

# the WholeNote

25<sup>TH</sup> SEASON!

Vol 25 No 9

JULY | AUGUST 2020



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# 2020/21

# Passions of the Soul

“Throughout history, music has accompanied important chapters of human existence. Each sound, each tone, each timbre immerses the human spirit in different states while also soothing the soul.”

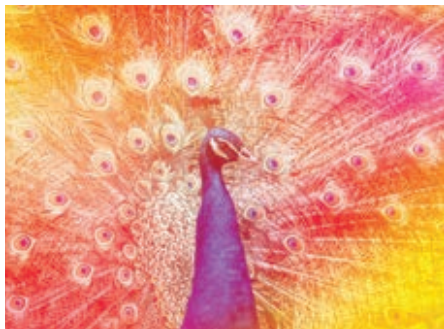
— Elisa Citterio, Music Director

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## HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE



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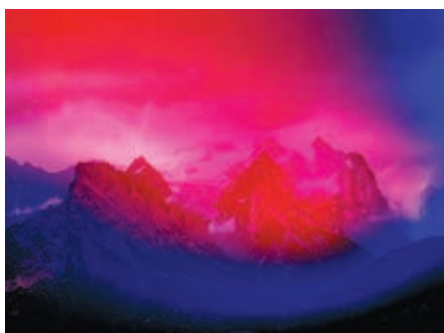
Featuring guest conductor and cornetto soloist Doron Sherwin



### Bach's Friends & Rivals

**JAN 21–24, 2021**

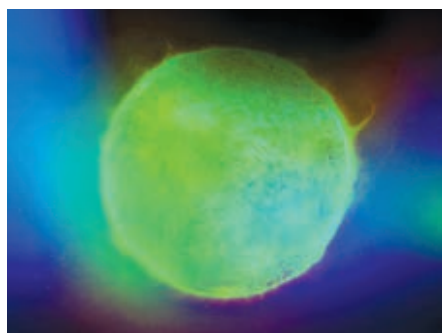
Tafelmusik favourite, guest conductor and oboist Alfredo Bernardini, returns



### Beethoven Symphony no. 4

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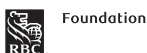
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Saturday, October 17, 2020 at 8 p.m.

Dukas, Fanfare pour précéder *La Péri*  
Korngold, Concerto for violin and orchestra  
Stravinsky, Symphony in three movements

## FOLK, MYSTICISM AND SPIRIT

Saturday, December 12, 2020 at 8 p.m.

Rachmaninoff, Capriccio Bohemien  
Scriabin, Concerto for piano and orchestra  
Prokofiev, Symphony No. 5 in B-flat major

## DARK AND LIGHT

Saturday, February 6, 2021 at 8 p.m.

Rachmaninoff, Isle of the Dead  
Shostakovich, Concerto for cello and orchestra No. 1  
Wagner, Symphony in C major

## PASSION AND DRAMA

Saturday, March 20, 2021 at 8 p.m.

Sarasate, *Zigeunerweisen*  
Prokofiev, Concerto for piano and orchestra No. 2  
Tchaikovsky, *Manfred* Symphony

## MELODIES OF EMOTION

Saturday, May 1, 2021 at 8 p.m.

Rimsky-Korsakov, Capriccio Espagnol  
Chopin, Concerto for piano and orchestra No. 1  
Scriabin, Symphony No. 2 in C minor

## PÄRT, GÓRECKI AND SHOSTAKOVICH

Saturday, May 29, 2021 at 8 p.m.

Pärt, Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten  
Górecki, Concerto for harpsichord  
Shostakovich, Symphony No. 14

## GRACE, FIRE AND BEAUTY

Saturday, June 19, 2021 at 8 p.m.  
Friday, June 25, 2021 at 8 p.m.

Schumann, Overture, Scherzo, and Finale  
Tan Dun, Piano Concerto "*The Fire*"  
Bruckner, Symphony No. 1 in C minor



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# the WholeNote

Volume 25 No 9 | July and August 2020

## ON OUR COVER

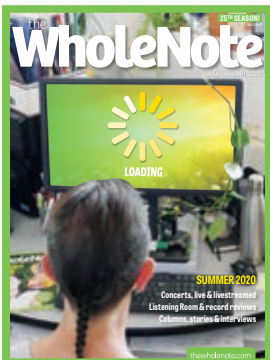


PHOTO: KEVIN KING

The loading wheel, absolute and eternal – to everyone things seem to be “buffering” in one way or another now. A seamless transition for some; to others, the sudden thrust into the online world and previously unimaginable lengths of screen time have certainly been big changes. Time now spent waiting for the next Zoom meeting or Facebook live stream to start, waiting for your favourite venue to re-open, waiting for someone to invent a face mask you can play an instrument through, waiting for the curve to flatten, or for a vaccine, or for social reform.

At *The WholeNote* we’re waiting just the same, and hoping our office building at Bathurst and Bloor can reopen for things other than photography projects. In the meantime, wishing all our readers a physically distant, but no less musically enriching summer! Hope you find strong connections (internet or otherwise). *Taken on a Friday morning in the WholeNote office (from a 2m distance).*

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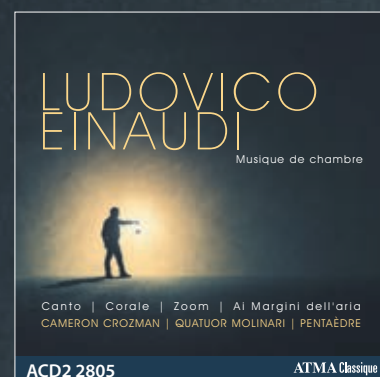
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Centre for Social Innovation  
720 Bathurst St., Suite 503, Toronto ON M5S 2R4  
PHONE 416-232-2232 | FAX 416-603-4791

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

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

### EDITORIAL

**Managing Editor | Paul Ennis**  
editorial@thewholenote.com

**Recordings Editor | David Olds**  
discoveries@thewholenote.com

**Digital Media Editor | Sara Constant**  
editorial@thewholenote.com

**Social Media Editor | Danial Jazaeri**  
dan@thewholenote.com

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

### SALES, MARKETING & MEMBERSHIP

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

**Advertising Art / Production Support / Operations**  
Jack Buell | adart@thewholenote.com

**Classified Ads | classad@thewholenote.com**

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

**Circulation/Subscriptions | Chris Malcolm**  
circulation@thewholenote.com

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

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#### THANKS TO THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

Brian Chang, Sara Constant, Paul Ennis,  
Robert Harris, Jack MacQuarrie, Jennifer Parr,  
David Perlman, Lydia Perović, Colin Story,  
Andrew Timar, Steve Wallace

#### CD Reviewers

Sophie Bisson, Stuart Broomer, Max Christie,  
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Colin Story, Bruce Surtees, Andrew Timar,  
Ken Waxman, Matthew Whitfield

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Ruth Atwood, Tilly Kooyman, John Sharpe,  
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Lori Sandra Aginian, Wende Bartley, Beth Bartley /  
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Summer music as it begins to flower

**SEPTEMBER 2020 AND ON**  
**The 18th annual CANARY PAGES**  
All things choral in southern Ontario.

**OCTOBER 2020 AND ON**  
**The 21st annual BLUE PAGES**  
directory of music makers





# “Exquisite Corpse” and Other Coping Strategies



“Basically how it works is that each participant records material while only partially knowing what other participants have made. The full musical piece is revealed without knowing how all the parts will intersect.” – Ben Finley

**E**xquisite Corpse, Wikipedia says, comes to us from the French Surrealists in the 1920s. As Surrealism founder Andre Bréton put it, “It started in fun, became playful and eventually enriching.”

As a game or technique it is similar to the game Consequences, where players in turn write something, folding the page to hide part of what they have written before passing it on. The sometimes enriching fun comes when the whole thing is presented, with the missing parts in place. The name itself came from a sentence co-created during an early Surrealist round of the game: “*Le cadavre exquis boira le vin nouveau*” (*The exquisite corpse shall drink the new wine*).

As a technique for collaborative creation, it continues to show up all over the arts spectrum: in the 1940s, composers John Cage, Virgil Thomson, Henry Cowell, and Lou Harrison, composed a set of pieces this way, each writing a measure of music plus an extra note or notes, then folding it on the bar line and passing it on to the next person. (*Party Pieces* is what the published end result was eventually called.) From post-punk English goth rock, to comic book frame-by-frame co-creation, to music theatre, parody novels, film, TV, art and architecture.

