 2020. For information: ymf@yip.com or 905-948-9474 x2211.

- **Galas, Tributes and Fundraisers**
  - **Mar 02 - 03:** Bowerbird Collective. Music for Australia: A Concert Raises Funding for the Bushfire Crisis. Simone Slattery, violin; Anthony Albrecht, cello; Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave. For information: whereisongeorge.com. $30 ($20 under 18). All profits donated to support Australian wildlife in the bushfire crisis.
  - **Feb 18 8:00:** Chorus York, Richmond Hill. Romantic Melodies, 3rd Annual Fundraising Gala. Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, Plaza Suite, 10058 Yonge St., Richmond Hill. 7pm: cocktails, appetizers, silent auction & cash bar. 8pm: concert. An evening of love songs in a cabaret style. Stéphane Potvin, artistic director; Aislinn Brennan, accompanist; Guests: Natalie Wong, violin; Drew Henderson, guitar; Angela Gibbon, soprano; Laura Ewing, poet. Tickets: RCPO box office or online at richevent.ca or call 905-787-8811. $50 ($20 tax receipt). For information: 905-787-8845 or 1-866-363-8231. coc.ca. $20(adults); $15(sr/st). Also by phone or online at rhcentre.ca or call 905-787-8811. $50 with $20 tax receipt.
  - **Feb 27 13:00:** University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Thursdays at Noon: What Makes Human Compositions Human? (Part 1). In this lecture-recital, Dr. Steve Sang Kyung Koh and the Interro Quarto highlight AI’s growing capabilities in composing music. Walter Hall, 20 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750. Free and open to the public.
  - **Feb 20 17:** Canadian Opera Company. Opera Insights: An Evening with Ian Cusson. Join COC Composer-in-Residence Ian Cusson for an exploration of his artistic inspirations and creative process. Includes performances from artists of the COC Ensemble Studio. Richard Bradshaw Auditorium, Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. at University Ave. Free but requires a ticket. Register online or call COC Ticket Services at 416-385-8231.
  - **Feb 17 23:** Darchei Noam/Howard Mendik. First Concert of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. Brahms: Symphony No.2; Schubert: Symphony No.8; Mendelssohn, Incidental Music to a Midsummer Night’s Dream. Recorded music with commentary. Darchei Noam Synagogue, 864 Sheppard Ave. 416-456-6175. $15.
  - **Feb 25 13:** University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Herman Geiger-Tovel Lecture: Linda and Michael Hutchinson. Walter Hall, 20 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750. Free and open to the public.
WholeNote CLASSIFIEDS can help you recruit new members for your choir, band or orchestra; find a new music director or accompanist; sell your banjo! Starting at only $24/issue.

INQUIRE BY FEBRUARY 22 for the MARCH 2020 issue. classad@thewholenote.com

Classified Advertising | classad@thewholenote.com

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION CONCERT BAND has openings for wood, brass, and percussion players. Be part of an exciting ensemble. Please contact John Walker for more information jewalker75@yahoo.com

VIOLA SECTION PLAYERS INVITED to join the Rose Orchestra for remaining 2019-20 concerts. For more information, visit theroseorchestra.org or email us at info@theroseorchestra.org

BUY & SELL
CLASSICAL RECORD AND CD COLLECTIONS WANTED. Minimum 350 units. Call/text or e-mail Aaron 416-471-8169 or AaA31.CA

FRENCH HORN: Selmer prototype by Reynolds. Double horn in excellent condition. mjbuell@gmail.com

TRUMPET: Bach Stradivarius model 37 (never used); TENOR saxophone, Yamaha; TRUMPET, Olds Ambassador; EUPHONIUM Besson silver, compensating. Phone 416-364-3642.

WHAT’S IN YOUR CLOSET? Does your old guitar gently weep? Sell that nice old accordion / clarinet / drum kit and find it on theroseorchestra.org or email us at info@theroseorchestra.org

MUSIC DIRECTOR REQUIRED FOR THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY, GUILDWOOD – to help us continue to develop our dynamic Music Ministry and who embraces a variety of styles of music, including traditional hymnody and popular song. We have an Allen 2 manual organ and a Roland digital piano. If you are a versatile keyboardist with a creative, confident and collegial working style, who would enjoy leading a small but knowledgeable and dedicated choir, while working with clergy, drama groups and other musicians, we would like to meet with you. We are a warm, friendly and inclusive congregation who also enjoy hosting and taking part in the special festivals and concerts of the Village of Guildwood. This is a part time position of approximately 8-10 hours weekly. Pay would be commensurate with experience, in the range of $15000 to $18000. To apply, please send your resume to officintegrityguildwood@rogers.com

NAVAL RESERVE BAND IN DOWNTOWN TORONTO IS LOOKING FOR MUSICIANS: Clarinet, French Horn, other positions available. Take pride and join. Get paid to play. Email david.pottinger@forces.gc.ca

DO YOU SING IN A CHOIR? Would you like to practice your sight-singing skills? Or need a little help learning your notes or rhythms? Or experience the joy of singing duets? Treat yourself! Private and group lessons available near Woodbine subway. Call or text Sheila at 416-574-5250, or woodbine.joyofsinging@gmail.com

DOG BOARDING (near Woodbine subway). Heading away for a while and can’t bring your favourite canine companion? Take just one dog at a time and give it a very special vacation. Your dog will pull you to my door on repeat visits! Call or text Sheila at 416-574-5250 or eastyork.dogboarding@gmail.com


FLUTE, PIANO, THEORY LESSONS. RCMP Certified Advanced Specialist. Samantha Chang, FTCL, FRAM, LRAM, PAGd, ARCT. Toronto, Scarborough 416-801-8166, samantha.stude@gmail.com www.samanthaf flute.com

LESSONS FOR ALL! Friendly and firm - I’m an experienced musician and mom teaching piano and singing to children (and the young at heart) in my Toronto home (East Leslieville). To discuss your child’s need for music-making please contact kskwhite@gmail.com

SIGHT-SINGING WORKSHOPS: sacred/secular Renaissance music, on the last Monday of the month, 7:30-9:30pm. Drop-in $10. Free for members of the Toronto Early Music Centre. All levels are welcome. Near Woodbine subway. Call/text 416-574-5250.

NEED HELP WITH YOUR TAXES? Specializing in personal and business tax returns including prior years and adjustments

HORIZON TAX SERVICES INC. • free consultation • accurate work For CRA stress relief call: 1-866-268-1319

VENUES AVAILABLE / WANTED ARE YOU PLANNING A CONCERT OR RECITAL? Looking for a venue? Consider Bloor Street United Church. Phone: 416-924-7439, 422. Email tina@bloorstreetunited.org.

STUDIO RENTAL IN EAST YORK - Hamo studio with piano available September-June. Long or short term rentals. Great acoustics. Free street parking. Wednesday or Thursday evenings. Suitable for unplugged vocal or instrumental rehearsals. Max 12 people. Barker.studiorental@gmail.com

If you can read this, thank a music teacher.

MosePianoForAll.com

ADVERTISE music-related needs, skills and services

Recruit new members for choirs, bands, orchestras.

Find a new music director | Find a music teacher | Buy or sell

Just $24 for the first 20 words, $1.20 for each additional word. Discounts for 3x, 5x and 10x insertions.

INQUIRE BY FEBRUARY 22 for the MARCH edition. classad@thewholenote.com
February’s Child is Beverley Johnston

Born and raised in Lachine, Quebec, dynamic percussionist Beverley Johnston began her music studies at Vanier College in Montreal and was then accepted into the U of T Faculty of Music to study music education. Johnston is recognised as a “Canadian Music Centre Ambassador” for her ongoing commissioning and engaging performance of Canadian music. She tours and performs frequently in Canada and internationally as a soloist and chamber musician. Featured in several documentaries, Johnston has recorded six solo CDs and collaborated on numerous others. She has been an instructor at the Banff Centre and currently teaches at the U of T Faculty of Music.

About your childhood photo... my 5th birthday party, at home in Lachine, Quebec, with all my friends from the street and my sister. This photo makes me realize that I have not lost that sense of concentration that happens when immersed in the sound of a musical instrument. Playing an instrument is one of the most satisfying activities... the ability to create your own sounds with your own body... as opposed to just listening.

Your absolute earliest memory of hearing music? I think the most connected memories would be when my mother would sing to me. She seemed so happy then. She would imitate the sound of castanets with her tongue which always used to make me laugh! We listened to my mother and father’s small but varied collection of LP records which included opera and some wonderful Danny Kaye records with him imitating different voices and characters. It wasn’t like I went out of my way to listen to music when I was a child, it was just there: listening to the radio, watching television, and attending local church or school musical events.

Your first recollection of making music? Making music started in the kindergarten rhythm band... playing the triangle. It’s ironic that playing the triangle was probably one of the biggest sources of income for me when I first became a professional musician... one of the first gigs I had was playing mostly triangle for the National Ballet Orchestra!

An important first music teacher? I did not enjoy my piano lesson teacher... she was a bit harsh. But the first real influence on my musical life was Iwan Edwards, my music teacher at Lachine High School, just up the street from where I lived. My music experience there was awesome... thanks to Iwan who was brilliant and very encouraging.

First time you performed for an audience? I first performed as a percussionist in my high school band in Grade 7... that would be in 1969. The band only had minimum percussion gear... the usual snare drum and bass drum... and then a set of chimes. We did an arrangement of “Black Magic Woman” and there was a bells part (probably supposed to be played on glockenspiel) which I ended up playing on the chimes with one mallet. Interesting!!!

What would you say to parents/grandparents hoping their young children will grow up to love and make music? Extra-curricular activities which involve music – the sound world and the ability to create your own sounds with your own body are among the most important activities one can take part in. Music is a special way to connect in a communal environment with other human beings and is so important for our mental health and brain development. It is a shame that some governments feel that these music education activities are not that necessary to fund.

Beverley Johnston’s full-length interview can be read at thewholenote.com/musicchildren

Pictured here at the 2017 Festival of the Sound (Parry Sound) Beverley Johnston lives in a rural part of Uxbridge, Ontario where she is able to make as much noise as she wants in her music studio, to the delight of the surrounding deer, rabbits, foxes and livestock! She is married to Canadian/Greek composer Christos Hatzis. Besides enjoying an active musical career, Bev also enjoys walks in the forest with her husband, watching old movies on TCM (without her husband) and cooking up a storm for family and friends. Although she has some beautiful natural surroundings at her home, she actually does NOT enjoy gardening and lets nature take its natural course.

Christmas 1978, Toronto, drumming on a rainbow.

Only four but music is already a family affair where new and old traditions resonate.

Music will take her all over the world: she’s on the trail of indigo – in this issue!

In May the mandala will be her guide.

Vocally and instrumentally hers is the music of confluence

Know our Mystery Child’s name?

WIN PRIZES!

Send your best guess by March 22 to musicchildren@thewholenote.com

Previous artist profiles and full-length interviews can be read at thewholenote.com/musicchildren.

—> you can view them in their original magazine format by visiting our online back issues https://kiosk.thewholenote.com

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WINNERS!

Feb 21 & 22 – Confluence Concerts presents “Bullet Train / Witch on Thin Ice” – a dynamic reading of Madeleine Thien’s gripping short story Bullet Train, along with the world premiere of Alice Ping Yee Ho’s Witch on Thin Ice: music inspired by the life and work of Yoko Ono. The evening features actor Courtney Ch’ng Lancaster; pianist Gregory Oh and percussionist Beverley Johnston (who says that the piece requires about five different percussion set-ups on the stage!).

TANYA LONG and BOB KLEIN, who each win a pair of tickets.

Confluence Concerts

Apr 2 – Women’s Musical Club of Toronto series “Music in the Afternoon” presents “Beverley Johnston and Friends”, with Johnston joined by colleagues from the U of T Faculty of Music: Ayun Huang and Russell Hartenberger; percussion; Susan Hoeppner, flutes; Marc Djokic, violin. The program will include the premiere of a WMCT commissioned work for percussion quartet by Hartenberger. A pair of tickets is waiting for RHODA SION

thewholenote.com
with soloists in several instances and, in the most memorable selection, Apres moi, le deluge, obligato cello (Matt Haimovitz). After a virtuosic cello cadenza, this work develops into a bluesy and occasionally meditative telling of the story of Noah and the Flood which culminates in the gospel-tinged Lord, I’m goin’ down in Louisiana before gently subsiding. After a rousing arrangement of Leonard Cohen’s Everybody Knows for vocal trio and cello, comes a modern-sounding but fairly tonal Missa in Fines Orbis Terrae with the choir accompanied by Messiaen-like organ (Avi Stein). The vocal trio (sopranos Devon Guthrie and Nancy Anderson with mezzo Elise Quagliata) return for One to One to One, in this instance accompanied by the low strings (three cellos and three basses) of NOVUS NY. Having begun with the close harmonies, murmurs, shouts and extended vocal techniques of the a cappella To the Fire with full choir, the disc ends with the vocal trio once again joined by Haimovitz for a raucous setting of Cohen’s Who by Fire to close out an exceptional disc. A wonderful cross-section of Woolf’s vocal writing that bodes well for the new opera.

**Concert note:** Tapestry Opera presents Woolf’s Jacqueline in five performances at Betty Oliphant Theatre February 19 to 23. This intimate piece for soprano and cello brings together the celebrated American soprano Marnie Breckenridge as Jacqueline, and renowned cellist (and former du Pré protégé) Matt Haimovitz as du Pré’s only constant companion, her cello.

Last April I wrote about a solo recording by Icelandic cellist Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir called Vernonuclaus which included Afterquake by Þall Ragnar Pállsson, a rock musician who has recently come to the world of art music. That solo piece was directly linked to his earlier Quake for cello and chamber orchestra, a concerto in all but name and his first collaboration with Thorsteinsdóttir. On a new disc from Sono Luminus, Concurrency (DSL-92237 sonoluminous.com) Thorsteinsdóttir is heard performing this forebear with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Daniel Bjarnason, the orchestra’s principal guest conductor. While I find Afterquake a stunning tour de force with its virtuosity and subtlety, I welcome this opportunity to hear the original Quake with its expanded palette of timbre, texture and colour. It is no surprise that it was a selected work at the International Rostrum of Composers in Budapest in 2018. The disc also includes Metacosmos, an atmospheric work by Anna Thorvaldsdóttir, Haukur Tómasson’s Piano Concerto No. 2 and Maria Huld Markan Sigfúsdóttir’s Oceans. In the booklet essay by American critic Steve Smith we are urged to contemplate the human dimensions of the music and not just hear it as scenic paintings. I must confess though, from the opening strains of Metacosmos I found myself remembering the stark landscapes of Iceland and thinking that yes, “You can hear a country in its music.” Tómasson’s concerto is seemingly all about timbre, the dynamics range from delicate pianissimos to forceful fortissi, but the music is never bombastic. As Smith says, “the soloist [Vikingur Ólafsson] is first among equals, a frolicsome force in continual conversation with lively choruses of counterparts, never overshadowed but also rarely isolated.” Sigfúsdóttir’s Oceans begins in near silence, gently evoking sunrise on a quiet sea. The seven-minute piece remains calm and serene throughout, setting the stage for Pálsson’s Quake, which concludes the disc. The recordings were made in the main Eldborg concert hall and the Norðurljós recital hall of Reykjavik’s five-star waterfront cultural centre Harpa, using Pyramix software, with the orchestra seated in a circle around the conductor. Production values are superb, with both CD and Blu-ray Pure Audio discs included in the package. Highly recommended.

**The String Orchestra of Brooklyn** (SOB)’s conductor Eli Spindel says of the group’s debut CD release afterimage (Furious Artisans FACD6823 furiousartisans.com) “The featured works […] take as their starting point a single moment from an older work and – through processes of repetition, distortion, and disc hive/collective reiteration – create a completely new soundscape, like opening a small door into an unfamiliar world.” The disc begins with Christopher Cerrone’s High Windows, based on Paganini’s Caprice No. 6 in G Minor. Scored for string quartet and string orchestra, the SOB is joined on this recording by the Argus Quartet. The 13-minute work examines a fragment of the Paganini as under a microscope and also draws on material from an earlier Cerrone piece for piano and electronics. The title refers to the windows of the church in which the premiere performance took place. Although this is the SOB’s first recording, they were founded in 2007 and the second work is Jacob Cooper’s Stabat Mater Dolorosa which was written for them in 2009. Taking Pergolesi’s Stabat Mater as its point of departure, the 27-minute work incorporates two singers as does the original. It takes patience to listen to the extremely slow unfolding of this careful examination of one of the most gorgeous works of early 18th-century vocal repertoire. If you are able to suspend your disbelief, it’s well worth the journey. The disc also includes the original works that inspired Cerrone and Cooper. Violinist Rachel Lee Priday performs Paganini’s solo caprice and soprano Melissa Hughes and mezzo Kate Maroney shine in a more traditional interpretation of the first movement of Pergolesi’s masterpiece to complete the disc. My only quibble with this recording is the order of presentation. I’m sure much thought went into the decision to put the new works first and the old works last, but after several listenings I find I prefer to hear the Paganini first to set the stage for Cerrone’s tribute, then the Cooper, with Pergolesi last to really bring us home. I thought I had all the material I needed for this month’s column when, just a few days before deadline, we received a shipment from the label Cold Blue and I found one of the discs so similar in approach to Cooper’s Stabat Mater that I decided to add it to my pile. Although new to me, it seems that Jim Fox originally founded this label in 1983, producing 10- and later 12-inch vinyl discs of primarily California-based contemporary and avant-garde music. When both of its distributors closed their doors in 1985 the label ceased operations for a time, but Fox later re-established it and began producing CDs in 2000. The catalogue now includes some five dozen titles by a host of composers including Fox himself, John Luther Adams, Charlemagne Palestine, Larry Polansky, Kyle Gann and Daniel Lenz.
On this recording the Eclipse Quartet accompanies and interacts with itself through overdubbing. Sargent says: “Throughout the piece, hymns tunes appear and reappear in ever-expanding loops of music passed between the quartets. Each time they return, the tunes filter through a ‘separation process’ whereby selected notes migrate from one quartet to the other. This process leaves breaks in the music that either remain silent or are filled in by stretching the durations of nearby notes, generating new rhythms and harmonies.” To my ears, the effect is like listening to a Renaissance consort of viols through a layer of gauze, or filtered by the mists of time, much like when ghostly strains of Schubert’s Death and the Maiden appear in George Crumb’s Black Angels. If I said you would need patience for Cooper’s protracted Stabat Mater, that is more than doubly the case for this 73-minute, one-track composition, but again, it rewards every moment of attention. I look forward to exploring the Cold Blue back catalogue, and to future releases.