The key to the game is that the full piece is revealed without any of the participants having had prior knowledge of how the parts would intersect.

## Exquisite COVID?

Come to think of it, if one substitutes “it started as no fun at all” for Breton’s “it started in fun” life feels a whole lot like *le cadavre exquis* right now, including not having the foggiest idea what, or when, the “big reveal” will be.

As Kevin King writes in “On Our Cover” (page 5), “to everyone things seem to be ‘buffering’ in one way or another now, ... waiting for the next Zoom meeting or Facebook live stream to start, waiting for your favourite venue to re-open, waiting for someone to invent a face mask you can play an instrument through, waiting for the curve to flatten, or for a vaccine, or for social reform.”

And while we wait, we chip away, each of us, at coming up with strategies and approaches that work for the part of the picture that each of us has to deal with, wondering how (or even if), as Ben Finley says in the quote at the top of this piece, “all the parts will intersect” and what kind of whole they will make when they do.

continues on page 30

## STATEMENT FROM THE PUBLISHER

### Black Lives Matter.

Many arts organizations and musicians in Ontario, whose activities are the main focus of *The WholeNote*’s work, are joining the call for urgent and concerted action to bring an end to systemic and deeply entrenched racism in society and the arts, especially, at this moment, as it relates, within the larger framework of racial inequity, to anti-Black racism. As publisher of *The WholeNote* I add my own voice to that call.

But beyond expressions of solidarity, we have much work to do. For 25 years, our aim has always been to support the musical life of our community by painting as comprehensive a picture as we could of that collective musical life. But calling something comprehensive does not make it so, and in fact makes us complicit in maintaining an inequitable and unjust society.

If we are to be part of the solution and not the problem, we must, individually and collectively, answer some fundamental questions:

From whom do we actively seek information about their musical activity?

How do the methods we use for gathering that information, and the structures we impose for presenting it, hinder inclusivity?

How do we decide what types of music merit coverage?

Who and how do we hire?

How do we decide not just what stories are worth telling but who the storytellers need to be?

As with the arts organizations and musicians whose activities are the main reason for our existence, joining this call for action is a necessary first step. But, moving forward, what we actually do about the things we are saying here is what we will all be judged by.

That will be the real story.

David Perlman,  
publisher@thewholenote.com

## Upcoming Dates & Deadlines for our September 2020 edition

**Free Event Listings Deadline**  
Midnight, Saturday, August 15

**Display Ad Reservations Deadline**  
6pm Saturday August 15

**Advertising Materials Due**  
6pm Monday August 17

**Classifieds Deadline**  
6pm Saturday August 22

**Publication Date**  
Tuesday August 25 (online)  
Friday August 28 (print)

**Volume 26 No 1 “SEPTEMBER 2020”**  
will list events

September 1 to October 7, 2020

AND INCLUDE

The 18th Annual CANARY PAGES  
Canary Pages deadline: Tuesday, August 4

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# DEEP AND SLOW THOUGHT

# AMPLIFIED

# OPERA'S

## artist-first mandate

SARA CONSTANT

**W**hen opera artists Aria Umezawa and Teiya Kasahara decided to use the name 'Amplified Opera' for a new Toronto-based opera company and concert series, they knew it would sound like a misnomer.

"A colleague of mine came up with the name 'Amplified Opera' because he thought it would be deliberately provocative to opera audiences to say 'amplified,'" Umezawa explains over video call in May 2020. "That, and this idea of amplifying voices from different perspectives in the industry."

The opera world is one that holds on fiercely to its traditions, and a feature of the art form is that operatic singing is typically – and famously – acoustic. But when Umezawa and Kasahara officially launched Amplified Opera in Toronto in October 2019 (with a totally acoustic series of concerts), their paradoxical name, and the irreverence it suggests towards what many view as a defining characteristic of opera, was a key part of their mandate. They wanted to create a company that placed equity-seeking artists with diverse lives and experiences at the centre of public, operatic discourse – something where many traditional opera houses have repeatedly fallen short.

Opera has repeatedly been reported as an industry where racist and colonialist caricatures abound onstage; where in many opera houses the legitimacy of blackface in costumes is still considered a contemporary debate; and where, in one prominent example, the Metropolitan Opera's 2016 staging of Kaija Saariaho's *L'amour de loin* marked their first performance of an opera by a woman in 113 years.

The issue is not just one of representation and misrepresentation, but of the deeper, structural problems to which these stories point. In a recent interview with Michael Zarathus-Cook at Toronto-based online publication *Ludwig Van Toronto*, baritone Andrew Adridge talks about how representation in opera doesn't work without structural change: that seeing the occasional Black artist in a lead operatic role does little for solving systemic issues within the industry, and does little for BIPOC (Black/Indigenous/People of Colour) aspiring artists beyond proving that they need to be exceptional to be welcomed into what many see as an overwhelmingly conservative and Eurocentric tradition.

Where many big opera houses have failed – weighed down by an aversion to risk-taking, a commitment to a flawed canon, a structural system that funnels the most privileged students and young

artists into the most powerful positions, or a combination of the three – smaller companies like Amplified Opera have found their strength. In their ability to be flexible in challenging the operatic status quo, Amplified Opera, and other grassroots groups like it, have championed the idea that values-driven innovation in opera is possible and necessary – and that within the art form, there are newer, more relevant stories to be discovered.

### Concept to realization

Umezawa and Kasahara explain that the idea for building an opera collective began in 2017 while Umezawa was visiting Canada from San Francisco, where she had been working as an Adler Fellow in stage direction at the San Francisco Opera.

"It was June, and I was expressing to her how frustrating it felt for me still within the opera industry, struggling with my gender and how I should present myself – even in an audition," says Kasahara. "If I should wear the heels, or stuff my bra, or have the long hair, or have the short hair – all of this stuff. And Aria was explaining: 'Well, not being yourself hasn't gotten you anywhere – so why not be fully yourself and see what happens?' It was like a huge lightbulb for me at that time."

"We had also been talking about different ways to help artists find their agency," they add. "So this idea of wanting to create an initiative to help artists and stimulate a conversation around the industry, around music, around art – it was kind of born that summer."

When Umezawa returned from the United States after her fellowship, she and Kasahara decided to formalize their ideas as a Toronto-based opera company. For Umezawa, it was a chance to show the industry at large that there was a way to create operatic programming in which artistic merit and values-based organizing weren't seen as separate initiatives.

"While I was [in San Francisco], there seemed to be industry-wide conversations starting around equity, diversity and inclusion, but often the way they were framed was that there were our 'equity/diversity/inclusion concerns' – and then there were our 'mainstage concerns,'" Umezawa says. "Many reasons were cited for why it was difficult to do an equity-focused mainstage show: 'lack of talent at the right level', 'donor interests', that it's easier to do it in new opera but not easy to do it from the canon. I felt like there was a misunderstanding about what an opportunity including diverse voices in opera was."

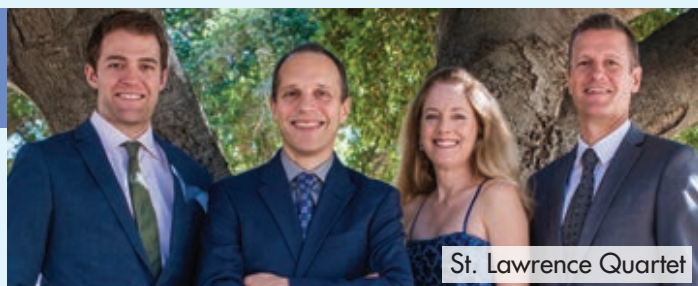
"When we are talking about how to make opera relevant – it's to empower the artists performing opera to tell stories that resonate with



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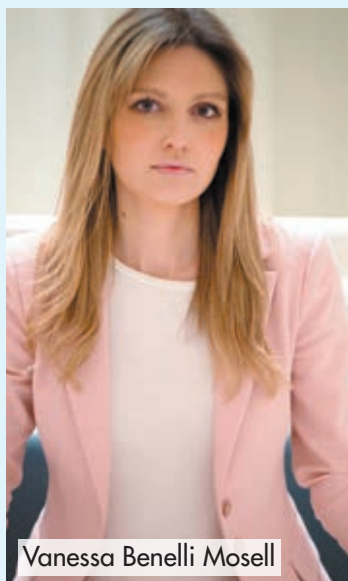
- Oct. 22 St. Lawrence Quartet
- Nov. 12 Castalian Quartet
- Dec. 10 Borealis Quartet
- Jan. 7 Tesla Quartet
- Feb. 4 Miro Quartet
- Feb. 25 Hagen Quartet
- Mar. 18 Gryphon Trio
- Apr. 8 Quatuor Van Kuijk



St. Lawrence Quartet



Hagen Quartet



Vanessa Benelli Mosell



Stephen Hough

## PIANO

- Nov. 3 Vadym Kholodenko
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- Jan. 19 Stephen Hough
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Baritone Kenneth Overton in Amplified Opera's *What's Known to Me is Endless*

them, and to actually invite conversation and critique and dialogue," she adds. "I figured: this new company could actually be the proving ground for what can happen when you empower artists to tell stories on their own terms."