Well, all that listening to atmospheric and mist-shrouded ambience left me needing an injection of backbeat and rhythm, so when I found the latest from the Shuffle Demons in my inbox I knew the remedy was in hand. I admit I may not be the ideal candidate to take on this review as it’s somewhat beyond my usual purview, but having spent some of my formative years in funky Queen St., W., I have fond memories of watching this outstanding (and outrageous) band playing on the streets of the neighbourhood. It came as a bit of a surprise to me that the Demons were still active some 35 years later, but it was a pleasant one indeed. Their ninth album Crazy Time (Stubby Records SRCD 1703 shuffledemons.com) features the classic saxes and driving rhythm of bass and drums the Demons are known for. It includes two new members, Matt Lagan on tenor sax and bassist Mike Downes alongside stalwarts Richard Underhill, Kelly Jefferson and Stich Wynston, but in honour of their 35th anniversary, original members Mike Murley and Iim Vivian appear on five of the ten tracks. As in the past, hot instrumental parts are interspersed with topical vocal tracks reminiscent of the classic Spadina Bus – be sure to check out the YouTube videos of that defining song – including the title track with its commentary on Ontario’s current leadership among other things: “We live in a crazy town, in a crazy world, in a crazy time.” All tunes were penned and arranged by Underhill with the exception of Jefferson’s smooth instrumental Even Demons Get the Blues and the retro rap vocal Have a Good One which Underhill co-wrote some years ago with interim Demons Eric St-Laurent, Mike Milligan and Farras Smith. The signature swinging unison horn choruses and individual solo takes are as strong as ever, and the infectious beat goes on. It’s great to find this iconic Canadian jazz institution alive and well, with no signs of aging or decay; long may the Shuffle Demons reign!

Concert note: The Shuffle Demons launch Crazy Time at Lula Lounge on February 27; first set at 8pm.

String Quartets

The Fitzwilliam String Quartet was formed in October 1968 in Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge and celebrates its 50th anniversary with a quite remarkable 2CD set of Shostakovich Last Three String Quartets – No.13 in B-flat Minor Op.138, No.14 in F-sharp Major Op.142 and No.15 in E-flat Minor Op.144 (Linn CKD 612 naxosdirect.com)

After graduating from Cambridge the quartet accepted a residency at the University of York in 1971, in early 1972 violinist Alan George (now the only original member still with the group) wrote to Shostakovich requesting the material and permission to play his 13th quartet, which still hadn’t been performed in the UK. Shostakovich not only supplied both but travelled to York for the November concert, the Fitzwilliams also playing three of his earlier quartets for him in his hotel room.

The visit started a relationship and correspondence which lasted until the composer’s death in August 1975 and also resulted in Shostakovich trusting the ensemble with the Western premieres of his 14th and 15th string quartets. The Fitzwilliam gained international recognition by becoming the first quartet to perform and record the complete cycle of Shostakovich string quartets.

Now, 43 years after those early recordings, the quartet revisits the momentous relationship. Alan George’s extensive, deeply personal and moving booklet essays underlining just what a life-altering experience it was. These are not easy quartets, George noting that they are strongly coloured by an aura of death and personal despair, and by musings on his own mortality by a composer for whom faith held no meaning, and who saw death as absolutely final – “existence passing into the infinity of oblivion.”

Not surprisingly, given the circumstances, the performances here are outstanding, with every phrase, every note, every dynamic and every gesture reflecting the depth of understanding the players have of these remarkable works.

The Miro Quartet – violinists Daniel Ching and William Fedkenheuer, violist John Largess and cellist Joshua Gindele – was formed in 1995, and has become one of the most celebrated American string quartets. They started recording the Beethoven quartets in 2004, releasing the first volume featuring the six Op.18 quartets (with then second violin Sandy Yamamoto) in 2005 on the Vanguard Classics label. Four subsequent CDs starting in 2012 covered the Opp.59, 74, 95, 130, 131 and 133 works, with the final recordings completed by February 2019.

The complete cycle is now available on eight CDs in a special box set of Beethoven Complete String Quartets (Pentatone PTC 5186 827 naxosdirect.com), marking both the ensemble’s 25th anniversary and the 250th anniversary of Beethoven’s birth in 2020. It’s quite superb. The quartets were recorded in numerical sequence over the years, so the listener can travel the same journey as the performers. And what a journey it is, with the astonishing late quartets in particular receiving superb performances. Slow movements are achingly beautiful, and the fast movements taken at breathtaking but perfectly balanced speed.
The insightful booklet notes by violist John Largess add another touch of class to a quite outstanding issue.

The Dover Quartet swept the board at the 2013 Banff International String Quartet Competition, winning every available prize, and if you needed any proof of their continuing rise to the very top of their field then their latest CD The Schumann Quartets (Azica ACD-71331 naxosdirect.com) should more than suffice.

Schumann wrote his three Op.41 string quartets – No.1 in A Minor, No.2 in F Major and No.3 in A Major – in a six-week period in 1842, never to return to the genre. They are quite lovely works, richly inventive and with more than a hint of Mendelssohn, to whom they were dedicated.

The Dover Quartet gives immensely satisfying performances of these brilliant works on a generous CD that runs to almost 80 minutes.

The latest CD from the always-interesting Rachel Barton Pine – Dvořák Khachaturian Violin Concertos with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra under Teddy Abrams (Avie AV2411 naxosdirect.com) – is apparently not what it was meant to be, the originally planned “very different” album having to be changed at the last minute, when the conductor became unavailable.

These two concertos immediately struck the soloist as an attractive alternate project: she learned both works at 15 and had played each of them a few times during the previous concert season.

Tied as they are by each composer’s use of his own ethnic music they do make a good pair, but although there’s much fine playing here it feels somewhat subdued at times and never quite seems to really hit the heights the way you would expect, possibly due to the last-minute nature of the recording session but also possibly because Barton Pine seems to take a more lyrical approach to works that are strongly rhythmic as well as strongly melodic. The Khachaturian fares better in this respect, with a particularly fiery cadenza from the soloist.

Perspectives is a fascinating CD by violinist Dawn Wohin and pianist Esther Park that explores the differing cultures and perspectives of women composers, reaching back to the 19th century and into the 21st (Delos DE 3547 naxos.com).

The nine works are: Hula-Hula by Reena Esmail (b.1983); Episodio by Ellen Taaffe Zwilich (b.1939); the particularly lovely Legenda by the Czech composer Vítěslava Kaprálová, who died at only 25 in 1940; Star-Crossed (commissioned for the CD) by Jung Sun Kang (b.1983); the remarkable solo violin piece, Proivantia “Sunset of Chihkan Tower,” by Chihchun Chi-sun Lee (b.1970); Deserted Garden and Elfentanz by Florence Price (1887-1953); the lovely Nocturne by Lili Boulanger (1893-1918); Portal by Vivian Fine (1913-2000); and Romance by Amy Beach (1867-1944).

Wohin plays with warmth, a crystal-clear tone and a fine sense of line and phrase in an immensely satisfying recital, with equally fine playing from her musical partner Park.

The outstanding cellist Daniel Müller-Schott is back with #CelloUnlimited, an impressive recital of 20th-century works for solo cello (ORFEO C 984 191 naxosdirect.com).

A passionate reading of the monumental and challenging Sonata Op.8 from 1915 by Zoltán Kodály makes a fine opening to the disc.

Prokofiev’s Sonata in C-sharp Minor Op.134 from 1953, the year of his death, is really only based on a fragment of the first of four projected movements; using a contrasting theme apparently partly sourced from Mstislav Rostropovich it was made into a performing version by the composer and musicologist Vladimir Blok in 1972.

Hindemith’s Sonata Op.25 No.3 from 1922 and Henze’s 1949 Serenade both consist of short but effective movements – nine each less than one minute long in the latter.

Müller-Schott’s own Cadenza from 2018 is followed by the early and surprisingly tonal 1955 Sonata by George Crumb; and Pablo Casals’ brief Song of the Birds, with which he always used to end his concerts, provides a calm and peaceful ending to a solo CD full of depth and fire.

It’s not unusual to encounter performances of both the Bach Sonatas & Partitas for solo violin and the solo Cello Suites in transcription: viola players, for instance, have available arrangements of both, and the Cello Suites can be found transcribed for violin.

Less common, though, are performances of the violin Sonatas & Partitas on cello, but this is what Mario Brunello provides on Johann Sebastian Bach Sonatas & Partitas for solo violoncello piccolo (ARCAN A469 naxosdirect.com).

Brunello says that he tried playing the works on a four-string (not the usual five-string) smaller violoncello piccolo with no particular intention, and found that with the smaller body and the same tuning as a violin (but an octave lower) in effect the instrument felt like a larger or tenor violin, allowing him to read the Sonatas & Partitas as a cellist without having to resort to near-impossible technical virtuosity.

He also points out that the natural tendency for a cellist to first apply the bow to the lowest string leads to what he calls a “looking-glass” reading and a “seen from the bass line” approach in his playing, the instrument’s resonant body encouraging lingering on the low notes. Brunello certainly does that, even in the dance movements, but although it occasionally threatens to compromise the pulse it never really feels like more than just taking a breath and not rushing.

The instrument he plays is a 2017 model by Filippo Fasser of Brescia, after Antonio and Girolamo Amati of Cremona, 1600-1610. The pitch employed is a’ = 415 Hz, so down a semi-tone from the printed violin score.

It all works really well, although obviously the trade-off is that the brightness of the violin is lost, especially with the octave drop. There’s an interesting effect in the Andante of the A minor Sonata No.2, where Brunello plays the first half of the movement pizzicato and then changes to arco for the repeat, reversing the pattern for the second half.

There’s a fine resonance to the recording, and Brunello’s playing is admirable.

There’s another cello arrangement of a well-known violin work on Vivaldi’s The Four Seasons, an arrangement for cello and string ensemble by cellist Luka Šuljić, who is accompanied by the Archi dell’Accademia di Santa Cecilia (Sony Classical 19075986532 somymusicmasterworks.com).

This also seems to work very well, giving the music a slightly darker tinge than usual, although with the lower register the solo line is difficult to distinguish in places. When it’s clearly audible it’s really impressive playing, with Šuljić displaying terrific facility and agility and handling the intricate solo line with apparent ease.

Full-blooded and committed ensemble playing, especially in the Allegro and Presto movements, where tempos are never on the slower side, makes for a really enjoyable CD.

We still tend to think of Andrés Segovia as being the guitarist most responsible for establishing the classical guitar in the concert hall, so Fernando Sor The 19th-Century Guitar, a new CD from the Italian guitarist Gianluigi Giglio (SOMM SOMMCD 0604),
Domenico Scarlatti; Muzio Clementi – Keyboard Sonatas
John McCabe
Divine Art dda 21231 (divineartrecords.com)

The erudite composer and pianist John McCabe left his mark on British music-making in the 20th century. His gifts as interpreter at the keyboard were very much equal to his abilities as composer. Discographic focus for the majority of his life centred upon neglected composers of old: Haydn, Clementi and Nielsen, among others. A recent reissue of two LPs that McCabe recorded in the early 1980s is a welcome one, pairing well-loved sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti with somewhat obscure works by the Italian-born English composer, pianist, pedagogue, conductor, music publisher, editor and piano manufacturer(!) Muzio Clementi.

McCabe brings a muscular, cerebral approach to these pieces. One immediately detects a scrupulous composer behind the studio microphones, carefully etching formal structures for the benefit of the listener with accuracy and intellectual rigour. It is evident that McCabe delights in this piano music yet never indulges, electing for efficient lines and tasteful embellishment, reflective of both style and substance.

Among the various highlights of Disc Two (Clementi) is the Sonata in G Minor, Op.50 No.3, subtitled “Didone Abbandonata” and composed in 1821. Expressive and probing, this music is liberated from the confines of continental neoclassicism, at once mournful and forlorn in prophetic anticipation of 19th-century music yet unvarnished. From the last of his opuses for piano, Clementi marks the final movement of this sonata Allegro agitato e con disperazione. Such qualifications were few and far between, even in 1821!

Adam Sherkin

Haydn Piano Sonatas Vol.2
John O’Conor
Steinway & Sons 30110 (steinway.com)

Celebrated for his characterful, refined interpretations of Beethoven, Schubert and – rather notably – John Ireland, Irish pianist John O’Conor has recently ventured into the 52 sonata-strong catalogue of Franz Joseph Haydn. The second in a projected series of such recordings with Steinway & Sons, this most recent release generally features late sonatas, varied in their formal structures yet irresistible in their innovations. O’Conor brings his customary warmth and tasteful approach to these classical essays: quirky, unexpected works at a good distance from the tautly balanced sonatas of Mozart and Schubert.

Haydn’s experiments in the genre offer a wide spectrum of musical personality. They brush boisterously with folk idioms of the 18th century, skewering phrasing and lyrical gesture in a ribald quest of mirth and merriment. Their slightly rough-and-tumble profile is not always captured by O’Conor. He appears to prize refined voicing and sculpted colour over a bit of pianistic fun. (Once in a while however, he does let himself loose amongst this music’s rustic urgings.) Despite the craft and polish, one detects a faint lack of familiarity with these works; figures and flourishes sound half-hearted, almost glossed over.

It is in the slow movements on this record where O’Conor sounds most at home. He brings a sincerity to Haydn’s melodic lines born of an intimate, semplice mode of expression. O’Conor’s ear for colouristical subtlety delivers harmonic poise and vocal nuance, begetting interpretations that would surely have made the old Austrian composer smile.

Adam Sherkin

Beethoven – The Piano Concertos
Ronald Brautigam; Die Kolner Akademie; Michael Alexander Willens
BIS BIS-2274 SACD (bis.se)

Beethoven – Piano Concertos 0-5
Mari Kodama; Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin; Kent Nagano
Berlin Classics 0301304BC (naxosdirect.com)

The arrival of 2020 commences a year of celebration for classical music presenters and aficionados across the globe, who will celebrate the 250th anniversary of Beethoven’s birth with innumerable concerts featuring the master’s greatest works. In advance of this significant anniversary, two recordings of Beethoven’s complete piano concertos were released last year: one features the husband and wife duo of pianist Mari Kodama and conductor Kent Nagano; while the other presents fortepianist Ronald Brautigam, who is no stranger to Toronto, having performed with Tafelmusik at Trinity-St. Paul's Centre in 2010.

Although these collections contain nearly identical musical contents (in addition to the standard five concertos, the Kodama/Nagano release includes the Rondo in B-flat, Erotica Variations, Triple Concerto, and the reconstructed Piano Concerto “o”), the end
of how this recording came to be. “After just a few notes on the exceptionally fine Pleyel grand piano in Kellinghausen, north of Hamburg, in a collection of Eric Feller’s, I found myself plunged into a different century. The pianoforte was built in Paris in about 1855 and professionally restored using historical materials and methods. It is absolutely uniform with the instrument that Chopin possessed and of typically French elegance — in sound as well as in appearance. It reflects the soul of the Romantic era. Apart from that, it offers an authentic testimony to the sound of the instruments that Fryderyk Chopin and Robert and Clara Schumann played.”

The technique then required to play this piano differs from today’s. The sound from this old instrument is finely articulate and does not produce the same overtones and resonance, nor the volume. Such instruments were expected to be heard in a room or salon having only a fraction of the volume of today’s concert halls. Moreover, a suitable room for a perfect recording is certainly essential. In this case a private salon in Zug, Switzerland from January 16 to 18, 2019 was just that.

Our pianist was right; what we hear here takes us back to a different century. I hope that Solo Musica plans to record Chopin with Höhenrieder playing the same instrument. That would be something to hear.

Bruce Surtees

Chopin – Late Masterpieces
Sandro Russo
Steinway & Sons 30125 (naxosdirect.com)

Italian pianist Sandro Russo revives the elegance and grandeur of the 19th-century piano tradition in this recording of late Chopin works. Having previously recorded several major piano works from the Romantic repertoire (as well as those of lesser-known composers), on this album Russo highlights every aspect of Chopin’s inner world. A selection of pieces that includes both intimate forms such as the mazurka and berceuse and the monumental Third Piano Sonata, this album feels like a true testament. Noble forces are at work here, generating the sound aesthetics of beauty and adroit virtuosity, a combination that is well suited to Chopin’s music and is the essence of Russo’s artistic expression.