Umezawa and Kasahara's inaugural project, a three-concert series in October 2019 titled AMPLIFY, attempted to put their ideas into practice. Their first concert, *The Way I See It* (directed by Umezawa), featured mezzo-soprano/author Laurie Rubin and pianist Elizabeth Upchurch, who used their experiences as blind and visually impaired (respectively) individuals navigating the opera industry as a creative and curatorial starting point. The second event, *The Queen in Me* (directed by Andrea Donaldson and accompanied by Trevor Chartrand), was a one-person show that reinterpreted the story of the Queen of the Night to explore queerness and expressions of gender, starring Kasahara in the soprano role. The third concert – *What's Known to Me is Endless* (directed by Michael Mohammed) – explored experiences of Black identity in Canada and the United States, featuring African-American baritone Kenneth Overton in collaboration with Canadian pianist Richard Coburn.

Umezawa describes a moment in their first AMPLIFY concert when Rubin sang "You'll Never Walk Alone" from *Carousel*. "Beforehand, she told a story about her first and only guide dog and how that guide dog taught her what it meant to trust," says Umezawa. "Then she revealed that the dog had passed away recently and dedicated the song to the guide dogs of the world, singing 'You'll Never Walk Alone.' It was really touching – and not the first thing that comes to mind when you think of that song. I thought that was a great example of how we could reframe and reread some of these canonical works."

### Flexible futures

In April 2020, Umezawa and Kasahara announced the addition of opera artists Marion Newman and Asitha Tennekoon as co-founders to the Amplified Opera team. Both artists have years of operatic experience on local and international stages, and both bring fresh perspective to the one-year-old company.

Though they are new additions to the team, Newman and Tennekoon are joining as co-founders, with the idea that the four artists will share organizational roles and responsibilities in a fluid and non-hierarchical manner.

"When [Kasahara and I] started the company, we started out calling ourselves co-artistic directors and co-founders," says Umezawa. "And then we had a talk about the social structures that exist in opera that we would like to challenge. For me personally, the hierarchies that we've put into place in opera is something that I don't believe is necessarily serving us anymore. So Teiya and I removed every title but co-founder, and when we brought Marion and Asitha in, we decided that if we're all going to be doing all of the work, we're all co-founders at this point."

"I think it speaks to the transparency that we are trying to foster within this little company," adds Kasahara. "Being small, and being



Marion Newman in the title role of *Shanawdithit*, with Asitha Tennekoon as John Peyton (Tapestry Opera, Toronto, 2019)

new right now, and being nimble, we can be adaptable and flexible, especially to the situation we all find ourselves in."

During a time when most arts organizations have had no choice but to streamline their activities due to complications related to the COVID-19 pandemic, news of their expansion came as a welcome surprise. For the team, these steps forward as a young company, and the time they have in quarantine to dedicate to this project, represent a source of positivity amid cancelled concert work.

"This is a really great time for us to get to know each other and how we work, and to actually have enough time to decide on our best practices," says Newman. "That's pretty special, because what we all had planned meant that we would all have been very busy, had all of that stuff gone ahead. So I'm keeping that in my heart as a good thing."

**Being small, and being new right now, and being nimble, we can be adaptable and flexible, especially to the situation we all find ourselves in.**

"I love that we're taking care of how we work with each other – the kind of culture we want to create for ourselves and thereby impact the industry as a whole," adds Tennekoon. "Trying to hone in on the focal points that are the most impactful, so that we're not just figuring it out as we plan a specific event. I think that's important, because I don't think that what we want to say has been effectively brought forward and presented as one collective front for the industry [before]."

In the coming months, the team plans to launch *Amplify Beta*, a retrospective project that will include documentation from AMPLIFY, as well as personal stories submitted by AMPLIFY concertgoers last fall (which will be interpreted on digital media and through a visual art piece by local artist Aquil Virani).

They've also just announced an upcoming digital collaboration with Tapestry Opera, another independent company in Toronto focused on showcasing new works and perspectives in opera. Titled 'Holding Space', it will take the form of a three-part series of private digital discussions with BIPOC opera artists in Canada. Taking place on June 30, July 5 and July 8, the conversations will be moderated via Zoom, and will serve as open forums for artists to share their experiences. (There is also an option to submit discussion proposals anonymously on Amplified Opera's website. Details and registration info can be found at [amplifiedopera.com/holding-space](https://amplifiedopera.com/holding-space).) [In kiosk here.]





KRISTEN LOKEN

Aria Umezawa hosting the SF Opera Lab Pop-Up: Battle of the Divas, on Thursday, September 20, 2018 at The Great Northern in San Francisco.



MEL CARROLL


Teiya Kasahara's pandemic balcony video series called "19 Videos for COVID-19"

During our conversation in May, Newman expressed a similar sentiment around the need to give BIPOC creators opportunities for artistic agency within the opera creation process. Reflecting on musical projects in Canada on themes of Indigenous reconciliation that she's been a part of as a First Nations mezzo-soprano, Newman recalled how efforts by some established organizations have lacked some of the deep and slow thought required to ensure that invited Indigenous artists were able to make informed artistic choices.

"One of the things I have felt quite deeply is frustration, when I see people who these stories are about or who are [asked to] create these stories – say, an [Indigenous] librettist who's never written an opera before – and because they don't understand the art form, the things they are asking for might not actually reflect opera," Newman says. "We need to be spending this time figuring out a way of working with community so that [artists] feel they are being heard – and their questions about how opera amplifies a story are being satisfied – before they actually have to produce a piece that goes onstage, or make recommendations about a director or designer who may or may not be the best person for that piece."

"Create really good teams that understand from the root what those stories are, and give them the power to actually say [what they think]," she adds. "I have seen that being attempted, but not quite met yet with companies that are more established and used to doing things a certain way."

What's striking about the work of Amplified Opera is how absolutely unapologetic they are in their commitment to addressing issues in their field – and to doing it loudly, with an artist-first philosophy. Umezawa mentioned the hope that their company would serve as an example for what operatic programming that centres artist agency could look like; so far, it's a plan that's working.

"We went for it," says Kasahara. "We put something up, and the reaction from not only the public but also from our colleagues was that we didn't realize that we needed something like this. And we want more opportunities to talk: to engage with art, and with our personhood as well." 

*Amplified Opera co-presents 'Holding Space' with Tapestry Opera as a series of private Zoom discussions on June 30, July 5 and July 8, 2020. For more information, visit [amplifiedopera.com](http://amplifiedopera.com).*

**WholeNote digital media editor Sara Constant is a Toronto-based flutist and writer specializing in contemporary and experimental music. This story is reprinted here from *HalfTones*,**

**The WholeNote's regular e-letter, June 25 2020, and can be accessed in digital form at [thewholenote.com](http://thewholenote.com).**

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STUCK ON SAFETY

# GO SMALL OR STAY HOME?

## The Orchestral Dilemma

### A conversation with Katherine Carleton

LYDIA PEROVIĆ



ESTHER VINCENT

Katherine Carleton

**K**atherine Carleton, C.M. is the executive director of Orchestras Canada. We talked over Zoom in June.

**LP:** What are you hearing from the orchestras these days?

**KC:** I'm hearing several things. They're looking back on the season that was and endeavouring to see from a financial perspective where they're going to be at the end of the fiscal year. Some have fiscal years

that end in May, some in June, some in July and all are trying to sort through financial impact of the forced closures in mid-March. At the same time, they're each working on a range of scenarios around what the coming season will look like, potentially. I don't think there's a single orchestra that has a complete picture of what next year's going to look like. Reopening and the speed with which that can happen, the size of groups that can convene, is all decided at the provincial level. It's different picture in each part of the country.