Three mazurkas on this album are a perfect example of Chopin’s mastery of expressing the grand gestures in small-scale works. Mazurka in C Minor Op.56 in particular is a microcosm of understated emotions of melancholy and surrender, yet it contains innovative musical language that at times seems different than anything Chopin had written previously. As a contrast, the Sonata in B Minor Op.59 is as big as it can get. This complex piece is a macrocosm of amplified emotions, an unrestricted cascade of brilliant phrases that command attention and challenge the performer both musically and technically. Sandro Russo is immaculate in both, bringing a fresh approach while keeping with the tradition of the grandiose Romantic era.

Ivana Popovic

Alkan – Symphony for Solo Piano; Concerto for Solo Piano
Paul Wee
BIS BIS-2465 SACD (naxosdirect.com)

Charles-Valentin Alkan (1813-88) was a true maverick amongst the great French musicians of the mid-19th century. A child prodigy from a family of exceptionally talented Jewish musicians (the Morhanges), Valentin, using his father’s given name of Alkan as his surname, performed brilliantly in fashionable Parisian salons beginning in 1826, a practice that soon attracted an invasion of foreign pianists including Liszt and Chopin. In 1838,
Having unwittingly fathered an illegitimate son, he withdrew from the concert circuit for some time, raising his child and devoting himself to composition. He briefly returned to the stage before becoming a total recluse for some 20 years, involving himself with creating a now lost French translation of the Bible from Hebrew sources and publishing numerous compositions.

Alkan’s legacy was largely neglected until a revival of interest in the 1960s brought forth a flood of recordings. Among the five Alkan discs issued in 2019 we have this release by the admirable pianist and barrister Paul Wee, who delivers insightful and riveting accounts of the gargantuan Symphony and Concerto for Solo Piano that form the bulk of Alkan’s Douze études dans tous les tons mineurs Op.39. This is music of extraordinary energy whose obsessive rhythmic profile sweeps all before it with a Beethovenian grandeur. Alkan’s daunting technical demands are never merely gaudy examples of pianistic sweep all before it with a Beethovenian grandeur. Alkan’s daunting technical demands are never merely gaudy examples of pianistic, but rather an integral architectural component of his unique and strangely compelling voice.

Ravel – Jeux de miroirs
Javier Perianes; Orchestre de Paris; Josep Pons
Harmonia mundi HMM902326 (harmoniamundi.com)

As the clever title indicates this most enjoyable, adventurous undertaking by harmony mundi sets the piano works of Ravel side by side with their orchestral versions as if they were mirrored. Coincidentally one set of Ravel’s piano works is entitled Miroirs from which we hear the fourth piece Alborada del graciosos, inspired by Spain, one of his main influences.

Ravel was a tremendous orchestrator and he orchestrated many of his own works plus the works of others. Here we can see why and the pianist chosen is Javier Perianes, a young Spanish pianist who has already conquered many of the world’s concert stages and worked with some of the greatest conductors. An artist with unbounded imagination and a special affinity towards French impressionisme, he has beautiful touch and unlimited technical skill.

The main work is Le Tombeau de Couperin, Ravel’s highly personal tribute to 18th-century French Baroque composers, Couperin, Rameau and Lully. The set of six pieces first appears in the piano version and my favourites are Forte with an infectious, incessant and very catchy melody that’s almost hypnotic. Rigaudon an explosive, high-spirited French courtly dance and the final Toccata where the pianist literally plays up a storm. Later on come the orchestral versions of these and we will be surprised how much additional richness a brilliant orchestration can produce.

The disc opens with the orchestral version of Alborada del graciosos followed by the original solo piano Tombeau. Cleverly set in between the mirrored versions of these pieces is an absolutely astounding reading of the very popular, forward-looking and jazzy Concerto in G characterized by “subtle playing of Javier Perianes and the refined sonorities of the Orchestre de Paris, conducted by Josep Pons.”

I’ve listened to this disc over and over again and hopefully so will you.

Janos Gardonyi

The Etudes Project Volume One – ICEBERG
Jenny Lin
Sono Luminus DSL-92236 (sonoluminous.com)

Another marvel of a record hits our ears from the enviable, masterful pianist – a paragon of the 21st-century keyboard – Jenny Lin. Lin has long been fascinated with the “intricate history of piano études,” examining the current state of the genre and charting its near 300-year lineage. She has themed this journey and its transpiring narratives, The Etudes Project.

Aligning with composers of ICEBERG New Music, Lin gave its ten members absolute freedom of style and pianistic approach when drafting new etudes for her. The exceptional results were not only premiered by Lin this past October in New York but also published by NewMusicShelf in complete score, released on the same day.

In addition to her Herculean playing, the fearless pianist brings curatorial prowess to bear in pairing each new etude with an existing work from the canon. Seminal music by Ligeti, Chin, Glass, Crawford Seeger, Debussy, Scriabin and – of course – Chopin is featured. Accordingly, the record frames ten diptychs, (old meeting new), as it demonstrates Lin’s utter virtuosity on the piano, founded upon tireless application of intellect, study, two ultra-keen ears and a generous musical heart worthy of any audience’s patronage and awe.

Have a listen to this disc and then have another; purchase a copy of the score. The Etudes Project will repay you manifestly.

Adam Sherkin

What we’re listening to this month: thewholenote.com/listening

Afterimage
String Orchestra of Brooklyn
Features works by Christopher Cerrone and Jacob Cooper that respond to Paganini and Pergolesi respectively, with the Argus Quartet and guest vocalists Melissa Hughes and Kate Maroney.

Separation Songs
Eclipse Quartet
Matt Sargent’s “Separation Songs,” featuring the Eclipse Quartet, are “Haunting and beautiful.” (’Fanfare’ magazine, five-star review). “It’s gorgeous.” (’Only Strings’)

Crazy Time
Shuffle Demons
Shuffle Demons play Lula Lounge Feb. 27th to celebrate the release of their great new CD Crazy Time.

Haydn Piano Sonatas, Vol. 2
John O’Conor
In the first volume of John O’Conor’s Haydn Sonatas (2017) Fanfare Magazine called his playing “focused, thoughtful, clean, transparent...O’Conor’s performance is thrilling, played to perfection.”

John O’Conor
Haydn Piano Sonatas, Vol. 2
In the first volume of John O’Conor’s Haydn Sonatas (2017) Fanfare Magazine called his playing “focused, thoughtful, clean, transparent...O’Conor’s performance is thrilling, played to perfection.”

What we’re listening to this month: thewholenote.com/listening
Aubade – Music by Auguste Descarries
Janelle Fung
Centrediscs CMCCD 27519 (cmccanada.org/)

> The rarely performed and under-represented Quebec composer, Auguste Descarries (1896-1958) is the focal point of a new solo disc by ambitious young pianist Janelle Fung. The composer’s piano sonata was only just given its premiere in 2017, 64 years after its composition! Fung has retrieved six of Descarries’ keyboard works from the proverbial dustbin of musical history, offering forthright and impressive attention to every last note on this recording.

Descarries was an industrious pianist/composer, penning the Rhapsodie Canadienne for piano and orchestra in 1936. His style seems indebted to the Russian and French schools, further enhanced by an apparent meeting with Sergei Rachmaninoff and close relationship with Nicolai Medtner, (carried out during the 1920s). In the end, Descarries lived his latter days in Montreal, the city of his birth.

Opening with the poetic, fantastical Serenités, this album lures us into a seemingly familiar yet reconceived soundworld. Romantic gesture and pastoral vignette meld in such offbeat North American pieces from a bygone age. Fung manoeuvres every turn and lyrical leap with virtuosic aplomb. Her eager, communicative style reveals a pianistic maturity. Such assuredness is most remarkable and one can only muse about Fung’s next projects and newfound deviations to unduly neglected keyboard works by Canadian composers.

The sound quality itself is bright and vivid, the record expertly produced. The team behind the project runs an impressive list, complementing the fine liner notes and poigniant artist statement from Fung.

Adam Sherkin

Poul Ruders Edition Vol.15 – Piano Concerto No.3; Cembal d’Amore, Second Book; Kafkapriccio
Various Artists
Bridge Records 9531 (bridgerecords.com/)

> Illustrious Danish composer Poul Ruders seems to have been blessed with abiding compositional fluency. He pens work after work in a consistent outpouring of top-notch pieces, adding to a lifelong musical catalogue that is both communicative and compelling. A most recent album featuring his music for keyboard is no exception.

With a rather eclectic mix of concerto, harpsichord/piano duo and operatic paraphrase, this record begins with Ruders’ newest piano concerto – the third – written in 2014. Pianist Anne-Marie McDermott tackles this demanding, mesmerizing single movement with her habitual panache. The dizzying acrobatics sound only a sheer delight under her steadfast command. Subtitled “Pagani Variations,” Ruders here takes an aural candybar and transforms it into a seemingly familiar yet recondite soundworld. Romantic gesture and pastoral vignette meld in such offbeat North American pieces from a bygone age. Fung manoeuvres every turn and lyrical leap with virtuosic aplomb. Her eager, communicative style reveals a pianistic maturity. Such assuredness is most remarkable and one can only muse about Fung’s next projects and newfound deviations to unduly neglected keyboard works by Canadian composers.

The sound quality itself is bright and vivid, the record expertly produced. The team behind the project runs an impressive list, complementing the fine liner notes and poigniant artist statement from Fung.

Adam Sherkin

Anna Höstman – Harbour
Cheryl Duvall
Redshift Records TK473 (redshiftrecords.org)

> Composer Anna Höstman and Toronto-based pianist Cheryl Duvall collaborate effectively on Harbour. Born in Bella Coola, British Columbia, now teaching at the University of Victoria, Höstman has earned significant residencies and performances. Her sense of the Pacific coastal environment is congenial, at least to my Vancouver-raised sensibilities. Also, I applaud her composing of the short, slow piano-left-hand piece, late winter (2019), for a musician whose right hand was temporarily disabled, having this condition myself and having done musical work with people with disabilities. In this composition, two recurring but long-separated high tones sound over a texture of arpeggiated chords. The note A becomes important, while one high E now recurs. Gradual change, peaceful though somewhat uneasy moods, and expertise with piano writing and sonority seem characteristic for this composer.

There is much variety among other works: allemande (2013) begins sparsely, reminding us of the voice. Subtle textural changes begin with two-or three-note sonorities, followed by register shifts and larger clusters. Harbour (2015) is full and more turbulent yet clearly layered – Duvall’s refined but powerful pianism brings sonorous appeal throughout this longer work. If we lose our way isn’t it enough to become attentive to sounds, allowing the piece to grow on us? darkness _ pines (2010) begins with complex chords: later a few triads glint through. Yellow Bird (2019) moves fitfully, topped with high chirping; Adagio (2019) pulsates slowly. A disc to be experienced – gradually.

Roger Knox

Across the veiled distances – Music by Hope Lee
Yumiko Meguri; Stefan Hussong
Centrediscs CMCCD 27219 (cmccanada.org/)

> Canadian composer Hope Lee’s unique music with its self-described ancient Chinese influences is heard in four piano compositions and one piano/accordion duet from four decades (1979-2017).

Brilliant Japanese pianist Yumiko Meguri performs Lee’s technically challenging, dramatic works perfectly. The four-section Across the veiled distances (1996) is part of a larger multimedia project inspired by a Marguerite Yourcenar short story based on Chinese legend. Played as one movement, the loud chordal opening leads to mystical musical conversations between the hands, with ringing string resonances, trills and contrasting driving and reflective repeated notes. The more atonal new-music-sounding Dindle (1979) opens with very soft percussive banging, followed by contrasting dynamic chords, pitches and single lines separated by silent spaces. These same ideas resurface in Lee’s later piano work in o som do desassossego (2015). In Entends le passé qui march (1992), recorded sound files add unique sound and exact time dimensions to the intense live piano part. In 2017’s Imaginary Garden V. (renewed at every glance) – part of a seven-section chamber piece for unusual instruments – superstar German free bass accordionist Stefan Hussong joins Meguri. Effective use of each instrument’s inherent qualities can be heard in such soundscapes as a piano percussive marching riff against long-held accordion tones, accordion held-note swells and vibratos against piano high note lines, accordion air button-created whispers and simultaneous two-instrument high pitches.

Across the veiled distances provides a great, in-depth cross-section of Lee’s piano works.

Tiina Kiik

Cheryl Duvall

Anna Höstman – Harbour
Cheryl Duvall
Redshift Records TK473 (redshiftrecords.org)
Vivaldi – Musica sacra per alto
Delphine Galou; Accademia Bizantina;
Ottavio Dantone
Naïve Vivaldi Edition Vol.59
(vivaldiedition.com)

Unlike Bach and Handel, Vivaldi’s instrumental works continue to be better known and more frequently performed than his vocal and choral music, though this imbalance is slowly being rectified. History is partly to blame for this, as even the renowned Gloria was only reintroduced in 1939; but Vivaldi is now considered a versatile and highly innovative composer of vocal music, a reflection of his ambition to become a universal composer who excelled in every aspect of his art.

One significant contributor to the propagation of Vivaldi’s vocal music is the Vivaldi Edition, an ambitious project to record 450 of the Italian composer’s works, many of them unknown. Musica sacra per alto is volume 59 in their collection and features four sacred pieces for alto with orchestral accompaniment, ranging in size from small-scale mass segments lasting only a few minutes (such as the two Introduzioni, which resemble solo motets in a form unique to Vivaldi) to the five-movement Salve Regina.

Contralto Delphine Galou and the Accademia Bizantina give convincing performances of each work on this disc, whether a languid aria or compelling allegro, uncovering the distinctly Vivaldian characteristics on the page and translating them into spectacular sounds. Although the material may be unfamiliar to many listeners, the style is unmistakable and this disc provides a fine example of why Vivaldi’s reputation as a composer of vocal music is continuing to grow, due in large part to the work of organizations such as the Vivaldi Edition.

Matthew Whitfield

Mozart – Die Entführung aus dem Serail
Soloists; Chorus and Orchestra of Teatro alla Scala; Zubin Mehta
Cmajor 752008 (naxos.com)

This production is a replica of a 1965 Salzburg performance designed by famous Italian director Giorgio Strehler which was so successful that the audience refused to leave the theatre. Since then it has been revived periodically and now again to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the director’s death. A young firebrand, Zubin Mehta, conducted then and now, at age 80, is conducting it again.

It certainly lives up to expectations: an impressive, monumental and symmetrical set bathed in sunlight suggests an atmosphere of dreaminess. The singers are lit alternately from the front and the back creating silhouettes as if we are watching a shadow play such as was fashionable in the Vienna of 1782 when this singspiel. Mozart’s first breakthrough success, was premiered. There is strong artistic control over all elements, e.g. costumes, colours, carefully choreographed movements and gesticulations, all coming together beautifully; the mark of a great director’s work.

The crowning achievement however is the singers and they all are of the highest quality. First and foremost, Dutch soprano Lenneke Ruiten, as Konstanze, is simply unbelievable in the three concert arias that follow one another and culminate in the magisterial, defiant and very difficult Martern aller Arten, sung with sustained, powerful high notes and without any trace of vibrato. This is a focal point of the opera, photographed from every possible angle, conductor’s included; it’s worth buying the video for this one aria alone.

Swiss tenor Mauro Peter as Belmonte, her lover, is a revelation. He is referred to as a “real discovery, a classic MozArtian tenor with warmth and style.” And there is Osmin, the basso profundo malevolent palace guard portrayed hilariously by Tobias Kehrer. An eye candy of a production.

Janos Gardonyi

Rossini – Ricciardo e Zoraide
Soloists; Coro del Ventido Basso; Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale Della Rai; Giacomo Sagripanti
Cmajor 752608 (naxosdirect.com)

The Barber of Seville, La Cenerentola, La Gazza Ladra – familiar Rossini titles, but La Gazzetta? Ermione? Bianca e Faliero? All these, along with Ricciardo e Zoraide, were among the 14 operas emerging from Rossini’s conveyor belt during his busiest four years, 1816-1819. Most were soon forgotten amid this super-abundance; Ricciardo e Zoraide, here making its DVD debut, was unperformed for almost 150 years until its revival at the 1990 Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro, Rossini’s birthplace. Aigorante and Ircano are warring kings in medieval Nubia. Aigorante lusts after his captive, Zoraide, Ircano’s daughter, who...
years for Ricciardo, her Christian-crusader lover. Disguised, Ricciardo attempts her rescue, but is captured. Zomira, Agorante’s jealous wife, plots the lovers’ downfall. This 2018 Pesaro production boasts a fabulously international cast, headed by lustrous South African soprano Pretty Yende (Zoraida), phenomenal Peruvian high-C wizard, tenor Juan Diego Flórez (Ricciardo), sturdy Italian bass Nicola Ullivieri (Ircano) and two powerful, breezy voiced Russians, tenor Sergey Romanovsky (Agorante) and mezzo Victoria Yarovaya (Zomira). There’s a major Toronto presence, too: Opera Atelier’s co-directors, Marshall Pynkoski and Jeannette Lajeunesse Zingg are, respectively, the stage director and choreographer, their familiar predilections for mannered stage movements and bare-chested men further undermining the far-fetched scenario’s minimal dramatic verisimilitude.