**Simon Rattle and several other musicians in the UK recently published an impassioned letter to their government that says, among other things, "Our entire industry is united, ready, prepared, and desperate to get back to doing what we do best." They're eager to cooperate with public health, and are asking for timelines. Do Canadian orchestras need a timeline? What do we need from the government?**

I did read an earlier letter by Sir Simon Rattle and Sir Mark Elder which asks for bridge funding so UK orchestras can survive. I don't think anyone is pushing the government for a hard and fast date to reopen until it is safe to reopen. Nobody wants to put their audiences, artists and cultural workers at risk. There are too many things that we do not know about the progress of the virus. To push the government to set the date by which we would open again is not a good idea because we don't know how the situation will change by that date. A premature date may put people at risk. If I'm understanding where my people are standing, nobody wants to do that; of



**Bach to the Barre!** A charming and funny view of what #StayingHome looks like for dancers and musicians, created by Timothy Dawson (TSO double bass) and friends with Guillaume Côté and Heather Ogden, principal dancers at the National Ballet of Canada.

course everyone wants to get back to playing, but nobody wants to get sick and no one wants to be the convenor of an event that causes the people to get sick. I think that the request to government – all levels of government, principally federal and provincial here in Canada – is: help us keep doing what we can do through this period of time until it is safe to gather again.

**Have you been following the reopenings across Europe? Rattle himself recently conducted the Czech Philharmonic which did not arrange any social distancing on stage but all the players had been pre-tested. Norway, Austria, Germany, Czech Republic have all had concerts – to a much smaller audiences, it must be said.**

There have been similar experiments going on in Asia too.

**Because we've been in Stage 1 in Toronto up until this week, we couldn't have started experimenting ourselves, I take it?**

That's right. We did see for example pictures of the Orchestre Métropolitain recording Beethoven symphonies last week at the Salle Bourgie in Montreal and they were all socially distanced. The issue is the very different funding models between continental Europe and Canada. The level of government subsidy that those orchestras are receiving is typically between 80 and 90 percent. So it may be feasible to bring an orchestra together to work with little or no audience and no revenue. We do not have that luxury here in Canada.

**Yes, I wondered whether the level of subsidy affects how nimble an orchestra can get these days?**

It certainly affects the extent to which orchestras can afford to perform without revenue from ticket sales.

**How will orchestra musicians in Canada survive this period? Do most orchestras employ fulltime or do they employ musicians as freelancers?**

Some orchestras with collective bargaining agreements treat their musicians as independent contractors. Some of our largest orchestras with collective



FRANÇOIS GOUPI / ORCHESTRE METROPOLITAIN DE MONTREAL



bargaining agreements treat their musicians as employees. There's a wide array of types of contracts. For example, the OSM, NACO and TSO treat their musicians as independent contractors; the Vancouver Symphony, the Calgary Philharmonic, the Winnipeg Symphony, the Orchestre Symphonique de Québec treat their musicians as employees. Because of the way the government has started the programs of support for workers, some of the orchestras were able to benefit from the wage subsidy, and some of them had to decide whether to lay their musicians off and encourage them to apply for the Emergency Response Benefit. I think all of the large orchestras kept paying their musicians through this period of time because of the importance they placed on honouring their commitment and keeping their band together. It's different with small and mid-size groups where there are relatively few employee orchestras and where those groups simply did not have the resources to continue to pay their musicians past the mandatory notice period in their agreements. So it's a very different experience from orchestra to orchestra – and not just a matter of large and small but also a matter of the history, of what the contracts stipulate.

**Have there been attempts to perform in groups of four or five, perform in open spaces, parking lots, do guerrilla concerts – have you been hearing from musicians who wanted to do that?**

I think a lot of that is happening. But again one of the obstacles was the limit on the number of people that can gather in one place. Our limit until just days ago was five, and is up to ten now. So yes there's a certain amount of that happening, but everybody's been very very careful about what the social distancing needs to be and the max number of people in the group, and they do not want to be in a situation where by the simple act of playing they're encouraging people to gather in close proximity. Instead, what we're seeing more of is digital activity, and the virtual orchestras and virtual ensemble projects.

**Pop concerts and unamplified music will probably require two different reopening approaches...**

Do you think?

**The crowds are bigger and sweatier in pop music, usually.**

I think we do share a fair amount with folks in the pop field. It's not a complete overlap, but if we're talking about a possibility of 1500 or more people gathering for an unamplified music performance, we are starting to talk about similar things as in commercial music.

**Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal, with Yannick Nézet-Séguin, in a socially distanced rehearsal for their June and July Beethoven symphonies recording project, at Montreal's Bourgie Hall, in June 2020.**



SIMON FRYER, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

2020  
2021

# MUSIC IN THE AFTERNOON

NOVEMBER 12, 2020 | 1.30 PM

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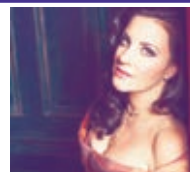


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MARCH 4, 2021 | 1.30 PM

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APRIL 1, 2021 | 1.30 PM

## ERIC LU

piano



MAY 6, 2021 | 1.30 PM

## MARMEN QUARTET

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Bryony Gibson-Cornish, viola  
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AND

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March 22, 2020: musical “first responder” Jeff Beecher, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra principal double bass, rounded up musicians from the orchestra to perform Aaron Copland’s *Appalachian Spring* from their homes, with the help of a click track. Beecher did the edit combining the tracks.

for Canadian artists. Given that they’re more likely to take a date than someone who has to balance the need for a 14-day quarantine at the end of a trip.

**You’ve probably been following the science reporting around the aerosol particles spread by instruments and singing. The spread is not as significant around instruments, including brass, studies seem to be suggesting?**

From what I understand, the research that’s been published so far has not been peer-reviewed and most has not been replicated since the original research. We are a small part of the international research project that’s been put together in the US, the University of Colorado at Boulder and the University of Maryland at College Park. There’s a consortium project, total cost about US\$300,000, to do research on aerosol particles, wind instruments and singing. What we’re hoping is that that will give the

calibre of research necessary to support next steps. But I’m getting I would say a little short tempered with the reckless sharing of things that no one actually understands in terms of the science and that has not been peer-reviewed nor replicated. I know everybody wants to play, I totally get that, people want to be back in business. But we need good science, not just hope. I’ve read what’s out there, and I’m getting a bit cranky about the fact that we’re letting our natural desire to play perhaps blind us to the calibre of what’s been produced. To a certain degree, we have to wait. To be sure that we are doing things with all appropriate care for the artists and for audience members and backstage workers.

**I know everybody wants to play, I totally get that, people want to be back in business. But we need good science, not just hope.**

**So are our orchestras going to have a fall season this year?**

Well, we already know that a few have already said that the season that they sold to the public will not be happening as they sold it to the public in their brochures. Victoria Symphony has said that, Vancouver Symphony, Pacific Opera Victoria have said that. And I expect that we will be seeing more announcements like that. If you have a season that starts in September that is predicated on international guest artists, conductors and guest artists coming from an international location, and where the budget is predicated on selling 80 percent of your seats in a 1500 or a 2000-seat hall, it seems pretty clear that in many venues that won’t be happening.

Some orchestras have said We’ll be doing something, but we’re not going to be doing what we originally put in the brochures. I expect that we will see all kinds of different activity. We need music. Musicians need to play. Online is fine, we had a lot of fun with that, and will continue, but being in the same space is emotionally and socially important. It’s likely that an orchestra of 95 people sitting in close proximity on the stage performing for an audience of 2000 people also sitting in close proximity in an enclosed space is something that will be unlikely to be happening by September. What would make that possible? It will require more research on people making

**Have there been joint efforts?**

We are keeping in touch with the Canadian Live Music Association and have tried to line up some of our recommendations with theirs so we get some critical mass. We also work closely with Opera.ca, CAPACOA, as well as the Canadian Dance Assembly, to see if we can dovetail our various requests.