I won’t call this opera a neglected masterpiece. However, conductor Giacomo Sagripanti and the truly spectacular singing provide plenty of Rossinian thrills over its nearly three-hour duration, making this a must-have for all opera-on-DVD enthusiasts.

Michael Schulman

Offenbach – Un mari à la porte

Soloists; Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino; Valerio Galli

Dynamic 37844 (naxos.com)

Since it was first performed in 1821, Der Freischütz has remained popular in Europe – especially in composer Carl Maria von Weber’s native Germany. The music is inspired, the plot suspenseful and the atmosphere evocatively romantic. Yet it is rarely performed in North America, though in Toronto both Opera Atelier and Opera in Concert have done worthy productions.

Undoubtedly the long passages of dialogue present problems, especially on a recording. Often the dialogue gets trimmed down, removed altogether, sung using Berlioz’s added recitatives, or turned over to a narrator. On this recording, the dialogue has been totally reconceived by stage director Katharina Wagner and dramaturge Daniel Janowski, and split up between two narrators. But, confusingly, both are pivotal characters in the opera, a Devil called Samiel, and a Hermit. So it is disconcerting to hear them (in the original German – a libretto with translations is included) give away key plot points, scold other characters, and do their best to disrupt things.

In the opera, Samiel doesn’t sing, so it works seamlessly to cast this role as female. But Corinna Kirchhoff’s voice is too grating and unnuanced here to cause terror, especially in the nightmarish Wolf’s Glen scene. In the opera the Hermit is a selfless, wise holy man who shows up only at the end to save the day. But in this narration, he comes off as vindictive and pompous.

In any case, Lisa Davidsen, magnificent in the first act of Die Walküre with the Toronto Symphony last year, is powerfully radiant here. Andreas Schager, who made a thrilling Siegfried in the Canadian Opera Company’s recent Götterdämmerung, is here just as ardent and versatile. The rest of the cast, the choir and orchestra are standouts, especially with the buoyant phrasing and clear textures shaped so expressively by conductor Marek Janowski.

Pamela Margles

Wagner – Tristan und Isolde

Soloists; Orchestra and Choir of Teatro di Cagliari; John Schloch

Dynamic 752208 (naxos.com)

Arthurian legend provides raw material for Wagner’s greatest opera, but his treatment for the story was inspired by Schopenhauer’s philosophy, specifically his contention that bliss can only be found through the negation of will and desire. Schopenhauer is certainly a presence in the opera, which ends in blissful annihilation, but desire is its governing force.

Essentially, Tristan und Isolde is a five-hour love song.

The plot is refreshingly simple. Tristan is sent to Ireland to bring the Irish princess Isolde as a bride for his uncle King Marke of Cornwall. But Tristan falls passionately in love with the bride-to-be and she reciprocates. They conclude that death is the only way out and take what they believe is poison. But Isolde’s maid Brangäne substitutes a love draught and their passion is reconfirmed.

Their affair continues until they are caught by one of Marke’s knights. Tristan is wounded and taken back to Brittany where he dies just as Isolde arrives. Sinking into his body, she is united with him in death.

The cast directed by Pierre Audi (and musicians by Daniele Gatti) masterfully navigate Wagner’s sinuous melodic lines and suspended harmonies. A sense of heady sensuality and physical longing saturates this production. Andreas Schager and Rachel Nicholls are brilliant in the title roles.

Raul da Gama

Antônio Carlos Gomes – Lo Schiavo

Soloists; Orchestra e Coro del Teatro Lirico di Cagliari; John Schloch

Dynamic 37845 (naxos.com)

Brazilian-born Antônio Carlos Gomes (1836–1896) lived many years in Milan, composing operas for La Scala, before returning to Brazil as a national icon. He intended Lo Schiavo (1889) as a protest against slavery, still legal in Brazil when he began working on it, setting a libretto prepared for him by Rodolfo Paravicini. A success in Brazil, it was largely ignored in Europe, although Caruso recorded Américo’s Act 2 aria, Quando nascesti tu. This 2019
production from Sardinia’s Teatro Lirico di Cagliari was, in fact, its Italian premiere. The opera is set in 1567, near Rio de Janeiro, during a revolt by indigenous Tamoyos, many having been enslaved by the conquering Portuguese. Américo (tenor Massimiliano Borghini), the enslaved Tamoyo leader Iberê (baritone Andrea Borghini), and then break every theoretical rule in the proverbial book.

Bruckner’s legacy, enshrined not only in his symphonic works, rises to prominence in his choral music, considered to be Gothic cathedrals and frequently revived and recorded that are well worth listening to. Such is the case with Stanford’s The Travelling Companion and this disc by New Sussex Opera.

Matthew Whitfield

Ambroise Thomas – Hamlet Soloists; Les éléments Orchestre des Champs-Elysées; Louis Langrée Naxos 2.110640 (naxos.com)

► Once immensely popular, Ambroise Thomas’ Hamlet had mostly disappeared from opera stages until the Canadian Opera Company’s historic performance with Joan Sutherland in 1985 (though Stuart Hamilton, ever astute, had chosen it to inaugurate Opera in Concert in 1974). It is now heard much more frequently. This terrific production from the Opéra Comique in 2018 offers definitive proof that it belongs in the standard repertoire.

Instead of using built sets, stage director Cyril Teste projects live and pre-recorded video on to curtains, backdrops, and movable walls. There are some astonishing feats of technological wizardry, especially when the singers interact directly with the live video. While video can no doubt feel clichéd these days, here it seems fresh, innovative and integral to the considerable psychological depth of this production. It’s amazing to watch the ghost of Hamlet’s father, Jérôme Varnier, make his way down from the back of the stage through what looks like steeply raked rows of empty seats in that theatre.

Video director François Roussillon puts us in the middle of the action. But the focus is always on singers. Extreme close-ups show the commitment of this remarkable cast, especially in the brilliantly staged interactions between singers, like Ophélie and Hamlet in their exquisite duet Doutre de la lumière. Hamlet’s confrontation with his mother is so gripping that it seizes the emotional centre of the opera.

Sahine Devielhe, a natural heir to the fabulous, now-retired Natalie Dessay, is a delight as Ophélie, with her formidable agility and charm. Stéphane Degout is a compelling presence, expressive and brooding in the title role. Mezzo Sylvie Brunet-Grupposo’s Gertrude is powerfully searing, while bass-baritone Laurent Alvaro humanizes Claudius with finely shaded details. The Orchestre des Champs-Elysées, playing on period instruments, and the choir Les éléments, all under conductor Louis Langrée, who has long been devoted to this great opera, are elegant and responsive.

Pamela Margles

► In 1835 Hans Christian Andersen published The Travelling Companion, a touching yet violent story full of wizards, princesses and mysterious strangers; in 1916, the Irish composer Charles Villiers Stanford set this text to music, creating what would be his last opera. Although reprised occasionally since its premiere, this recording of The Travelling Companion is the first of its kind, captured live at Saffron Hall in December 2018.

It is immediately noticeable that this is a live recording, as the sound quality lacks some clarity, with slightly blurred timbres and occasionally opaque orchestrations, as well as the feeling that everything is being performed at a distance. Despite the issues of transferring this live performance to disc, the musical execution itself is of notably high quality, with soloists, chorus and orchestra combining to present a cheerful and charming interpretation.

Cheerful and charming are also the best words to describe Stanford’s score, which maintains the levity and brevity characteristic of early-20th-century English music, never falling into verismo’s dramatic angst or Wagnerian mysticism. Major key runs consistantly throughout the work, as do little woodwind marches, fanfares, and lighthearted figurations. This can only be taken as a deliberate decision on the part of Stanford, for his symphonic and chorological works are some of the most stunning of his era and leave no doubt that this was a man who was highly capable of writing whatever music he wished to hear.

English opera has relatively few major composers to its credit: Purcell, Handel and Britten are three that have maintained a presence in modern opera houses, but there are also works which are only occasionally revived and recorded.

Music, with stirring choruses calling for time and place, admirably reinforce Gomes’ choreography, reflecting the libretto’s historic action, Iberê commits suicide. Facing the rebels’ condemnation for his soon capture Américo. Iberê, rejected by Ilàra sets them free. They rejoin the Tamoyos who leader Iberê (baritone Andrea Borghini), Américo’s friend, the enslaved Tamoyo slave girl Ilàra (soprano Svetla Vassileva). To Count Rodrigo (bass Dongho Kim), loves the Portuguese. Américo (tenor Massimiliano having been enslaved by the conquering during a revolt by indigenous Tamoyos, many Cagliari was, in fact, its Italian premiere. It evokes the mass tradition of Mozart and Haydn, the lyricism of Schubert and the austerity of Bach. Moreover, the Requiem presents the grand melodic roar of the organ, moaning trombones and soaring voices of the RIAS Kammerchor and Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin which combine to provide the most intensely moving Bruckner music ever recorded.

Raul da Gama

Charles Villiers Stanford – The Travelling Companion Horton; Mellaerts; Valentine; New Sussex Opera Orchestra and Chorus; Toby Purser Somm Recordings SOMMCD 274-2 (naxosdirect.com)

► In 1835 Hans Christian Andersen published The Travelling Companion, a touching yet violent story full of wizards, princesses and mysterious strangers; in 1916, the Irish composer Charles Villiers Stanford set this text to music, creating what would be his last opera. Although reprised occasionally since its premiere, this recording of The Travelling Companion is the first of its kind, captured live at Saffron Hall in December 2018.

It is immediately noticeable that this is a live recording, as the sound quality lacks some clarity, with slightly blurred timbres and occasionally opaque orchestrations, as well as the feeling that everything is being performed at a distance. Despite the issues of transferring this live performance to disc, the musical execution itself is of notably high quality, with soloists, chorus and orchestra combining to present a cheerful and charming interpretation.

Cheerful and charming are also the best words to describe Stanford’s score, which maintains the levity and brevity characteristic of early-20th-century English music, never falling into verismo’s dramatic angst or Wagnerian mysticism. Major key runs consistently throughout the work, as do little woodwind marches, fanfares, and lighthearted figurations. This can only be taken as a deliberate decision on the part of Stanford, for his symphonic and chorological works are some of the most stunning of his era and leave no doubt that this was a man who was highly capable of writing whatever music he wished to hear.

English opera has relatively few major composers to its credit: Purcell, Handel and Britten are three that have maintained a presence in modern opera houses, but there are also works which are only occasionally revived and recorded.

Music, with stirring choruses calling for time and place, admirably reinforce Gomes’ choreography, reflecting the libretto’s historic action, Iberê commits suicide. Facing the rebels’ condemnation for his soon capture Américo. Iberê, rejected by Ilàra sets them free. They rejoin the Tamoyos who leader Iberê (baritone Andrea Borghini), Américo’s friend, the enslaved Tamoyo slave girl Ilàra (soprano Svetla Vassileva). To Count Rodrigo (bass Dongho Kim), loves the Portuguese. Américo (tenor Massimiliano having been enslaved by the conquering during a revolt by indigenous Tamoyos, many Cagliari was, in fact, its Italian premiere. It evokes the mass tradition of Mozart and Haydn, the lyricism of Schubert and the austerity of Bach. Moreover, the Requiem presents the grand melodic roar of the organ, moaning trombones and soaring voices of the RIAS Kammerchor and Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin which combine to provide the most intensely moving Bruckner music ever recorded.

Raul da Gama

Charles Villiers Stanford – The Travelling Companion Horton; Mellaerts; Valentine; New Sussex Opera Orchestra and Chorus; Toby Purser Somm Recordings SOMMCD 274-2 (naxosdirect.com)

► In 1835 Hans Christian Andersen published The Travelling Companion, a touching yet violent story full of wizards, princesses and mysterious strangers; in 1916, the Irish composer Charles Villiers Stanford set this text to music, creating what would be his last opera. Although reprised occasionally since its premiere, this recording of The Travelling Companion is the first of its kind, captured live at Saffron Hall in December 2018.

It is immediately noticeable that this is a live recording, as the sound quality lacks some clarity, with slightly blurred timbres and occasionally opaque orchestrations, as well as the feeling that everything is being performed at a distance. Despite the issues of transferring this live performance to disc, the musical execution itself is of notably high quality, with soloists, chorus and orchestra combining to present a cheerful and charming interpretation.

Cheerful and charming are also the best words to describe Stanford’s score, which maintains the levity and brevity characteristic of early-20th-century English music, never falling into verismo’s dramatic angst or Wagnerian mysticism. Major key runs consistently throughout the work, as do little woodwind marches, fanfares, and lighthearted figurations. This can only be taken as a deliberate decision on the part of Stanford, for his symphonic and chorological works are some of the most stunning of his era and leave no doubt that this was a man who was highly capable of writing whatever music he wished to hear.

English opera has relatively few major composers to its credit: Purcell, Handel and Britten are three that have maintained a presence in modern opera houses, but there are also works which are only occasionally revived and recorded.

Music, with stirring choruses calling for time and place, admirably reinforce Gomes’ choreography, reflecting the libretto’s historic action, Iberê commits suicide. Facing the rebels’ condemnation for his soon capture Américo. Iberê, rejected by Ilàra sets them free. They rejoin the Tamoyos who leader Iberê (baritone Andrea Borghini), Américo’s friend, the enslaved Tamoyo slave girl Ilàra (soprano Svetla Vassileva). To Count Rodrigo (bass Dongho Kim), loves the Portuguese. Américo (tenor Massimiliano having been enslaved by the conquering during a revolt by indigenous Tamoyos, many Cagliari was, in fact, its Italian premiere. It evokes the mass tradition of Mozart and Haydn, the lyricism of Schubert and the austerity of Bach. Moreover, the Requiem presents the grand melodic roar of the organ, moaning trombones and soaring voices of the RIAS Kammerchor and Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin which combine to provide the most intensely moving Bruckner music ever recorded.

Raul da Gama

Charles Villiers Stanford – The Travelling Companion Horton; Mellaerts; Valentine; New Sussex Opera Orchestra and Chorus; Toby Purser Somm Recordings SOMMCD 274-2 (naxosdirect.com)
David Occhipinti – these out of infinite
Various Artists
Centrediscs CMCCD 27619
(cmcccanada.org)

► Eclectic musical genius, composer and guitarist, David Occhipinti has released a new project that is the culmination of his life (and musical experiences – a journey that has afforded him an “overview” of our little blue planet, and led to a perception of the “one-ness” of humanity, and also of our diverse and fascinating artistic expressions. This enlightened POV enables Occhipinti to freely imbibe of a musical smorgasbord (classical, jazz, new music, haute cabaret and art songs) without particular concerns about boundaries or potential cultural collisions. All of the music here (which is formatted into “Suites”) has been composed by Occhipinti, and informed by his artistry and particular inclusive view.

First up is Three Emilys for Solo Voice, which features the gorgeous, super-human vocal instrument of Minjia Chen in a largely a cappella exploration, propelled by text from the pens of Emily Carr, Emily Dickinson and Emily Brontë. Carla Huhtanen is the soprano in Cubist Cummings, the third movement of which, the mystery of stillness, is chilling in its compartmentalization and use of vox nactus with harp (Érica Goodman) and marimba (Beverley Johnston), to create a stark landscape reeking of alienation.

Of unsurpassed beauty is Three Songs from James Joyce – which was developed from a set of poems found in a copy of Chamber Music discovered by Occhipinti in a London book store, and is perhaps the most evocative suite on the recording. Sung by Robin Dann, the spellbinding group of support musicians, including Occhipinti on guitar, bassist Andrew Downing, cellist David Hetherington and bassoonist Nadina Mackie Jackson among other Toronto greats, invigorate these complex, dark, Celtic-inspired pieces into being. The closing collection, Three Songs for Children’s Chorus, was originally composed for and is sung here by the Cookie Choir. It perfectly parenthesizes this remarkable recording, ripe with hope and the consciousness-altering music of David Occhipinti.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

Pascal Dusapin – Penthesilea
Pettrinsky; Montalvo; Nïg; Mechelen;
Orchestre Symphonique et choeurs di al
Monnaie; Franck Ollu
Cypres Records CYP4854
(naxosdirect.com)

► The French composer Pascal Dusapin is known for drawing upon many contrasting styles – from the paroxysmal avant-garde to expressionist late Romanticism – throughout his impressive output. His new opera, Penthesilea is no exception. This is Dusapin’s second foray into the operatic genre, and we receive a rather restrained and meditative musical interpretation of Heinrich von Kleist’s almost absurdist verse play.

The music is meditative and unrelenting in its impressionistic treatment of the text and drama. The chant-like vocal writing is often set against vast tapestries of lower register washes from the ensemble. Several lesser-known instruments – such as the dulcimer and Egyptian rattle – create familiar beacons of a rather uneasy cerebral quality. While the near 90-minute work lacks a definitive climactic arch, the adventurous novelty of the musical material provides more than adequate satiation for the ear.

Adam Scime

Péter Eötvös – Tri Sestry
Soloists; Frankfurter Opern-und;
Museumsorchester; Dennis Russell Davies
Oehms Classics OC 986 (naxosdirect.com)

► In this opera by Hungarian composer Péter Eötvös – a towering figure in the contemporary classical music world – a mind-boggling number of characters weave strange relationships that are all held together by a very strong musical setting of Chekhov’s play Three Sisters. The orchestra and cast in this recording masterfully execute Eötvös’ complex and demanding score. From the opening passages all the musicians create a world-class atmosphere of artistic confidence. The orchestra provides massive percussive screeches and rugged landscapes upon which beauty and hysteria interweave harmoniously.

With dozens of performances, it would be safe to say that his opera has become a standard of the repertoire – a testament to the masterful writing we are used to from Eötvös. This opera is artistically sound, and the fabulous music-making by the singers and orchestra make for a compelling listen that is a must for contemporary opera lovers.

Adam Scime

CLASSICAL AND BEYOND

Carl Maria von Weber – Chamber Music for Flute
Kazunori Seo; Shohei Uwamori; Makoto Ueno
Naxos 8.573766 (naxos.com)

► Carl Maria von Weber, best known for his operas, Der Freischütz and Oberon, also composed chamber music, some of which is to be found on this disc. I will pay the performers, fronted by flutist Kazunori Seo, the ultimate compliment: that I felt listening to this recording that I could hear Weber’s voice throughout. Yes, you can at times hear the influence of Beethoven and of his contemporary, Friedrich Kuhlau; but the music presented here is not mere imitation but an original take on, and within the stylistic parameters of, the time.

There is much to admire in the A-flat Major Sonata, the first work on this recording: the elegant phrasing in the opening movement, the dramatic dynamics and judicious use of vibrato in the slow second movement. In the second work, the Grand Duo Concertant, in which I hear the influence of Kuhlau, there is boundless but carefully managed excitement, drama and virtuosic flute playing matched at every moment by the effortless fluidity of pianist, Makoto Ueno.

To me, however, the high point in the disc is the third and last composition, the Trio in G Minor, in which flutist and pianist are joined by cellist Shohei Uwamori. Weber’s artistry reveals itself like an early morning sunrise: the first movement begins with the melancholic opening theme played first on the flute and then on the piano, which adds a new and unexpected layer of understanding of the music. But when the cello follows with a second theme, the effect is breathtaking!

Allan Pulker

Four
London Myriad
Métier msv 28587 (divinartrecords.com)

► This is a crisp and capable ensemble, a woodwind quintet minus French horn. The material is supplied by the French and English moderns. For tuneful fun, turn to Eugène Bozza, Jean Françaix and Richard Rodney Bennett. Jacques Ibert, Claude Arrieu and Frank Bridge supply some more weight, but never too heavy. Largely
the playing is elegant and the ensemble finds admirable unity of pitch and articulation, no small task among such diverse voices, and they play the spirited small works with great verve, as if they were having a heck of a time doing so.

I really like this group, their relative youth, the way the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and I particularly like Bridge’s Divertimenti, H.189. Easily the longest selection on the disc, the composer allows an idea to develop and subside into a new one in each of the four movements. One is led to suppose each movement stands on its own, but he follows a format for a multi-movement work meant to be performed as a whole, like a miniature symphony. The second movement, Nocturne, is a dialogue for flute and oboe. Rather daringly, given the sparse character, this stands as the longest movement. Naturally, the scherzo which follows is a duet for clarinet and bassoon. Mr. Bridge is a staunch egalitarian.

Max Christie

Joy & Desolation
Alexander Fiterstein; Tesla Quartet
Orchid Classics ORC100106
(orchidclassics.com)

Get ready, the youth are marching, and they hear the beat of a drummer we should all listen for. Clarinetist Alexander Fiterstein and the Tesla String Quartet have released a sharp-looking package of chamber works for that particular and popular grouping, the clarinet quintet.

After paying homage to the founder of the movement, Mozart, in his Quintet K581, they embark on a path through the 20th century: Gerald Finzi’s Five Bagatelles (arranged by Christian Alexander) and a late-millennial work by a pre-boomer, Solfisguj by John Corigliano. Lastly comes a brief and fairly recent work by Argentine composer Carolina Heredia: Ius in Bello (Laws of War) (2014).

I appreciate the care and skill the group employs in recreating Mozart’s beloved chamber work; it will certainly not disappoint. The colour of Fiterstein’s clarinet brightens the rich sound of the quintet, whose lead voice (in this instance, violinst Michelle Lee, although she alternates on the disc with Ross Snyder), offers a gorgeous counterpart to the wind. They score the unknown territory of chamber music involving instruments with which he was not entirely familiar. Many such forays into the unknown were cautiously undertaken. Moreover Brahms had a habit of destroying pieces he did not approve. Considering all of this it is remarkable that his mature chamber work is among the greatest of the 19th century.

The String Quartet No.3 in B-flat Major is one of three quartets which give credence to his view that (for Brahms) the quartet remained a proving ground for experiments of striking originality. It harks back to the world of Mozart and Haydn. Yet throughout, the cycle of nostalgia is muted and it serves only to allow Brahms’ interplays and musical tensions to be resolved with greater impact. Schumann once described Brahms’ chamber music as “symphonies in disguise” and the Piano Quintet in F Minor is typical of this. It combines the resonances of orchestral music with the differentiated textures of chamber music and is a masterpiece of Brahms’ maturity.

Kirill Gerstein offers a legendary interpretation of the Piano Quintet. With high drama, impulsive accelerations, ominous pauses which shrink to a whisper, and moments of deliberation, the work explodes to life. The Hagen Quartett play with such a high level of empathy that at times it’s possible to imagine these works were written almost exclusively for them.

Raul da Gama

Saint-Saëns – Symphony No.1; Symphony in A Major; The Carnival of the Animals
Utah Symphony; Thierry Fischer
Hyperion CDA68223
(hyperion-records.co.uk)

The output of Camille Saint-Saëns was an impressive one, yet for some reason, a great many of his pieces lie in relative obscurity today.

Among these are two symphonies – both early works – and both overshadowed by the lavish “Organ” symphony of 1886. Critics tend to dismiss them as derivative, but they remain fine examples of a young composer’s first forays into symphonic writing as evidenced here on this splendid Hyperion recording featuring the Utah Symphony conducted by Thierry Fischer.

From the majestic opening measures of the Symphony in E flat from 1853, it’s clear that the orchestra is in full command of this buoyant and optimistic music. The martial mood of the first movement is continued in the second movement Scherzo, followed by a lyrical Adagio. The Finale: Allegro Maestoso is exactly that – majestic and ceremonious music, where the Utah’s formidable brass section is given ample opportunity to demonstrate its prowess, and the triumphant conclusion performed with great panache.

The Symphony in A Major is an even earlier work, composed c.1850 when the composer was all of 15. There are echoes of Beethoven and Mendelssohn here, particularly in the sunny third movement Scherzo and the jubilant Allegro molto finale. Again, the orchestra delivers a stylish and convincing performance under Fischer’s sensitive baton.

Interspersed between the two symphonies is the popular Carnival of the Animals. The musical menagerie with its braying, squawking and clucking is proof indeed that the dignified 53-year-old composer – forever sporting a beard and a frock coat – had a keen sense of humour after all.

Bien fait! This is a wonderful recording showcasing two of Saint-Saëns’ less well-known orchestral works along with one of his most familiar – a welcome addition to the catalogue.

Richard Haskell

Second Wind
Dave Camwell
Navona Records nv6253
(navonarecords.com)

The saxophone was patented by Adophe Sax in 1846, after a great deal of music had already been written. And it was not until the mid- to end-of the 20th century that its repertoire diversified. Dave Camwell’s Second Wind contains an exciting variety of works written for the saxophone but also includes several pieces by Bach, Vitaldi and Handel which have been arranged for the instrument. Music history contains many examples of re-orchestration: Bach performed many of his works with different instrumentation and Robert Schumann added piano accompaniment to Bach sonatas. Camwell has further revised Schumann’s arrangements by adding two saxophones (the other played by
Susan Fancher) to Partita No.3, BMV1006 and Sonata No.3 BMV1005. The players' bright sound and clean articulation show how well-suited the saxophone is for Baroque music. Camwell shows his mastery of many forms with the other pieces, including Robert Muszynski's Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano, Op.29. Throughout the two movements, Andante Maestoso and Allegro Energico, he combines a muscular technique with a light and effervescent sound through the entire range of the instrument, including altissimo passages. Three larger works round out the album, one with wind ensemble, another with choral and the final work, Russell Peterson's Concerto for Flute, Alto Saxophone and Symphonic Band. The variety of music from different centuries, and with such diverse instrumentation, makes this album a real saxophone tour de force!

Ted Parkinson

Hommage to Women Composers
The Piano Duo of Iris Graffman Wenglin & Ruth Lomon
Navona Records nv6254 (navonarecords.com)

The duo of pianist/lecturer Iris Graffman Wenglin and composer/pianist Ruth Lomon had been performing traditional two-piano programs when they came up with the idea of playing works by women composers, music that was usually difficult to find and seldom performed. When Lomon was in London, she began to research works, and this project took off. Recorded in 1976 and 1978, and remastered in 2017, this album features pieces by 11 women composers from the Romantic era to the late 20th century.

Two Clara Wieck Schumann piano solos played by Graffman Wenglin set the stage for future tracks. Highlights include Barbara Pentland's Three Piano Duets After Pictures by Paul Klee (1958) featuring spaces and rhythmic attacks interspersed with lyric sections. I love Lomon's composition Soundings for Piano Four Hands (1975) which lives up to its title with wide-ranging atonal piano effects like low ringing lines against higher tones, virtuosic chords and leaps. Thea Musgraves's Excursions (1963) has eight under-one-minute car-driving movements like the bumpy rhythmic The Drunken Driver, the lyrical relaxing The Sunday Driver and the accented heavy chord Backseat Driver. Compositions by Taillferre, Talma, Gideon, Richter, Fontyn, Ptaszynska and Ran complete the collection.

Graffman Wenglin and Lomon are spectacular musicians, both individually and as a duo. They completely respect and understand the diverse styles, technique, ensemble playing and compositional intricacies of each piece and of each other's musicianship. This timeless recording is a wonderful memorial to Lomon who died in 2017.

Tiina Kilik

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY

George Antheil – Symphony No.1; Suite from Capital of the World etc.
BBC Philharmonic; John Storgårds
Chandos CHAN 20080 (chandos.net)

This is the third in a series of invaluable volumes devoted to the orchestral works of the notorious “Bad Boy of Music,” the pistol-packing composer, pianist, inventor, author and occasional glandular advice columnist, George Antheil (1900-1959). A protégé of Ernest Bloch, he left America in 1920 in hot pursuit of his then girlfriend whose mother had banished to Paris, in an attempt to discourage their relationship. It proved a lucky break for him, for upon his arrival his piano recitals were soon lionized by the intellectual elite of the capital. He cemented his European reputation in 1926 with the literally riotous premiere of what will always remain his best known work, the sensational Ballet Mecanique for multiple pianos and percussion. Alas, the clouds of war gradually intervened and he returned to America in 1942. He withdraws the work from his catalogue for decades. It was eventually published in 1997. This is followed by the transcendent “symphonic meditation” Les Offrandes oubliées (1930), one of his most successful works in this genre.

Notably absent in the works of the 1930s, Messiaen’s preoccupation with birdsong is front and centre, alternating with retrospective hymnal passages reminiscent of his earlier style, in the late Un sourire (1939), which premiered December 5, 1931, as Messiaen’s exquisite contribution to the bicentenary of Mozart’s death. The recording concludes with the original orchestral version of the lengthy, supremely Catholic devotional tone poem L’Ascension – Quatre méditations symphoniques (1932/33); the later 1934 version, with a different third movement, is a well-known crown jewel of the organ repertoire.

Järvi maintains an excellent command of the orchestra throughout. The dense harmonies projected by the Zürich strings are sublime and expertly balanced, the percussion section is impressively resonant and solo passages are outstanding. A very fine job indeed by the recording team, sourced from live performances from January and April 2019.

Daniel Foley

Ginastera – Harp Concerto Op.25
Siddel Walstad; Norwegian Radio Orchestra; Miguel Harth-Bedoya
LAWO LW1182 (naxosdirect.com)

To celebrate Paavo Järvi’s appointment as their new music director, the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich has released this admirable collection of early orchestral works by Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992), a composer demonstrably dear to Järvi’s heart. The disc begins with Le Tombeau resplendissant (1931), a lesser-known work that reflects a crucial time in Messiaen’s life; it bears an unsettling autobiographical program note that begins, “My youth is dead: it was I who killed it.” Perhaps feeling it was too personally revealing, he withdrew the work from his catalogue for decades. It was eventually published in 1997. This is followed by the transcendent “symphonic meditation” Les Offrandes oubliées (1930), one of his most successful works in this genre.

Daniel Foley

Astor Piazzolla

Messiaen – L’Ascension; Le Tombeau Resplendissant; Les Offrandes Oubliées; Un Sourire
Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich; Paavo Järvi
Alpha-Classics.com ALPHA 548 (naxosdirect.com)
composer. His career spanned almost 50 years (1934-1983). Through all three phases – objective nationalism, subjective nationalism and neo-expressionism – Ginastera remained the greatest exponent of the Argentinean gauchesco tradition which holds that the gaucho – a native, landless horsemans – is the icon of Argentina. In the last decade or so of his life, the composers appeal was so great, his influence stretched into many musical styles including jazz and so-called progressive rock.

The selections on this disc, featuring harpist Sidsel Waistad and the Norwegian Radio Orchestra conducted by Miguel Harth-Bedoya, are emblematic of Ginastera’s great gift for creating epic compositions that evoke Argentinean music and dance traditions. These skillfully integrated into classical forms contemporaneous with the 20th century. Romanticism is never very far away, of course, and this is clear from both HARP CONCERTO, Opus 25 and the 12 VARIAÇÕES CONCERTANTES, Op.23.

Both Walstad and the orchestra deliver fine performances of two of Ginastera’s eminently paradigmatic works. Walstad’s playing is eloquently dreamy and distinctively ripe in tone. Her performance, based on the 1968 revision (also performed by Nicanor Zabaleta), is scintillating. The orchestra, under Harth-Bedoya’s baton is stunning. What musicians across the board is startlingly fresh and alive.

Raul da Gama

Christopher Tyler Nickel – Music for Woodwind Choirs
Various Artists
Centrediscs CMCCD 27019 (cmccanada.org)

The composer
Heitor Villa-Lobos is to Brazil what Bach and Beethoven are to Germany, Liszt is to Hungary and Chopin to Poland. Uniquely, Villa-Lobos also became the cellist who played many other instruments, including guitar, on which he achieved a remarkable facility. Virtuosity across many instruments also became one of Villa-Lobos’ strong suits. Burle Marx, the conductor and close friend once asked Villa-Lobos if there was anything he did not play. “Only oboe,” was the reply; but when the two met shortly afterwards, Villa-Lobos was well on his way to mastering that instrument too.

Villa-Lobos’ Guitar Concerto was commissioned by Andrés Segovia in 1951. (performed in February 1956). It is different from the bright colours and seductive melodies of Rodrigo’s CONCIERTO DE ARANJUEZ. But it is highly virtuosic, emotional, and explores a range of techniques including glissandi, arpeggiation and harmonics. The HARMONICA CONCERTO is emblematic of Villa-Lobos’ cross-instrument virtuosity. The appropriately numinous Sexteto mistico is imaginatively poetic and the rhapsodic and sensual Quineto instrumental is typical of the composer’s ability to communicate with feverish Brazilian passion.

The São Paulo Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Giancarlo Guerrero is in exquisite form throughout as is the OSESP Ensemble. The warmth of guitarist Manuel Barrueco’s playing – like his tone and touch – is eminently suited to Villa-Lobos’ work. Harmonica wizard José Staneck’s performance is utterly unforgettable for his ability to communicate Brazilian saudade on so tiny, albeit exquisitely chromatic, an instrument.

Raul da Gama

Waldorf University Press
This recording, the first devoted solely to her compositions, offers up the altogether worthwhile experience of entering Di Castri’s adventurous sound world.

There is a lot going on in these works, with their constant shifts in mood and texture. But the inventive details add up to much more than a series of engaging episodes. Each work is tautly structured, creating an invigorating momentum. Above all, these works are inescapably moving, whether on a personal level, or when confronting the global issues that concern Di Castri.

The best moments are the most unexpected. Take the burst of reflectiveness at the end of the title work Tachipito. Or the way the explosive glissandi in Quartet No.1 are interrupted by magical other-worldly harmonics. In Dux, virtuosic passages of unprompted rhapsodizing create a reassuring harmonic atmosphere. In Cortège, the repetition of the aurally clad counterpoint, high and low staccatos, and dynamic shifts written in traditional Bulgarian folk-singing style. Jocelyn Morlock’s (2019) Serpentine Paths’ use of intense sound effects like high violin and low cello pitch contrasts, fast intense and slower passages, is a race to the performance finish line! Alice Ping Lyee Ho’s Kagura Fantasy (2018) is an exciting listen with contemporary string effects, theatrical feel, dance-like sections and Asian folk-music influences.

The Mercer sisters are inspirational to both musicians and families alike.

Pamela Margles

Our Strength, Our Song
Akemi Mercer-Niewoehner; Rachel Mercer
Centrediscs CMCCCD 27719
(emccanada.org)

In a recent issue of The WholeNote, David Jaeger wrote at length about cellist Rachel Mercer. Jaeger produced this new release with Rachel and her violinist sister Akemi Mercer-Niewoehner playing six duo works by Canadian women composers.