**I’ve read in *The Guardian* that Boosey & Hawkes has been emailing orchestras and managers around the world to propose works that contain up to 20 and up to 50 musicians. Do you think some of the Canadian orchestras will go smaller, repertoire-wise, in the fall?**

I’m not surprised to hear that. I expect a number of artist managers have been going to the orchestras and saying, We have this soloist who has this repertoire for chamber orchestra. But the uncertainty around opening dates, travel requirements and quarantine requirements will not make any bookings easy. Similarly, this affects repertoire as well – in some cases the orchestras may be looking very closely at the repertoire that they have in their library, that they can use if they get the word that in two weeks’ time they’re going to be able to put on a performance. I think there’s a lot of planning right now for small ensemble work, and possibly towards a classical orchestra size work, possibly moving towards full orchestral by the end of next season, but it really depends on what the prevailing conditions are. I think people are trying to buy themselves the maximum amount of flexibility in their artistic planning so that they’re not committing themselves to paying a rental fee or guest soloist fee unless they actually know that the performance can happen. It may be a good period for Mozart serenades...

**You’ve probably seen the recent announcement of the new Koerner Hall season? It struck me as more local, more Canadian than usual.**

It’s a very strong season and I thought the simultaneous announcement of the season and the indication of all the forms of flexibility around ticket refunds was an interesting message. So [both] we are announcing the season, and how we’ll take care of you if it does not happen.

**Do you see an era coming up where we will be more local, with not that many soloists from abroad?**

I’m seeing a lot of conversations happening in terms of working with core orchestra or only a few additional per-service musicians, working with local soloists, working with resident conductors; and a lot of conversations with music directors if they’re not in Canada about how they would handle quarantine if it’s still in effect at the point they are expected to lead concerts. I think, as Erin Benjamin of the Canadian Live Music Association said, this could be a spectacular opportunity




music in close proximity; it will require ideally either a vaccine or treatment for the virus that is effective; it will require health and safety precautions; and it may even require renovations to venues to enable what social distancing can be done. Think about Roy Thomson Hall: walking into the lobby, how the line-ups work; think about the hallways to the orchestra level at RTH, those long, skinny downward ramps... Many organizations and venues across Canada are right now trying to figure out how many people they can accommodate, how quickly they can get them into the hall with physical distancing in place, how many people can be accommodated in the physically distanced venue, and trying to figure out what they can afford and how much ticket revenue they can forego.

By the way, there's an organization based in the US called the Event Safety Alliance, that has published a useful guide to safe reopening – it's not orchestra-specific but it is about developing a strong venue reopening plan.

**Do you ever worry if we're shut down for too long, people will lose the habit? Ticket sales for opera for example have already been modestly but steadily going down every year. Do you ever worry that after a certain point people will not want to go out, mix with others and take any amount of risk in order to hear an orchestra play?**

That's one of the reasons we are seeing the amount of digital content that we are seeing – it's so organizations can stay in touch with their people, and to keep those connections warm and current, and in some ways to expand the reach of their offerings. We initially saw a lot of experimentation, I suspect there is a lot of more strategic focus now in terms of who are you trying to reach and what kinds of things you are sharing with them. Part of the post-COVID response is going to depend on how carefully we have tended those relationships through this period. I agree with you that if the habit is one that people don't actually miss having, then we have a problem. But if we succeed in demonstrating both that there's a reciprocal relationship there between the performers and the audience, and that we all want nothing more than to be back in the same room together, I think there are possibilities.

What is it that makes a performance a “gotta be there” activity? It's something we'll be talking about a lot in the coming days. That sense of really needing to be present, in real time, for the experience.

But this is where I guess I get stuck on the idea of safety, and of welcoming, and of care. If orchestras open prematurely and people are put in danger because they were welcomed back too soon, I think it would be harder to come back from that. 

*Lydia Perović is a writer in Toronto, including writing on art song and other subjects for The WholeNote (artofsong@thewholenote.com). This interview appeared first in her arts blog, Definitely the Opera.*

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## THE WHOLENOTE: MEMBERSHIP AND DIRECTORIES – HELPING US SUPPORT WHAT YOU DO

# MUSIC IN THE DANCE OF LIFE

## Responding to a changing world

BY JENNIFER PARR



SOPHIE GIRAUD/NETFLIX

From the upcoming Netflix drama series *Tiny Pretty Things*

I have been friends with Jennifer Nichols since meeting as colleagues working at Opera Atelier more than ten years ago, and I have followed her freelance career with great interest ever since, sometimes reviewing or previewing her shows for *The WholeNote*: Kurt Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins* with the Toronto Symphony in 2017, for example which she choreographed and performed in, with mezzo Wallis Giunta; or 2019's Dora-nominated *Pandora* for FAWN Opera which, again, she both choreographed and danced in. One of the things I love about her work is how she is always looking for new challenges, new ways to push herself and discover more of what is possible in terms of choreography and performing to music.

In the May/June issue of *The WholeNote*, we found ourselves as virtual colleagues again – she wrote a moving guest article about how music is at the heart of all she does: dancing, choreographing, teaching, producing and, as she said to me the other day, even just walking down the street. Now, with the continuing need to physically distance ourselves from each other, thanks to the ongoing world pandemic, even walking down the street is bounded by restrictions; most of her other activities have had to be recalibrated, reinvented, moved online as much as possible, but somehow trying to keep that human connection that is created by dancing with, and in the live presence of, other people.

This ability to see the exciting possibilities in new situations is standing her in good stead given that the current crisis has turned the world of artists upside down. I reached out to her to find out how her plans are progressing particularly. She seems to be even busier than before the pandemic hit, I suggested, and she agreed: "I had been hoping for a respite but instead am busier in a really different way, scrambling to build the foundations of a new reality."

A big part of this new reality is having lost the studio she founded: The Extension Room, where she taught her ballet-based fitness program, The Extension Method, and not being able to teach classes in person. In response, with the help of her filmmaker husband she is undertaking the "huge endeavour of setting up a new online platform, dealing with the tech side, while also trying to keep teaching every day. It all just takes more time than you'd think." She is also trying to stay moving forward with creative projects and grant applications, but like many of us, is finding that it is much harder to "fully go there with the creative side," to keep inspiration flowing when you can't meet with fellow artists in person.

Since May/June when she wrote her article for *The WholeNote*, the world has been engulfed in protests against police brutality against Black and Indigenous citizens, and in the resurgence of a revolutionary desire for a better, more equitable society. I asked if this was having an impact on her work as well. "Yes, definitely! First of all, it required me to do a lot of introspective work for my students and teaching business, to dig deep in terms of whether I have gone as far as I could as a studio owner and teacher in that industry, to make sure I'm being as inclusive and welcoming to every community as I can. Ballet itself has a huge history of discrimination, elitism and white-centred practices, and that means that anybody working in the ballet industry has to take extra steps."

An example: she has always taken great pride in the fact that everyone who takes a class at her studio feels welcome and comfortable, in spite of the fact that ballet in and of itself is intimidating to many people. So, it came as a bit of a surprise in the first week after the initial protests while she was doing what we all were — listening, learning, trying to understand the depth of our complicity in our society's systemic racism — when one of her students sent her an email saying (paraphrased), "I'm Black and I have been attending your studio for two years, but while I have always felt welcome, and I've been really comfortable there, I can count on one hand how many fellow students are Black. As a leader in the industry you have a platform and you need to speak up." It's advice, Nichols says, that she takes to heart. But at the same time, she says, she recognizes that "the institution of ballet is what it is and the only way it is going to change is that from a very young age, from tiny tot ballet on, the marketing and messaging must be that this



is an art form for *everyone*. The elitism has to be stripped away, and the socio-economic restrictions have to be dealt with as well.”

It requires applying a ruthless microscope to her creative work: at her studio, as co-artistic director of Hit and Run Dance (which has always had a diverse casting mandate), and as an independent choreographer. And it’s in the latter capacity that another of her projects, wrapped before the pandemic hit, is about to be launched.

While known for her exquisite work in live performance, she has also been building a choreographer’s résumé in television and film, cutting her teeth on the series *Reign* (the historically anachronistic but addictively watchable teen-oriented series about the young Mary Queen of Scots) and going on to work as a guest choreographer on various other film and TV projects. This fall, a brand new television series based on the best-selling young adult novel *Tiny Pretty Things* by Sonia Charaipotra and Dhonielle Clayton will be launched on Netflix with Jennifer as head choreographer and dance consultant.

Set in the world of Chicago’s only elite ballet academy, the Archer School, the feeder school for Chicago’s renowned professional ballet company, *Tiny Pretty Things* charts the rise and fall of the school’s students, young adults of widely varying backgrounds from around the country and beyond.

Listening to her speak about her involvement in the series, I was struck by how much it drew on the full spectrum of what she has done to this point in time. Her role was integral to maintaining the integrity of the depiction of not only the dancing in the show, but the psychological reality of the students’ lives at a professional ballet school and what that means for their development, including the loss of the childhood that most children have.

It was this insight, in fact, that led to her becoming involved with the project in the first place, beginning with an impromptu meeting, at the suggestion of a friend, with the head writer and showrunner Michael MacLennan (*Bomb Girls*, *The Bletchley Circle*). MacLennan had been recruited by producer Jordanna Fraiberg to join her in



JAG GUNDU

Mezzo Wallis Giunta (left) and Jennifer Nichols (right) in the TSO’s June 2017 *Seven Deadly Sins*, by Kurt Weill

turning the hit YA book into a series. Not being interested in something that was “all fluff, tutus and tiaras,” he had agreed only if he could explore the darker, grittier aspects of growing up at a ballet school. Once officially part of the team, Jennifer’s job encompassed everything from vetting potential cast members for dance ability, to reading all the scripts with an eye to dancers’ vocabulary and slang,



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Kylie Jefferson

## CHORAL SCENE

# IN THE ABSENCE OF SINGING, UNCERTAINTY

BRIAN CHANG

to choreographing much of what we will see in the class and rehearsal studios, to consulting on the choice of guest choreographers for each episode, to being part of the team in the edit suite in post production.

She was also part of the team determining the music that would be used for the dance sequences. Taking their cues from each episode's script, the show's two music supervisors, Scott Belluz and Natasha Duprey, would present a list of possible choices (from pop songs to hip-hop to classical music of different eras), to the team who would then choose what would work best, both dance-wise and narrative-wise in each scene. This was particularly important as "tucked into the excerpts of the dances the students are learning and performing are reflections of what they are going through in their lives, their sexuality, their frustrations, their struggle to find a place in the world."

It's similar to the way original songs written for the TV series *Smash* echoed the characters' lives but, as Jennifer emphasizes, "this is unique in a TV show about dance," and she hopes it will help to draw viewers to the program. Part of what will make this so powerful, she believes, is how the complex musical tapestry weaves together contemporary and classical music, even counterposing the two, as when the choreographer of the school's year-end showcase decides to re-envision his ballet and the music gets changed from a classical string variation by British composer Benjamin Britten to a wildly modern work by Canadian composer Nicole Lizée. Weaving the whole together is the underscoring by show composer James Jandrich.

One of the central storylines — which seems prescient now in the wake of the first wave of protests, although the show finished filming in December — focuses on Neveah (Kylie Jefferson), a young Black girl from L.A. who, right from the beginning, has to fight the stereotypes typical of the ballet world, fiercely determined to prove her ability and her right to a place in the school. It's a through-line, Nichols says, that has the potential both to draw viewers to the show and new audiences and potential dancers to the art form. If the show is picked up for future seasons, she says, both she and her colleagues hope to continue exploring such current issues. After all, "If we want to affect change in the ballet world as well as the world at large, this is a great platform. Through TV pop culture we can hope to really reach a lot of people." 🍷

*Tiny Pretty Things* will debut in the fall of 2020 on Netflix.

**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.**

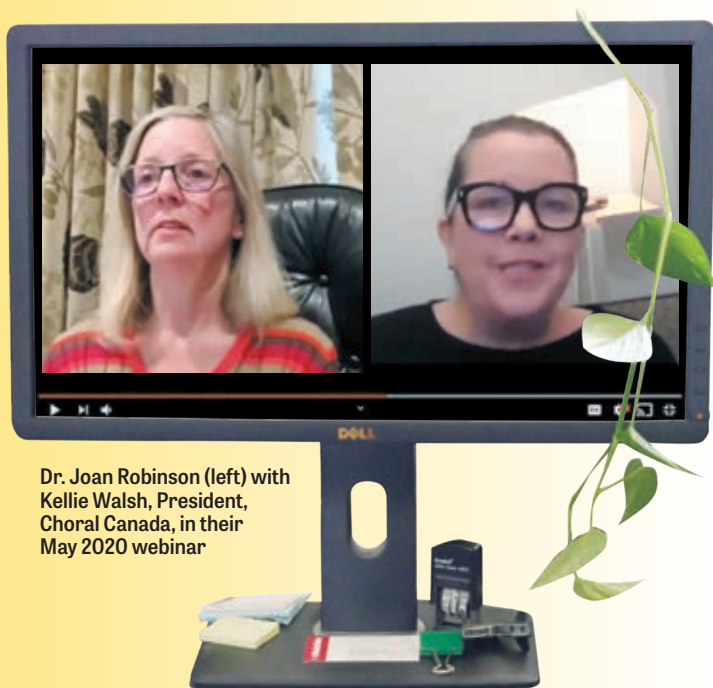
Anyone who sings in a choir has likely seen the tragic story of the Amsterdam Mixed Choir where after a performance of the Bach *St John Passion*, 102 of the 130 choristers were sickened by COVID-19. One of those members would pass away from the virus in the following weeks, just as news also broke of the Skagit Valley Chorale in Washington State where 52 members would ultimately be infected, with two deaths. Smaller group outbreaks were noted in other choirs around the world such as the Berlin Cathedral Choir and in many faith-based settings. The headlines are enough to make any person take pause. The choral community has been shaken particularly hard by these stories as, for many, choir is their escape from the pain and stress of the world, not the cause of it.

In the absence of clear scientific evidence, the precautionary principle has provided the only guidance available to choirs throughout much of the pandemic so far. Organizations have not waited to take strict action, instead choosing to comply with blanket safety, quarantine and shutdown measures. For every choir in Ontario, it is now over three months since any rehearsals. Seasons were ended early, summer festivals are cancelled, tours are out of the question, and uncertainty reigns, with planning for next season made difficult by differing assumptions of what may be.

The choral world is not a small industry and leaders have convened to provide coherence amidst the confusion. On June 23, an open letter was released by heavy hitters of the Canadian choral world including Lydia Adams of the Elmer Iseler Singers, Ivars Taurins of Tafelmusik, Kari Turunen of the Vancouver Chamber Choir and Mark Vuorinen of the Grand Philharmonic Choir, amongst many others.

"With new studies being published from various worldwide sources re-evaluating earlier claims on the risk of singing and the





Dr. Joan Robinson (left) with Kellie Walsh, President, Choral Canada, in their May 2020 webinar

transmission of COVID-19, we feel that a new dialogue must ensue to ensure a safe, prudent return to choral singing in our communities on an equal footing with the reopening of other sectors,” states the letter.

“We ask for a more collaborative dialogue in establishing guidelines on reopening this important sector of society, as has occurred in industries with similar health concerns. To segregate one important activity that impacts so much of Canada’s culture, history, economy, tourism, education and mental health, is troublesome for all of us and has not provided a balanced, positive and safe way to move forward into the future.”

This followed a day after a letter written by Vuorinen in his capacity as president of Choirs Ontario, stating “we are asking for public health departments to help the tens of thousands of



Mark Vuorinen

choristers in this province by providing clear and actionable guidelines for choral singing that are guided by science.”

The letters argue that with the exception of the high-profile super-spreader events in Skagit Valley and Amsterdam, there is little other evidence connecting choral singing to high-risk spread of COVID-19. Both letters reference a variety of sources that are starting to build scientific evidence of transmission risks, but haven’t indicated any compelling evidence of singing as higher risk compared to other now-permissible activities like eating in restaurants, or others for which there is a path to resumption, such as working out in gyms.

Alarms have sounded in the choral community about safe resumption of activities for many weeks now. On May 5, the Barbershop Harmony Society along with Chorus America hosted a webinar titled Science and the Near-Term Future of Singing. Dr. Donald Milton, professor of Environmental Health at the University of Maryland and otolaryngologist Dr. Lucinda Halstead of the Evelyn Trammell Institute for Voice and Swallowing at the Medical University of South Carolina presided.

Dr. Milton presented based on his expertise concerning bioaerosols, exhaled breath analysis and respiratory epidemiology. “Some people generate many more times than everyone else does...It turns out that what’s going on is that when you exhale, if you exhale all the way down to residual volume, really get all the air out of your lungs, you collapse small airways. And when you take a deep breath, you pop those airways open and there’s a little fluid film that breaks. And on the next breath, you exhale it.” He notes that this is variable, and fluid increases with aging and with infection. Later, based on his interview with a chorister in a large ensemble that also had an outbreak, he surmised that “the better trained singer you are, the more you’re going to use all your total lung capacity. You are going to collapse small airways and take a deep breath for that next measure and open up those airways and if you’re projecting your voice... I’m sure you can project a good volume.”