Violet Archer’s Four Duets for Violin and Cello (1979) is a four-movement work composed “especially” for violinist Tom Rolston and his then 12-year-old cellist-daughter Shauna. Family fun galore, as the opening Brooding movement starts with a slightly grim low-pitched cello mood leading to a more reassuring violin line. Love the upbeat plucks in the dramatic Paean fourth movement. More tonal rhythmic sounds in Jean Coulthard’s Duo Sonata for Violin & Cello (1989) as repeated patterns and plucks unite this orchestral-sounding piece. Barbara Monk Feldman’s Pour un nuage violet (1998) is a welcome change of pace with nature-inspired subtle rhythmic original sounds.

The Mercer sisters are phenomenal in their passionate performances of their commissioned works. Rebekah Cummings’ Our Strength, Our Song (2018) features conversational counterpoint, high and low staccatos, and dynamic shifts written in traditional Bulgarian folk-singing style. Jocelyn Morlock’s (2019) Serpentine Paths’ use of intense sound effects like high violin and low cello pitch contrasts, fast intense and slower passages, is a race to the performance finish line! Alice Ping Lyee Ho’s Kagura Fantasy (2018) is an exciting listen with contemporary string effects, theatrical feel, dance-like sections and Asian folk-music influences.

The Mercer sisters are inspirational to both musicians and families alike.

Tiina Kik

Focus
Adam Cicchillitti; Steve Cowan
Analekta AN 2 8792 (analekta.com/en)

Canadian guitarist/friends Adam Cicchillitti and Steve Cowan formed this duo in 2015. Their dedication to performing, commissioning and collaborating with living composers from contemporary classical to popular music styles is heard here in five works by Canadian composers.

A wide cross-section of styles can be heard. The duo’s Canada Council commission Focus (2018) by Harry Stafylakis is a unique mix of pop, jazz, and classical. The first movement is more pop-sounding while the more classical second movement, based on a theme from Beethoven’s seventh symphony, opens with a single-pitch melody and develops through contrapuntal writing to a strumming rock-like closing. Andrew Staniland’s Brazilian-inspired Choro: the joyful Lament for Villa-Lobos (2017) is a virtuosic rhythmic work. Cicchillitti and Cowan’s 2017 arrangement of José Evangelista’s five-movement Retazos (2010) is impressionistic, with reflective, haunting, mellow tonal melodies and contrasting florid fast runs. Their commission Ombres et lumières (2017) by Patrick Roux has a grief-stricken lyrical first movement and a contrasting faster rock-groove-flavoured second movement. Originally for two harps, composer Jason Serenson impeccably arranged his more atonal programmatic two-movement River and Cave for the duo in 2018. The opening water rippling effect is achieved by delicate repeated pattern playing. The slower low-cave section emulates cave echo effects with lower strums, longer silences and staccato drips.

Cicchillitti and Cowan are fabulous duo guitarist who perform together to perfection in all styles. No wonder this recording is on CBC’s Top 20 Canadian Classical Albums of 2019!

Tiina Kik

Boston Symphony Commissions – Timo Andres; Eric Nathan; Sean Shepherd; George Tsontakis
Boston Symphony Orchestra; Andris Nelsons
Naxos 8.559874 (naxos.com)

Four recent (2016-2017) works by American composers receive their premiere recordings on this disc.

The episodic structure of the brightly scored, 11-minute Everything Happens So Much by Timo Andres (b.1985) suggests, as per its title, a variety of things happening, as in a play, film or ballet. Similarly, the colourful episodes of another 11-minute piece, the space of a door by Eric Nathan (b.1983), also hint at a sequence of unseen events. Both of these compositions seem, to me, not quite self-sufficient, yet well-suited as soundtracks for something to be watched.

The 13-minute Express Abstractionism by Sean Shepherd (b.1979) invites visual accompaniment in very nature. In four movements inspired by artists Alexander Calder, Gerhard Richter, Wassily Kandinsky, Lee Krasner and Piet Mondrian, Shepherd’s quirky, cleverly scored music would be even more persuasive if performed together with projected slides of the artists’ works.

The longest (24 minutes) and most substantial music on the disc, needing no visual support, is by the oldest and best-established of the composers, George Tsontakis (b.1951), visiting composer in 2008 at the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Music. His four-movement Sonnets – Tone Poems for English Horn and Orchestra, inspired by Shakespeare, is a lyrical, moody gem, its solo part beautifully played by the BSO’s Robert Sheena. It’s an English horn player’s worthy alternative to Sibelius’ Swan of Tuonela, which it closely resembles in overall impact, though boasting Tsontakis’ individual, memorable melodic expressivity.

Michael Schulman
Taking Flight
Mike Murley
Cornerstone Records CRST CD 150
(cornerstonerecordings.com)

➤ Around 1998, saxophonist Mike Murley formed a trio with guitarist Ed Bickert and bassist Steve Wallace. The group only endured until Bickert’s 2001 retirement, but it represented a high point for chamber jazz: a debut CD, Live at the Senator, won the 2002 JUNO for best jazz recording; Test of Time, a later release of 1999 material, won the 2013 JUNO. The spirit of the group has found continuing life in the Murley Trio with Wallace and guitarist Reg Schwager. Taking Flight adds the superb expatriate Canadian pianist Renee Rosnes to the mix, with Jim Vivian substituting for Wallace on four of nine tracks. The group emphasizes the quiet end of the dynamic spectrum, but it does so with resonant firmness and determined invention.

The group covers a spectrum that’s tailored to its gifts. The late Kenny Wheeler, both partner and inspiration, is represented by Winter Suite and Phrase 3, models of introspective collaboration. The former begins with just Murley’s tenor, before it’s joined by Rosnes’ floating accompaniment. Wayne Shorter’s Penelope has its own evanescent glow, and the spinning lines of Charlie Parker’s Bird Feathers feels Tristan-like in this context, emphasized by Rosnes’ rapid invention.

The CD concludes with Nikolaus Brodszky’s I’ll Never Stop Loving You, played by the trio of Murley, Schwager and Wallace and dedicated to the memory of Ed Bickert, who passed away a couple of weeks before this March 2019 recording session. No tribute could be more fitting.

Stuart Brooner

Intention
Marilyn Lerner; Ken Filiano; Lou Grassi
NotTwo MW995-2 (nottwo.com)

➤ Marilyn Lerner is one of Canada’s most creative pianists, from ventures into klezmer to the avant-garde playfulness of Queen Mab Trio with Lori Freedman and Ig Henneman. Her most intense and inventive project, though, may well be the longstanding and virtuosic trio with two veteran New York free jazz musicians, bassist Ken Filiano and drummer Lou Grassi. The group’s first CD, Arms Wide Open, was recorded in a Brooklyn studio in 2008. The next two – Live in Madrid (2012) and Live at Edgefest (2013) – documented festival appearances. Intention comes from a 2018 New York concert with the trio achieving even higher levels of empathetic creation.

Taking a conversational approach, there’s a certain pointillist playfulness to the sound-oriented Plink Plunk, complete with hand drums, isolated piano string plucking and sudden bass glissandi; but even in this mode the group is a dynamic collective, suddenly mustering episodes of dense interactivity. Each musician might open a dialogue with a solo foray, a series of suggestions and motifs, as Grassi does in his multi-directional opening to No Farewell. Before long the group is embroiled in another collective composition, in this case a particularly pensive episode, a layering of distinct yet interactive parts, distinguished by bright piano trebles, rich arco bass and varied metal percussion.

While jazz piano trios once resolved into piano with accompaniment, Lerner, Filiano and Grassi are full partners, the trio pressing dialogue into meteorological events, the tempestuous, the torrential and often the impending.

Stuart Brooner

Higienópolis
James Hill’s Local Talent
Projectwhatever Records
(projectwhatever.com)

➤ Local Talent is the newest project from James Hill, a Toronto-based pianist who has surely and steadily established a presence for himself on the national music scene. In many ways, Local Talent’s debut release, Higienópolis, is a continuation and expansion of the work that Hill has done in two other notable Canadian groups: the jazz trio Autohahn, with drummer Ian Wright and saxophonist Jeff LaRochelle, and the hip-hop/jazz band BADBADNOTGOOD, with whom Hill has played for the past several years. Wright is back in the drum throne on Higienópolis; rounding out the trio is bassist Rich Brown, who, at this point in his career, may be Canada’s preeminent voice on the electric bass.

Higienópolis begins with the title track, a mixed-metre affair that unfolds carefully over the song’s six-minute runtime. Busy, snare-drum-driven sections are juxtaposed with compelling solo piano passages, whose sparseness becomes expansive through the intelligent application of reverber and other time-based effects. When a solo does start, halfway through the song, it seems like a welcome inevitability, rather than a demonstration of athletic prowess.

Local Talent’s commitment to patience, as demonstrated both in Hill’s compositions and in the band members’ individual artistic choices, is one of Higienópolis’ most charming features. At its best, as on the title track, on The Silent Cry, and on Sailing At Night, the album evokes a sense of theatre, of the familiar refracted and re-presented as something new. Highly recommended.

Colin Story

Bliss Station
Eric St-Laurent
Katzenmusik KM10 (ericst-laurent.com)

➤ Toronto-based guitarist Eric St-Laurent’s new album, Bliss Station, is a continuation and expansion of the work that he has done on past releases, including Dale and Ruby, both of which feature his long-standing trio of bassist Jordan O’Connor and percussionist Michel DeQuevedo. Both DeQuevedo and O’Connor join St-Laurent on Bliss Station, as does trumpeter and pianist Sebastian Studnitzky.

Though drums are more common in guitar trio/quartet settings, Bliss Station benefits from swapping out a drum kit for DeQuevedo’s percussion (as on previous outings). Of the many effects that this exchange produces, the most prominent is that of intimacy: without cymbals, snare and bass drum splashed across the sonic spectrum, the acoustic nuances of each instrument become more clear, and small moments acquire greater weight. Another, more subtle effect, the rhythmic interplay between band members, comes to the fore. St-Laurent plays the guitar with deep metrical commitment, whether on melodies, supportive riffs, chords or solos. Bliss Station’s title track provides a great example of this, as St-Laurent moves through melodic statements and a solo with a propulsive, unerring sense of momentum. The funky Mustard Arizona is no different, though it is also remarkable for Studnitzky’s ability to make his trumpet sound nearly as breathy and understated as a flute.

The fun of Bliss Station is in the band’s interactivity, as well as in the sense of immediacy, fun and rhythmic joy that the performances succeed in evoking.

Colin Story
La Mince Ligne
Tertio
MCM (tertioband.com)
► This was the first time this writer had come across up-and-coming, jazz-rock fusion group Tertio; and what a great discovery it turned out to be. The Montreal-based collective truly has their own distinctive style that is absolutely refreshing and pleasing to listen to. Drum and bass grooves for days, unique and interesting synthesizer work, fantastic trumpet riffs and catchy guitar melodies, come together to make this record a contemporary jazz, rock and even funk journey that will have any listener wanting to tap their foot or bop along.

More With Less starts off the record with a positively groovy track that showcases their distinct blend of “modern jazz, urban rhythms and the raw energy of rock” which they are known for. New One showcases soaring trumpet melodies courtesy of Andy King and a soulful, stellar guitar solo by Vincent Duhaime Perrault who is also credited with composing all of the group’s pieces. La truffe incorporates a positively funky and enthralling electric bass solo in which very apparent talent is showcased. Throughout the record, drummer Eric Thibodeau, bassist Alex Leflaive and keyboardist Paul Shrofel provide the perfect backing to each piece, moving the melodies along with captivating chord and a constant, catchy rhythm. For those wanting a great and much needed pick-me-up within these dreary and grey winter days, this album is ideal for you. Truly a newer band worth keeping an eye out for.

Kati Kiliaspea

Temptation
Chantal Chamberland
EvoSound EVSAT19M (chantalc.com)
► Renowned French-Canadian jazz vocalist and guitarist Chantal Chamberland’s recent release is a wonderful testament to her musical talent and unique style. Her trademark soulful and sultry voice shines throughout the record, often accompanied by her melodious and flowing guitar melodies. Chamberland can almost be compared to the late, great Leonard Cohen based on some similarities in vocal styling and smooth genre-crossing ability, albeit she brings a distinct jazz and soul touch to the songs. The album is comprised of well-known pop, soul and blues songs which she has transformed and pleasantly enhanced through beautiful, mellow guitar and vocal stylings into a relaxing and all-encompassing musical journey.

Tracks Temptation and Beautiful Life start the listener off on a path that meanders softly through a sultry musical soundscape in which it is easy to get immersed completely, lulled and guided along by Chamberland’s melodic voice. Chasing Cars is a stellar string arrangement by Paul Intson that pulls you right into a magical dream world. A toned down, piano and acoustic bass version of Whitney Houston’s hit I Wanna Dance With Somebody is a pleasant and very pleasing surprise in the latter half of the album.

Backed by talented musicians Dan Lockwood on drums, Intson on acoustic bass and Eric Boucher on piano results in a perfectly balanced sound. This record is a worthy addition to any jazz or pop aficionado’s collection.

Kati Kiliaspea

Absolutely Dreaming
Ted Quinlan w/Brian Dickinson; Kieran Overs; Ted Warren
Independent TQ-2019 (tedquinlan.com)
► With the release of his new recording, guitarist and composer Ted Quinlan has again established himself as one of the most gifted, imaginative and technically skilled jazz guitarists around. For this very contemporary project, Quinlan joins forces with three additional noted players – Brian Dickinson on piano; Kieran Overs on bass and Ted Warren on drums. Produced by Quinlan, the CD was also perfectly and authentically recorded by Steve Bellamy.

All nine tunes here were written and arranged by Quinlan, and seldom is one blessed to experience a jazz project of such luminosity. Things kick off with Chetastic which begins with a sense of urgent musical anticipation, tinged with sinuous guitar lines. These are perfectly complemented by the penultimate rhythm section work featuring an exquisite and percussive piano solo by Dickinson and inspired work by Overs and Warren. Of note is Not What It Seems – where sensual, languid guitar lines interwine seamlessly with Overs’ warm, fat bass sound. The group is like a single-celled organism – mutating, dancing and swinging through the unknown inclusive universe in total symmetry.

Also a delight is Building 8 – a jaunty, bop-ish track, with an almost 1950s West Coast jazz feel, and yet completely fresh – featuring a stunner of a bass solo from Overs as well as Quinlan’s masterful playing throughout. Quinlan never overplays and his lines may slow things down, but there’s a special vitality heard throughout.

Kati Kiliaspea

Assembly of Shadows
Remy Le Boeuf
Soundspore Records SS 201901
(remyleboeuf.bandcamp.com)
► My introduction to Remy Le Boeuf was an amazing Le Boeuf Brothers concert in 2017 at the Jazz Room in Waterloo. Remy (saxophone), and his brother Pascal (piano), have recorded...
several albums which push the boundaries of jazz composition and improvisation including 2016’s Imagist, a collaboration with the JACK quartet.

Assembly of Shadows, contains the five-part title suite and two stand-alone pieces, Strata and Honeymooners (the latter, an elaborately developed an Ornette Coleman tune). Le Boeuf is writing for a 20-plus member band and his works are complex and layered; they contain innovative orchestration and leave room for individual performers to shine with improvisatory sections. (Anna Webber’s flute playing on Strata and Alex Goodman’s quietly elegant guitar work on the second movement of the suite are noteworthy.) I recommend searching for Strata on YouTube and watching the highly engaging live performance.

The Assembly of Shadows suite tells the story of a child who becomes lost in a forest, falls asleep, then wakes to dance with the trees and is eventually guided home. All five movements contain exciting and nuanced material and the final A Light Through the Leaves ends with a beautiful and elegant section with full horn tones with an inner moving line leading to a delicate flute and piano duet (which ends with the child going to sleep safe in her own room). Assembly of Shadows is modern, complex and highly recommended.

Ted Parkinson

Live At Willimantic Records
Lao Dan; Paul Flaherty; Randall Colbourne; Damon Smith
Family Vineyard FV 109 (family-vineyard.com)

—they’re involved in every other form of music, so why shouldn’t Chinese musicians play improvised music? Isolation and lack of venue are drawbacks, explains Mainlander Lao Dan who is featured on this CD. Luckily Dan, who plays alto saxophone, suona and bamboo flute, was able to connect with Americans, tenor saxophonist Paul Flaherty, percussionist Randall Colbourne and bassist Damon Smith to produce this US-recorded 77-minute slab of Free Jazz.

Playing saxophone on tracks such as Noise & Light, Dan creates call-and-response patterns encompassing snarling, triple-toned smears and altissimo trills, and even supersedes the veteran saxophonist’s output with bloodcurdling shrieks and frog-like croaks. Oriental exoticism isn’t a factor with his other instruments, but the aural Long Shadows he casts on that track reveal more relaxed flute pitches mixed with a spicato tang from Smith. Meanwhile the suona’s irregular trills and pinched multiphonics on Winter Dawn feature irregular surges that complement Flaherty’s sonorous saxophone split tones and eventually create a guileless theme before diminishing into atomized peeps.

With both horn players sometimes circular breathing and invariably shooting notes past tonal limitations, Smith’s deep woody strokes and obbligato throbs, plus Colbourne’s rumbling affirmations and fluid pops, function both as backing chorus and provocation, urging the others to create even more frantic blowing. Still, at one point Dan completes a ferocious, split-tone solo by vocally screaming. Whether this is the result of excitement or joy at finding simpatico partners is open to conjecture.