Dr. Halstead was asked if there was a way to have a safe rehearsal; her blunt answer was “No. You can’t. Unless it’s a small group and it’s outside and the wind is not at your back.” On the question of when it’s safe to sing again. Dr. Halstead said, “It’s going to take a long time. If we had a vaccine that was effective and treatments that had a 95 percent cure rate, that would be the most safe and you would probably have very little to worry about.”

For most choristers, the absence of conclusive scientific evidence is enough to prevent them from getting back into rehearsal and singing the way they were before the pandemic. To help answer and address some of the uncertainty, Choral Canada convened an online webinar on May 22 to talk about the future of choral music in light of the pandemic. The webinar was joined by Dr. Joan Robinson,

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## THE WHOLENOTE: MEMBERSHIP AND DIRECTORIES – HELPING US SUPPORT WHAT YOU DO



Grand Philharmonic Choir

a pediatrician and University of Alberta professor specializing in infectious diseases.

Choral Canada, representing 28,000 choirs across Canada, presented alongside the leads of various choral sectors across the industry. Dr. Robinson presented her best assessment of available recommendations informed by her background in infectious diseases. Some of her key points: "Singing produces more and smaller droplets than does talking. Smaller droplets stay in the air longer but will have less virus than larger droplets so may be no more infectious." Robinson also notes that there seems to be some evidence that there are people who release more droplets than other people, superspreaders like those mentioned by Dr. Milton to Chorus America.

**"Nothing will replace the powerful synergy of the real thing. But as a mentor of mine used to say, 'Never give up on something that you think about everyday.'" — Elise Bradley**

Robinson also explained how challenging it can be to determine if it is singing itself, or a related activity that caused the superspreader event, like sharing cookies or oranges during choir break, or even the putting away of contaminated folding chairs. Further, in smaller communities it is easier to contact trace exposure. For larger cities, if a chorister takes public transit to rehearsal and then home, or is out with friends prior to rehearsals, it's difficult to ascertain the true source of infection.

"Obviously, the best option is to wait until there is no more COVID-19 in your community to meet. And I do think there's a chance in about two months from now, we'll go through a period of at least a few months where there really is no virus out there. Or maybe you can argue for meeting when there is COVID-19 in the community. Those with risk factors for death should not show up. Stand six feet apart as much as possible. Wide open spaces are way better than a small room. And obviously, no sharing of food and drink."

The Ontario Ministry of Labour has issued over 100 guidance documents on infection control and prevention measures for different workplaces including salons, beaches, retail and factories, but there is no guidance for arts and cultural industries. The official plan for reopening Ontario broken into three stages does not include the reopening of concert and performance venues, stating: "Large public gatherings such as concerts and sporting events will continue to be restricted for the foreseeable future."

Should choirs have the ability or inclination to reconvene, therefore, there would still be nowhere to perform except digitally.

"Maybe during this time we won't be creating the greatest choral art, however you define that," shared Dr. Adam Con, representing post-secondary and church choirs on the Choral Canada webinar, "but I continue to remind myself that it is better that my singers *miss* it than *dread* it."

But when it comes to scientific evidence, infectious disease specialists can only provide guidance at this point as more research continues.

For many choirs, their membership skews older and more female-identified. Public Health Ontario numbers for June 26, 2020 indicate that women are contracting the disease more than men, representing 54 percent of all infections. Of 2644 known deaths in Ontario, 42.1 percent have been in those aged 60 plus. Approximately 64 percent of these are from long-term care and retirement homes.

In Skagit Valley, the American Center for Disease Control (CDC) investigated the event and released a detailed report. This report is one of the key sources of scientific evidence choirs can look to for potential

risk. The report indicated the median age of infected choristers was 69 and 85 percent were female choristers.

The CDC discussion posited the following summary of infection spread: "Choir practice attendees had multiple opportunities for droplet transmission from close contact... and the act of singing itself might have contributed to SARS-CoV-2 [COVID-19] transmission. Aerosol emission during speech has been correlated with loudness of vocalization, and certain persons, who release an order of magnitude more particles than their peers, have been referred to as superemitters and have been hypothesized to contribute to superspreading events. Members had an intense and prolonged exposure, singing while sitting six to ten inches from one another, possibly emitting aerosols."

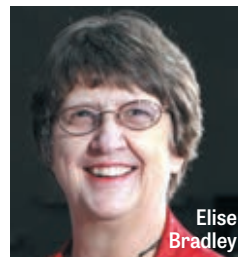
Reviewing the possible spread associated with the listed activities, it is difficult to imagine a choral rehearsal that does not involve close contact, singing, loudness, and prolonged exposure. While some of these may be mitigated with barriers or distance, the mechanics of rehearsal for 130 people, while remaining cohesive, presents exceptional challenges.

It is worth noting that the seating chart was examined by the CDC and was found to "not add substantive additional information" to the findings, despite knowing who the likely index individual was. However, the CDC as well as Dr. Robinson also noted that the Skagit Valley rehearsal was broken up into sectionals and they were not all in the same formation the entire rehearsal, further complicating the tracing of the spread.

Choral organizations have proven themselves resilient in the face of funding and recruitment issues in the past, even moving past assault and harassment allegations. But COVID-19 is something new, and it is very unclear whether a choir like the Skagit Valley Chorale or the Amsterdam Mixed Choir or a local choir can weather the uncertainty ahead. But as choirs move to Zoom and virtual performances, shifting their focus to community from performance-driven activity, there's an opportunity to delve deeper into the reasons why people come

together to sing and to spend the time and effort on community building.

Elise Bradley, of the Toronto Children's Chorus, for her part, shared a bit of hope on the Choral Canada webinar: "Zoom... will never replace choir. Nothing will replace the powerful synergy of the real thing. But as a mentor of mine used to say, 'Never give up on something that you think about everyday.' It is important to



remember we're not alone, we have each other." ●

**Follow Brian on Twitter @bfchang.  
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# CLASSICAL AND BEYOND

## "AS LIVE AS WE CAN DO IT"

### TSM Reborn

PAUL ENNIS



Wigmore Hall / BBC Radio 3's recital series: this one featuring Benjamin Grosvenor and Hyeyoon Park, and an audience of two.

**O**f all the musical events I've taken in online recently, the highlight was watching new TSO music director Gustavo Gimeno in Amsterdam conducting the regathered Concertgebouw, the orchestra in which he played percussion for 11 years beginning in 2001.

Both Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* (recorded June 2 and broadcast June 3) and Dvořák's *Symphony No.8* (livestreamed on June 5) are now available on YouTube. The Dvořák, its live aura palpable, struck special notes of smooth and sweet, its dance movements floating effortlessly. The musicians observed quite distinct social distancing rules, with the strings separated by 1.75 metres, the winds and brass by two metres, which led to many members being placed on the steps behind the stage.

I was in the midst of a telephone conversation with TSO concertmaster and Toronto Summer Music artistic director, Jonathan Crow, when I wondered. Had he seen it? Yes, he had. Wasn't it extraordinary, I asked rhetorically.

"Oh, it's unbelievable," he jumped right in. "For me, it was to see the musicians *so happy* to be making music together again. Just to be onstage playing this incredible piece in an incredible hall with an incredible conductor. And it was just amazing to see everybody adjusting. That orchestra was playing in a way that they'd never played before. Everybody was far away. Everybody had their own music. It's just a huge learning curve. And to play as spectacularly as they did is a real tribute to the kind of flexibility of everybody involved. I can't wait to be back on stage with my colleagues playing Beethoven. I don't know if we'll have masks or if you'll be able to see my big grin or not, but it's certainly going to be there."

When I pointed out that the live feeling is very important to the palpability and accessibility of the musicians for an online audience, Crow responded enthusiastically. "Absolutely! It's a hard thing to do," he said. "Because I've done so many of them from that end when you're just staring at a computer screen, trying to figure out, how do I – I mean, I still get nervous for them in a strange way because it's still a performance, but finding the way to make it really feel like you're connecting to the people through time and through electrical wire, through cables, basically through a computer screen. It's such a strange thing when you grew up basically thinking of music as the thing you do as a community. You grew up doing chamber music, in the orchestra playing for people, doing group lessons and you know, listening to one another, then having it suddenly cut off. Very odd."