Ken Waxman

Metropolis Paradis
Mareike Wiening
Greenleaf Music GRE CD-1073 (greenleafmusic.com)

Surprising as it may seem, drummers are often accomplished composers and Nuremberg-native Mareike Wiening confirms this truism on her debut CD. Her eight tunes are interpreted by a selection of New York’s top contemporary players, which besides Americans, pianist Dan Tepfer and tenor saxophonist Rich Perry, include fellow German, bassist Johannes Felscher, and ex-Torontonian, guitarist Alex Goodman.

Basically Wiening’s strategy is to create subtle sprightly lines, centred on harmonies from Goodman’s fluid fretting and Tepfer’s stacked triads and smooth key changes. Once established, Perry’s sometimes biting and always-flowing solos buoy the melody atop rhythm section swinging. Besides leaving space for frequent single-string guitar extensions and even a bass solo, Wiening’s brush and stick work is also notable for its taste.

Tunes range from charming or moody to ones such as the title tune and 2 in 1 which give scope to saxophone slurs, and rolling chords that ricochet from the guitarist to the pianist. The challenging Misconception is the foot-tapping standout, however, as Tepfer digs in with harder accents, Goodman hammers out the exposition while drum rolls and rattles characterize the stop-time finale.

If the CD has a drawback, it reflects Wiening’s confidence, or lack of same, as a composer. She has demonstrated that she can write subtle melodies that are lightly rhythmic while retaining sophistication. But as Misconception demonstrates by moving outwards from this lyrical comfort zone she can also create sounds that animate as well as they assuage.

Ken Waxman

POT POURRI

Sombras
OKAN
Lulaworld Records LW010 (okanmusica.com)

The two creators of OKAN are Elizabeth Rodriguez on vocals and violin and Magdelys Savigne on vocals, congas, cajon, bata drums and small percussion. Both artists are also the primary composers of the material on their exquisite new recording, Sombras, which translates as “shades”… and that’s exactly what this talented duo has given us – hues, intensities and variations. Sombras was produced by uber-talented bassist Roberto Riveron (who also performs on the CD). The inspired lineup of players also includes Anthony Szczachor and Frank Martinez on drums; Bill King, Danae Olano, Jeremy Ledbetter and Miguel de Armas on piano and keyboards; Reimundo Sosa on quinto guitar; Pablolsky Rosales on tres guitar; Alexis Baro on trumpet and Mari Palhares on pandeiro and surdo.

The title track opens with the intoning of a sacred blessing – perhaps for Mother Africa herself, by way of Cuba – followed by a pulse-racing Latin explosion featuring summurous, dynamic vocals, a stirring and volatile piano solo from de Armas and the entire face-melting ensemble. Certainly one of the most moving tracks on the project, Laberinto seamlessly segues from a folk-song-like interlude into a very contemporary number, steeped in pure, powerful Cubanismo.

Other delights include Desnudando El Alma (Stripping the Soul), which is a heartrending and muy romantico ballad, made all the more melancholic by the moving string arrangements and the always gorgeous piano work of King, as well as a technically thrilling bass solo from Riveron. With the charming closer, Luz (Light), we are again transported to a magical place of ancient sights, smells and emotions – Cuba puro – OKAN sí!

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

Resonance
Stick & Bow
Leaf Music LM231 (leaf-music.ca)

Adventurous duo Stick & Bow is comprised of Canadian marimba player Kristyna Marcoux and Argentinian cellist Juan Sebastian Delgado. With the release of their new recording,
the two Montreal-based musicians have been succinctly described as “rediscovering the classics through a continuous musical search…”

The CD includes 13 diverse pieces, including unique, contemporary interpretations of works by familiar and obscure composers, including Bach, Bartók, Piazzolla, Nina Simone, Paco De Lucia and Radiohead. Opening the program are Bach’s Adagio and Prelude. This is a luxurious interpretation, filled with exotic flavours and unusual nuances, as well as a seamless segue into a bebop-centric idyll of pizzicato and percussion, defined by razor sharp time and profound dynamics – and yes, a Marimba can be played with dynamics!  

Fandango, by Luigi Boccherini, is rendered here with a youthful joy and percussive tango motifs, and Bartók’s Romanian Folk Dances are tinged with a lithie, soulful, loving and mystical impression of the ancient Roma people. With Nina Simone’s Love Me or Leave Me, the finger-snapping duo lends a film noir quality to this anthem of 1950s relationship dysfunction, and also deconstructs the

Something in the Air
Solo Piano Forays Define the Limits of Improvised Music

KEN WAXMAN

Oftentimes called an orchestra on its own, the pianoforte has been an accepted vessel for solo performances almost from the time it was invented around 1700. Through the centuries its refinement and development has allowed for memorable presentations in jazz, so-called classical and less-refined popular music. Depending on the player and the program, the piano can be both a percussive and a melodic instrument so that its versatility can be emphasized by committed improvisers as well. 

Jacques Demierre is one pianist with experience on both sides of the notated/improvised divide. He takes solo keyboard playing one step further on The Well-Measured Piano (Creative Works CW 1064 creativeworks.ch) by stretching three selections with selective overdubbing and editing. Unlike those who use these tools as gimmicks, Demierre’s conclusions about the acoustic properties and architectural construction of his instrument allow him to add more logical textures to his creations. While some of his variations can seem to be as stiff-necked and conventional as if he was interpreting a Romantic sonata, his basic strategy is to balance key patterning and string strumming so that low and high pitches are both highlighted. Additionally his pacing is such that he can be as energetic as necessary without losing forward motion. A track such as Wind Motet, for instance, begins with a tsunami-like eruption of internal string sweeps that are built up with keyboard clips and slathers. As the discordant waves against shoreline timbres intensify into swelling cacophony, a melodic line remains on top. Meanwhile, the stop-time exposition that is To Thank the Morning Rain is distinguished by elevated key scratches alongside a near-processing mid-range theme that encompasses sly rhythms and echoes, as the narrative gets busier and more concentrated. Climaxing with a pressurized, almost claustrophobic overlay, the track ends with tones ringing downwards into the soundboard. If preparations weren’t noted, the multiple textures might be attributed to prodigious skill rather than mechanical extensions.

One pianist who doesn’t use post-production and overdubbing is Canadian D.D. Jackson, whose Live at Freedom of Sound (ddjackson.com) is exactly as advertised. It features the Ottawa native improvising on his own compositions plus one by his mentor, the late Don Pullen. Jackson’s tunes include ones like Tunnel Vision, which marry a waterfall of glissandi to a bluesy backbeat. Becoming both soulful and sophisticated, it surges ahead while leaving room for strident plinking detours. Or the pieces can be lyrical and soothing, as the Pullen–memorial For Don, which makes its points through squirming amoeba-like jabs that culminate in an implicit feeling of melancholy. Some motifs sound instantly familiar, but are sweet without being cloying. Even jaunty, demonstrative D.D.’s Bounce/Better Angels, with its foot-patting exposition at the finale, includes a middle section where pressurized single-note emphasis leaves no doubt about cerebral toughness. But perhaps the most telling track is Richard’s Tune, which Pullen composed in honour of another influential pianist, Muhal Richard Abrams. A solid synthesis of almost pre-modern chording and melodic suggestions, the Waltz-time tune maintains a contemporary feel by sliding low-pitched percussive jumps in the midst of its gently rhythmic storytelling. At the same time, Jackson’s high-quality and unique interpretation confirms his place in the jazz lineage that includes Pullen and Abrams.
Manring makes In Lak’Ech truly atmospheric; Antoine Dufour does likewise on Absolution. Meanwhile Graham emerges as the pre-eminent artist-technician.  

**Raul da Gama**

**The Hockey Sweater/Le Chandail de hockey**

Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra; Gemma New; Roch Carrier

Centrediscs CMCCD 26619 (cmccanada.org)

Who would we Canadians be without our favourite winter sport, hockey? And how about those Team Canada Juniors! ... Countless intense discussions have taken place about the rivalry between the Montreal Canadiens and the Toronto Maple Leafs. No wonder Roch Carrier’s popular 1979 short story The Hockey Sweater is such a hit. Set in 1946 Saint-Justine Quebec, life revolves around school, church and most importantly boys playing hockey, each wearing the Montreal Canadiens Maurice Richard Number 9 hockey sweater. But the story’s young hero needs a new one so his mother orders it from the Mr. Eaton, who sends him a Toronto Maple Leafs jersey instead. Aargh, intrigue...

Commissioned by the Toronto Symphony, National Arts Centre and Calgary Philharmonic orchestras, composer Abigail Richardson-Schulte worked for a year composing The Hockey Sweater before its 2012 premiere. Her musical storytelling is immaculate and supports, yet never overpowers, the spoken story, here dramatically and clearly narrated by Carrier himself in separate English and French tracks.

Many musical styles surface throughout, from the opening quasi-traditional Québécois fiddle tune to the use of organ in the church, school and, of course, hockey rink fanfare!

Dramatic writing emphasizes story moments, like string slides with the hair glue story (the boys would use “glue, lots of glue” to emulate their idol Richard’s hair style), softer sadness music with the Leafs sweater arrival, horn and string interludes, and a final string reel with closing horn note and percussion hit. Intermittent audience cheering (and booing) throughout adds to the musical imagery.

Richardson-Schulte is currently composer-in-residence with the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, and serves as artistic director of the HPO’s What Next Festival. Under the direction of Gemma New, the HPO come together in a well-balanced and joyous team effort in what has become an annual high-light of the orchestra’s winter season. The Hockey Sweater shoots and scores!!

**Tiina Kiik**

Jackson’s initial stateside notice came when he spent time as pianist in saxophonist David Murray’s group. For the past decade and a half, Baltimore’s Lafayette Gilchrist has filled that chair and Dark Matter (CDcds 005 lafayettelafichristmusic.com) is an 11-track live showcase of his playing and compositional skills. Although Gilchrist apprenticed playing a Washington, D.C., hip-hop variant called go-go, what this did was strengthened his vernacular soloing. For example, For the Go-Go, which opens this set, is an out-and-out swinger with downward key splatters and single-note variables. But the showy rhythms expressed owe as much to stride strategies as the go-go beat. Likewise And You Know This, which supposedly merges Jamaican ska with New Orleans funk, ingeniously highlights both genres’ blues roots with the common Spanish tinge by intensifying the backbeat through left-handed pressure, key fanning and theme variations. While some tracks may be showy, the keyboard sleight of hands is never gratuitous and his playing is battery and affectionate as well as tough and steely. Gilchrist also creates quiet themes that wouldn’t be out of place on an Errol Garner date and logically interpolates song fragments into his sequences. Could that be It Ain’t Necessarily So within Dark Matter? He’s also capable of updating a traditional blues, as on Blues for Our Marches to End by adding a Black Lives Matter–suggestive title to the tune’s expected walking-bass line, which is more broadly amplified by the end. Meantime, Spontaneous Combustion showcases shifting time signatures and pitches with detours into ragtime-like flourishes and built-up hip-hop allusions. High-frequency rollicking, splintered tones and dissected patterns connect by the finale.

If the one criticism levelled at Dark Matter is that it needs more of an edge, that sentiment couldn’t be applied to the next disc. Using a prepared upright piano, France’s Eve Risser explores all the crannies and parameters of her composition Après un rêve (Clean Feed CF 524 CD cleanfeedrecords.com) during its nearly 25-minute duration. Stopping and exciting the internal strings so that they vibrate guitar-like and create a clanking percussive continuum, she adds keyboard patterning to devise a distinctive quasi-impressionistic exposition. After adding top-side chording and internal rumbles, swift glissandi finally mark a descending individual key-plinking ending.

Creating an equally atonal program at more than twice the length as Risser’s is British pianist John Tilbury, who on The Tiger’s Mind (Cubus Records CR 372 cubus-records.ch), presents an improvisation based on parts of Cornelius Cardew’s noted score. A longtime Cardew associate and his biographer, Tilbury’s familiarity with the material allows him to add snatches of clamour and cries from pre-recorded fire, water and bird sounds to the performance, as well as utilize the spatial properties of the cathedral in which he recorded. Initially using the pedals to emphasize the piano’s stentorian tones, Tilbury’s aleatory variations soon move to higher pitches. These include singular string plucks and pauses, as well as patterns which subtly incorporate bell-pealing and avairy caws. As the interpretation strengthens, lapping water suggestions and sea lion-like yelps briefly disrupt the cascading narrative. After a strident whistle signals the midway point, the narrative continues to unroll fluidly with thematic material sharing space with wood echoes from the piano’s bottom board and sides, plus vibrations along tightly wound strings. Just when it seems as if the piece will evaporate into silence, a final sequence unleashes jangling metallic string preparations that presage horizontal passages that establish a defining finale.

Combining inspiration with their own skills, each pianist shows how impressively and distinctively the multi-keyed mini-orchestra can be used to create a memorable program.
Old Wine, New Bottles

Fine Old Recordings Re-Released

“Ludwig van Beethoven advanced music from the salon to the concert hall, from castle to cottage and made it the most democratic thing in the aesthetic world.” This year we celebrate the 250th anniversary of his birth in Bonn on December 16, 1770. Many recording companies have assembled extensive collections of performances including previously unrecorded items to create complete editions. Inevitably, the contents of some collections are more “complete” than others. The all-encompassing Beethoven site, The Unheard Beethoven, published their overview. They found that the Naxos edition has an astonishing 89 items not found on any other label, many times the highest number of unique-to-them compositions of any of the other complete editions.

The Beethoven Complete Edition (Naxos 8.500250 naxos.com) contains 90 CDs derived from their own archives, new recordings and more. Each disc is in a fine cardboard sleeve with colour-coded border to match the category; red is orchestral, orange for concertos, yellow for keyboard, green for chamber (the largest collection), blue for stage, purple for choral and pink for songs and lieder. The collection comes, together with booklet, in a box that occupies the shelf space of 21 regular CDs.

In the Orchestral section, the symphonies are played by the Nikolaus Harnoncourt Esterházy Sinfonia, a chamber orchestra formed in 1992 in Budapest with personnel from the Hungarian Symphony Orchestra. Their purpose was to make recordings using an ensemble comparable in size to the groups known to Beethoven. Their maestro, Béla Drahos is a Hungarian conductor and flutist. The group plays modern instruments but the balances and recording quality result in natural, effortless transparency, esteemed upon their first release. Without any spotlighting, all the instruments’ voices are heard, appearing in clear perspective across the sound stage. The recordings date from 1995, and 1996 for the Ninth. In addition to the symphonies, there are the overtures, Coriolan, Leonora 1 & 3, etc. Also, in this section are Deces, Dances, German Dances, Viennese Dances, Contradances and Minuets, plus Wellington’s Victory, etc. conducted by Oliver Dohnányi, Leif Segerstam, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Stephen Gunzenhauser and Drahós. The Dances are all charming and not for one moment tedious.

The Concertos, violin, piano and triple, and some shorter fragments are on six discs. The five piano concertos are played by Stefan Vladar in astonishing performances conducted by Barry Wordsworth plus the E-flat Concerto WoO4 conducted by Dragos. Takako Nishizaki, who may be the most recorded violinist of the digital era, plays the Concerto and the two Romances. On that same disc Jakub Jancuk plays a fragment of the Violin Concerto in C Major WoO5. Soloists in the Triple Concerto from Budapest, conducted by Drahos, are Dong-Suk Kang (violin), Maria Kriegel (cello) and Jenö Jandó (piano).

The 20-CD Piano category contains every note of all you’ve ever and never heard written by Beethoven for one and two pianos. Except for the 42nd, performed by Boris Giltburg, the 32 Sonatas are played by Jandó, a Hungarian pianist and professor of the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest. All the other repertoire pieces are here, four CDs of Dances and Bagatelles, four discs of Variations plus a feast of music new to our ears. In addition to the transcription for piano of his various major works, Artists include Jandó, Carl Petersson, Sergio Gallo, Constantín Scherbakov and many others.

Listening to Beethoven speak through his chamber music is, for me, a most gratifying and valuable part of this set. There are 30 CDs containing, of course, the 16 String Quartets together with another 95 other chamber works for diverse instruments, from duets to septets. Many of us know the Septet Op.20 in E-flat Major for clarinet, bassoon, horn, violin, viola, cello and double bass but few, if any, would recognize or be aware of the Wind Quintet WoO208 in the same key for oboe, bassoon and three horns. Fortunately, the String Quartets are played by the distinguished Kodály Quartet, three of whom also play the string trios. The quartet was founded in 1966 by graduate students of the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest; they play with the sound and innate musicality that distinguishes the finest Hungarian musicians, so many of whom are featured in this collection.

Some exceptions though. The Fine Arts Quartet are prominent. The Violin Sonatas are played by Nishizaki accompanied by the ubiquitous Jandó. Also, the three Piano Quartets WoO36 are played by the New Zealand Piano Quartet. The Xyron Trio from Germany plays the seven Piano Trios and their cellist Maria Krieger and pianist Nina Tichman play the Cello Sonatas and three sets of popular variations. There are a host of other musicians playing a miscellany of great chamber works to discover.