I asked if he had enjoyed other people's performances in this virtual universe we've been living in and he told me that he had, but in a

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James Ehnes and Jonathan Crow at a TSM launch in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre

weird way. “I enjoyed them but they also made me really miss them.” A lot of the people he has been watching, he explained, have been people that he knows and has worked with for dozens of years, and played chamber music with or heard live.

“So I see these things and it makes me think, I can’t wait to go back and see this in the hall. You know, we just did a Beethoven romance [No.2] with James Ehnes at the TSO. He sent me his recording – to start patching it all together and everything – and it was him in his living room playing the Beethoven by himself. It was kind of amazing and it’s so funny because it sounded exactly like him and, oh yeah, I could recognize that playing anywhere. But what it made me think was, Oh, this is beautiful but, man, how much more beautiful will that be when we can go back and hear him play the Beethoven concerto with the symphony. Live!

“These things are lovely and it’s nice for us to kind of keep busy and feel like we’re continuing to make music, continuing to reach people, but in a way it’s also like whetting everybody’s appetite for when we can go back to normal, whenever that is, when we can do live music again and actually have an interaction directly with the audience rather than through that barrier.”

### Toronto Summer Music Reborn

The reason for my phone call to Jonathan Crow was welcome news from Toronto Summer Music: the virtual rebirth of Toronto Summer Music, two months after its 15th season had been cancelled. “We have a great group of supporters at the festival,” Crow told me, “and we had a

number of people who stepped up and said, ‘We want to see Toronto Summer Music doing something and we want to support you. We want to support your artists.’”

The call was in late June, while details of the reconfigured program – from July 16 to August 1 – were still being finalized. But Crow described the mix of concerts and chats and how the festival will work: recorded in beautiful spaces (like Koerner Hall, The Burlington Arts Centre and Kingston’s Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts), executed professionally with great recording equipment and a top-notch videographer, and with the music performed “as live as we can do it.” Trying to work out the safety of the enterprise has also been a very interesting process. “There’s been a lot of thought going into things that normally would never be considered. You know, researching what does the clarinet do with the virus; what does the horn do? Are singers safe? This sort of stuff.”

The biggest challenge was logistical, given the limitations imposed by the maximum of ten people in a certain space. “In a way you’re left thinking about what is a space? It becomes very conceptual,” Crow said. And while spatial considerations don’t affect the social distancing between two performers, in a quartet where everybody’s two metres apart, the circle gets a lot wider. In a septet “you get to the point where we’re going to be so far apart that we don’t actually have the communication with our colleagues that we’re used to,” Crow said. “What kind of a learning curve are we going to have, to make sure that we can sound really good and feel like we’re making live music?”

Rehearsals and recordings will take place in the second week of July, which gives them a couple of weeks to figure out their logistics and to make sure that everybody feels comfortable. “We wanted to make it as festival-like as possible,” he said. “Hopefully that atmosphere will come across in the recording, [so] that it doesn’t seem too sterile or pre-planned – that it’s still the excitement of doing live concerts.”

Every performer in the 17-day online festival already has a connection to Toronto Summer Music, Crow told me, “so it’s not like there’s anybody who doesn’t know what we do at TSM. And the nice thing about that is that every artist who has ever come through has talked about how great our audiences are, how much they love the vibe of the concerts ... They know that what they’re presenting is, in a way, their gift to our Toronto audiences – the audience is not paying – it’s something that we’re giving back to the people of Toronto.”

A lot of what went into the programming was Crow reaching out to artists and asking, “What do you want to play? What are you thinking about during these days? What makes you excited about getting back into music?” Crow said that he left a lot of it open to the artists and what they wanted to present.

As to specifics about the program: “We’ve got kind of a little weekly series. Mondays



From top:  
The Burlington Arts Centre,  
Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts,  
Koerner Hall



will be Mentor Mondays. And that's basically the mentors that have come to the festival previously or would have been here this year. So, for example, a highlight of that will be Brian Manker and Colin Carr having an online conversation about Bach suites: on playing them; little demonstrations; just talking about it. They're actually recording it as we speak. I got a text from Brian yesterday saying, 'How long do you want this to be? We've spent about three hours and we can go at it again tomorrow.' You know, they're super into it. We'll probably edit that down to something that's a little bit shorter but leave the entire thing online for those hardcore Bach cello suites enthusiasts who just want to hear these two remarkable musicians pick each other's brains."

Tuesdays will offer slightly more alternative programming. "For that we'll have VC2, who's a great two-cello group that's come to the festival before. And Ladom. Both Ladom and VC2 are actually former participants [known as 'fellows' in TSM's academy program] – which is awesome. Wednesday will be kids programming so we'll have two of those. Thursdays are Throwback Thursdays – highlights of things that have happened at the festival in the past that we want to bring your attention to. A big highlight of that will be James Ehnes, who will be opening the festival on July 16 with a program of Beethoven violin and piano sonatas. That sort of thing."

"Fridays will be Fellow Fridays and that will be fellows both past and present who have done recordings for us. And we'll talk to them a little bit. And Saturdays will be some sort of Signature Saturdays, major events like what we used to do with the academy program mentors, the visiting artists, doing a little bit more standard chamber music. Highlights of that will be the Beethoven septet, recorded with people from Toronto and a nice program of the Beethoven 'Moonlight' sonata mixed with the Shostakovich viola sonatas.

"So, that's the basic look of it. We'll have a three-day opening and the next two weeks will follow that same pattern. The Dover Quartet will also do one of the big Signature Saturdays from New York."

Meanwhile, as Ontario moves tentatively into Stage 2 of post-COVID reopening, musicians around the world are in various stages of concertizing, with the likes of live hour-long recitals in London's historic Wigmore Hall, and full-blown orchestral events such as Yannick Nézet-Séguin leading Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain, where, after three months of silence, Nézet-Séguin and his OM musicians were reunited in June at Montreal's Bourgie Hall without an audience to perform Beethoven's first eight symphonies – the first time in North America that a full orchestra had played together since suspending their activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The concerts will be streamed on the OM and Bourgie Hall websites throughout the summer.

In Europe, according to bachtrack.com, Italy is on the leading edge of performing before live audiences, a striking turnaround for a country that suffered so much in the pandemic's early days. And classicfm.com writes about an upcoming Swiss television broadcast of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande (OSR) and Grand Théâtre de Genève Choir, performing Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* in Geneva's great Victoria Hall with social distancing measures in place; singers and many of the musicians were arranged on the balcony overlooking the stage. (Events for up to 300 people are now allowed in Switzerland.)

For me, the Wigmore Hall lunch-time performances had an exceptional live quality as performers took to the stage of the 119-year-old facility to play in front of an audience of two. The month-long series concluded at the end of June but will be archived into July. Many of its performers are familiar to Toronto audiences: Stephen Hough, Benjamin Grosvenor, Paul Lewis, Angela Hewitt and Mitsuko Uchida. Lewis played Beethoven's "Moonlight" sonata with muscular security; Grosvenor and his violin partner, Hyeyoon Park, dazzled in music by Franck and Szymanowski.

I asked Jonathan Crow if he had seen any of the Wigmore Hall recital series – he hadn't – but after I mentioned that the musicians had performed live in the hall and there was a nice ambient quality, he picked up on it immediately.

"That's one of the reasons we're doing all of our recordings in real concert halls, because there's something about stepping onto the



BO HUANG

VC2 – Amahl Arulanandam and Bryan Holt – returns to TSM this summer

stage in Koerner Hall, even when it's empty. You still feel this kind of thrill, you feel this buzz – it's like, Ooh, I'm in one of the world's great halls – and you can kind of feel the edge of a live performance starting, even for rehearsals. And you just don't get that the same way in your living room. As much as you might be trying to do something that's incredibly persuasive, it's still your living room. And so, when we do our recordings we put everybody back in the concert halls and they haven't been on stages for four months. I'm hopeful that that will give us all the edge – that, okay, yes, this is a real thing." 🐼

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

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# One More Pivotal Moment For Small World Music

ANDREW TIMAR

**E**stablished in 1997 by Toronto music curator Alan Davis, Small World Music Society has for years maintained its position as one of the city's premier presenters of culturally diverse music. All in, they reckon they have presented and partnered on close to 800 concerts and related events in venues ranging from top-tier concert halls to their own venue, from outdoor festival stages to clubs across Greater Toronto, making SWMS one of the this country's most significant global music presenters, reaching audiences of many kinds.