There are seven discs in the Stage section featuring the 1805 version of the opera Leonore and the eventual Fidelio of 1814. The Leonore is from Leipzig conducted by Herbert Blomstedt with Edda Moser in the title role. Fidelio is conducted by Michael Halász with Inga Nielsen as Leonore. The Creatures of Prometheus Overture and Incidental Music, also scores for King Stephen, Egmont and the premiere recording of the complete The Ruins of Athens were recorded in Turku, Finland directed by Leif Segerstam. They are also responsible for Leonore Produced and other surprises.

The five Choral discs contain a somewhat esoteric entry, The Glorious Moment, Op.136 and also the familiar Choral Fantasies. The Missa Solemnis enjoys an outstanding performance from Nashville conducted by Kenneth Schermerhorn. The Mass in C Major, Christ on the Mount of Olives, two versions of Opperfeld and the rest are directed by Segerstam in Finland.

Few would have imagined that Vocal would require 13 CDs. Songs of the British Isles occupy more than five CDs and Miscellaneous Folk Songs another one. There are four CDs of Lieder and another for voice and orchestra. Wrapping up this complete edition is the 90th CD of Canons and Musical Jokes.

Considering the quality of the performances throughout, the extent of the unique repertoire and the reality of the recorded sound, the Naxos box of Beethoven has it all.

DOREMI has embarked on a survey of the many recordings of the Trio à cordes Français, one of the prominent chamber groups active internationally in the second half of the 20th century. The trio was formed in 1959 by violinist Gérard Jarry, violist Serge Collot and cellist Michel Tournus, each of whom was a highly respected musician. Their repertoire ranged from classical to contemporary. In addition to their recordings as a trio, they were also heard performing and recording with luminaries such as Jean-Pierre Rampal, Maurice Bourgue, Michel Debost, Pierre Pierlot and others. Volume One (DHR-8091-4, 4cds) is dedicated to the music of Mozart and comprises their complete Mozart recordings. It includes a wonderful rendition of the Divertimento for String Trio, K563, one of Mozart’s greatest masterpieces as well as the two duets for violin and viola and the beautiful quartets with flute, oboe and piano. The set includes a curiosity… an unfinished movement for string trio, K562e. The captivating performances throughout these four stereo CDs were recorded between 1966 and 1977.

These musicians were active as soloists and this set includes a very fine, crisp performance of the Sinfonia Concertante for violin and viola, K364, accompanied by the Toulouse Chamber Orchestra conducted by Louis Arriacome.

During Mozart’s lifetime, JS. Bach was almost forgotten, only to be resurrected by Felix Mendelssohn decades later. It is therefore very interesting that Mozart took Bach works and arranged them for string trio and even composed his own preludes to the Bach fugues for contemporary performance. All these Bach/Mozart arrangements for string trio are included in this important set.
Errol was an elegant battler of ALS – possibly the worst affliction a human being can have. The brain stays sharp while gradually losing control over the body. It’s a cautionary tale that, toward the end of life with everything else stripped away, we become more like our true nature than ever before. Errol loved music and he cherished friendship, and those who volunteered at the benefit concert for ALS research in St. Andrew’s church earlier this year [June 13, 2019] witnessed this firsthand.

— Gary Corrin (principal librarian, TSO).

Composer, educator, conductor, music librarian, studio and orchestra trombonist, pianist, Errol Gay was a consummate musician. In the course of his rich life he held positions at several universities, was a conductor and chorus master with the Canadian Opera Company, assistant musical director at the Charlottetown Festival, music advisor/conductor for the Hart House Orchestra (U of T), music director of Orchestra Toronto, co-conductor of the High Park Choirs of Toronto, co-conductor of the Canadian Children’s Opera Company Youth Chorus and a frequent guest conductor with leading orchestras in the USA and Canada, including the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. He was the TSO’s associate music librarian for 24 years.

Profiled in The WholeNote’s We Are All Music’s Children in May 2015, Errol Gay shared a generous first-person account of his youth in British Columbia, with parents who loved music, actively supported it in their community, and encouraged it in their son. More biographical details are included in First the Child, Then the Music – Paula Citron’s April 2015 feature about his wife, Ann Cooper Gay. These back issues can be found by visiting kiosk.thewholenote.com.

Married to Ann Cooper Gay – opera singer, educator, conductor, and former artistic director (now retired) of the Canadian Children’s Opera Company – Errol Gay also leaves behind two daughters, four grandchildren, and a grieving music community that keenly shares this loss.

Mention Errol Gay’s name in a random roomful of music-loving people and affectionate smiles will erupt all around you – an echo of his own infectious grin and warm, generous nature, and a reflection of the way he valued friendship. The excerpts below are from a flood of memories – some from social media, some shared by Ann Cooper Gay and many offered directly to The WholeNote. (A longer version of these can be read at thewholenote.com)

... My memories of Errol will be with me always. His passion for music and clarity and insight in pursuing it, wearing whichever of his countless hats, has left an irreplaceable impact on the musical life of Canada and beyond. Some people in our wonderful world take librarians for granted. I have never been of their number! As I conjure him now: I see the quizzically raised eyebrows and hear his laugh! ...

— Sir Andrew Davis, interim artistic director of the TSO, served as their music director from 1975 to 1988, when he was named conductor laureate. [In a letter to Ann Cooper Gay]

I knew Errol Gay longer than any other musician in Toronto. We first met in 1968, in the claustrophobic pit of the Royal Alex. Errol playing trombone and me playing bassoon in the band for Anne of Green Gables. It was my first major gig in Toronto, and Errol was the best mentor I could imagine in negotiating the requirements of a union contract and the expectations and requirements of a pit band. I retired from the Toronto Consort in 1992 after 20 years, and picked up my bassoon again; a few years later I joined Orchestra Toronto. I was delighted in 2002 when Errol Gay was appointed conductor. His tenure with Orchestra Toronto included performances of the full range of symphonic repertoire, spiced with some major rarities. I have particularly fond memories of playing the Richard Strauss first horn concerto with Errol’s daughter Erin as soloist. Errol was also responsible for the transition of the orchestra from a local ensemble, the East York Symphony, to a major GTA group, and saw Orchestra Toronto installed as the resident orchestra in the superb George Weston Recital Hall. Errol was the driving force behind the establishment of Orchestra Toronto; not a concert goes by without our feeling his influence.


Errol came to the Toronto Symphony in 1982 as associate principal librarian and was the other finalist when I got my job here. I never felt a moment of resentment from him – he was a real gentleman that way. Rather, for 12 years I was the direct beneficiary of his considerable and varied musical abilities. Errol began as a trombonist and learned to play passable double bass from which he developed an uncanny knack for bowings. He was an accomplished pianist who could play jazz and could also reduce open scores at sight. He was a composer and arranger whose works were performed by the TSO and by the Canadian Children’s Opera Company Chorus. He knew voice types and opera roles inside out. He served as a conductor for the Canadian Opera Touring Company as well as for this orchestra, once stepping in at the last minute to conduct a Pops concert with...
the Chieftains. Errol also served as extra percussionist with the TSO – famously chastised by a concert reviewer for ‘reading a book’ during a performance. He was following the score.
— Gary Corrin, principal librarian, Toronto Symphony Orchestra

Errol was passionate about words, their meaning and usage, and proper grammar, as am I. I remember phone conversations with you [Ann] while Errol commented in the background about various aspects of our English language. He was always very complimentary to me about my writing and I always breathed a little sigh of relief when we agreed about a certain grammatical ‘rule’ because I knew that he was a stickler. During one phone conversation, can’t remember what we were discussing, I could hear him ask: ‘Is that Sue?’ and then, as you moved closer to him with phone in hand he began to play a beautiful piece on the piano, undoubtedly his own composition, just for me. What an honour!
— Suzanne Vanstone, senior communications manager, editorial at the Canadian Opera Company, now retired. [in a letter to Ann Cooper Gay] (May 2015). In our working sessions (Errol composing at the piano, Cow: the Legend of Laura Secord (June 2012) and Alice in Wonderland (December 2005), and we went on to co-create the High Park Boys’ Choir in its inaugural season and followed Ann and Errol to sing for the CCOC Youth Chorus through his high school years.
Errol’s death has made me reflect upon how we feel something together as we sing. This feeling is not created of allusions that you would only notice if you had the same encyclopedic musical knowledge as he did – this was his way of winking at his listeners. You could trust him ‘not to write crap’ (inside joke). I am so grateful to have known Errol from a very young age, and I could not have learned the craft of conducting without him. I’m both happy and very sad that Errol Gay died on Friday. I’m sure you understand, but he would answer with a pun. He displayed the same intellect in his music, writing beautiful pieces full of allusions that you would only notice if you had the same encyclopedic musical knowledge as he did – this was his way of winking at his listeners. You could trust him ‘not to write crap’ (inside joke). I am so grateful to have known Errol from a very young age, and I could write a book about my memories and experiences with him. He very much helped form the person and musician I am today, and I will always cherish and pass on what I learned from him.
— Kristina Bijelic is a singer and violinist who met Errol when she was a child in the High Park Choirs, and was later in the CCOC.

Errol Gay was a melting pot of knowledge and art, each element inextricable from the other. He was kind, caring and witty. He was the kind of person you could make nerdy jokes with and not only would he understand them, but he would answer with a pun. He displayed the same intellect in his music, writing beautiful pieces full of allusions that you would only notice if you had the same encyclopedic musical knowledge as he did – this was his way of winking at his listeners. You could trust him ‘not to write crap’ (inside joke). I am so grateful to have known Errol from a very young age, and I could write a book about my memories and experiences with him. He very much helped form the person and musician I am today, and I will always cherish and pass on what I learned from him.
— Kristina Bijelic is a singer and violinist who met Errol when she was a child in the High Park Choirs, and was later in the CCOC.

As a conductor Errol was colourful, dramatic and passionate. His love of jazz and creative music would trickle into our warmups. I distinctly remember a game he would play where we would start on a major chord, and then he would voice lead with each part to create rich jazz harmonies. He didn’t treat us like children – he treated us like musicians. This changed my life: I realized at an early age that this was what I wanted to do. When I work with groups of singers today, I do not aim for a perfect performance. It is more important that we feel something together as we sing. This feeling is not created by the conductor, but by the belief that everyone is truly involved in that moment, creating something, I learned this from Errol Gay, and a generation of musicians he taught did too.
— Alex Samaras is a singer and educator in Toronto. At age ten he joined the High Park Boys’ Choir in its inaugural season and followed Ann and Errol to sing for the CCOC Youth Chorus through his high school years.

I’m both happy and very sad that Errol Gay died on Friday. I’m happy because his long battle with ALS is over. I’m sad because we have lost another local musical hero and a lovely person. ... He always valued the music and the enjoyment of making it more than personal ambition or honours. He was as loving and supportive with his family as he was with colleagues, students, little choristers and friends. And he knew how to laugh.
— John Terauds founder of the blog Musical Toronto (now Ludwigm van Toronto); music critic for the Toronto Star (2005-2012); organizer, choir director and music teacher.
RACHMANINOFF & SCHEHERAZADE

Elim Chan, conductor
Stephen Hough, piano
Jonathan Crow, violin

Featuring Rachmaninoff’s rapturous Second Piano Concerto and Rimsky-Korsakov’s bewitching Scheherazade.

FEB 14–16

RESERVE YOUR SEATS TODAY!
416.593.1285 TSO.CA

FEB 19

BEETHOVEN PASTORAL WITH OSM

Experience Dusapin’s thundering Organ Concerto, performed by the organist of Paris’s Notre-Dame Cathedral, Olivier Latry.

MAR 13–15

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

Plus Sergei Babayan performs Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto.

BMO SEASON PRESENTING SPONSOR
The immovable reputation of Beethoven is the kind of continuity that either confirms the unchanging greatness of classical music, or makes us despair of the depth of its conventionality and inertness. I am old enough to remember the last time the world celebrated a major Beethoven anniversary, his 200th, in 1970. Fifty years later, just about everything in the world has changed, but Beethoven, it seems, has not.

He still more or less bestrides our Western musical world like a colossus. People with no interest in or knowledge of classical music are still familiar with the da-da-da-dum of the Fifth Symphony or the transcendent Ode to Joy of the Ninth. They might even recognize the obsessive melancholy of Für Elise. For more serious music lovers, Beethoven remains the ne plus ultra.

How is it, though, that Beethoven can continue to perform the same ritualistic ceremonies for the Western mind as he has for a century, when the values Beethoven represents (of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution), are precisely the ones that have been reconsidered, put in play and found wanting in our contemporary world? Or so it seems. Just ask Stephen Miller, or Dominic Cummings, or Victor Orban, or even, if you can find him, Maxime Bernier. Not to mention, of course, He Who Shall Not Be Named. The decay of the Enlightenment values that Beethoven so completely represents is the central political reality of our times. Beethoven should be in disarray in this milieu. But he isn’t. Why not?

I think there are two reasons. The first is the most obvious – Beethoven speaks to us still because the world he rendered into sound continues to be, despite everything, the world we live in, or think we live in, or would like to think we live in. Beethoven was six when the Declaration of Independence was proclaimed, 17 when the Americans wrote the Constitution that is still dead-centre in their political discourse, 19 when the fall of the Bastille announced the French Revolution. The origins of the liberal democracy we still savour and try to defend were created during Beethoven’s youth, rendered into sound by him as an adult, and remained his guide throughout his life, long after they had been abandoned, tarnished and battered about by post-Napoleonic Europe. Today we know how complex and ambiguous those simplistic notions of liberty, equality and fraternity were, and are – but the fantasies they spin over us die a long and hard death. Beethoven has remained central to us because he allows us to revel in the glow of those myths, those truths and ideals that still inspire. Precisely these days, we need Beethoven to keep us together, to keep the fantasies spinning, to keep our better natures in play. Or so we think. Beethoven and the values he represents are the talismans we cling to as darkness creeps over the edges of our lives.

But there’s another, quite different, reason for Beethoven’s longevity, I think. A much more fundamental reason. And that has to do not with what Beethoven represents, but what he and his music are. Because one of the things about Beethoven’s music that is so obvious that it hardly bears saying (except that it is never said) is how simple, coarse and vulgar it is. Unparalleled really in Western music. Compared to virtually every other composer, Beethoven reeks of the street, of the tavern, of the visceral, of the elemental. Mozart is infinitely more sophisticated, Haydn more worldly and ironic, Chopin more cynical, Schumann more troubled, Wagner more manipulative – maybe only Mahler hints at Beethoven’s vulgarity, but Mahler toys with the vulgar so as to overcome it. Beethoven is different – he never strays far from the primal, obsessive ideas that make up so much of his music – the mindlessly simple triadic themes, the rhythmic compulsions, the brutal harmonic dissonances, the sheer towering ugliness of so much of his art. Beethoven struts his coarseness and vulgarity across the Western musical stage like a gang member, his banners and battle scars prominently on display. Cool enlightenment be damned – Beethoven is passion incarnate in music, not reason. But passion laced with intelligence – of the musically profound. Of the elemental. Of the basic. And that’s the key. That’s why he still speaks to us.

In his greatest moments, whipped into the Dionysian ecstasy of his Seventh Symphony, or the peace and serenity of the E-major variations of the 30th piano sonata, in the sardonic laughter of the metronomic Eighth Symphony, Beethoven takes us on a perilous journey that plays with his love of the precipice, of the precarious, of the primal. When Beethoven is inspired, the very bedrock simplicity of the music is the foundation for its astonishing success, fulfilling a promise of beauty in the world upon which we gambled when we made humankind the measure of everything (the true meaning of the Enlightenment). Beethoven is the artist of the challenge, the artist...
without a net, the artist lacking a stylistic tool kit with which he can spin out a few bars, or a few movements, or a few works. It’s always all or nothing with him. That’s why when Beethoven is at his best, there is nothing more thrilling in music. He takes on a challenge for us all, and prevails. On the other hand, when he is at his worst – in Wellington’s Victory or the King Stephen Overture or the listless, anemic “Emperor” Concerto, for example – nothing is more terrifying. It’s a glimpse into the abyss, a portrait of a man who stakes everything on himself, and falls. When Beethoven runs out of inspiration, there is nothing more empty in Western music.

It’s precisely because Beethoven offers the possibility of failure as well as success that makes his music so affecting and powerful. The simplicity of his language and his inability to hide behind any stylistic curtain raise the stakes of each composition. We’re always hanging in the balance with the composer as he tries to bust his way through each composition, setting impossible goals for himself and then trying to meet them (so that that obsessively repetitive rhythm of the Fifth Symphony doesn’t bore us, for example, or the sprawling architecture of the Third confuse). And that’s what makes Beethoven so modern. Because the modern world is Beethoven’s world – one where we have, in effect, made the same gamble on ourselves as he made in his music. A gamble on our ability to prevail, despite all, without ideological nets, without the safe harbours of convention, or race, nation, ethnicity or religion. A gamble on human reason and decency and strength.

Like the modern world, Beethoven is about precarity, about the perilous nature of being human when all the traditional sources of value have been pulled out from under us and there is nothing left but our own wits. He thrills us with his ability to set his own challenges, place himself in a stark, primal world of his own making, and successfully manage the fear and potential destruction that attend his every musical move. When he succeeds in navigating this landscape and delivers us safely home at a work’s conclusion, we celebrate ourselves in a manner unique in music, perhaps in all of art. Beethoven is the artist of the inner self, triumphant in the world. In that, he is supremely modern. 

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

A FAIRYTALE WITH A TORONTO TWIST

FEB. 6-21 | 416-363-8231 | coc.ca | Four Seasons Centre
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS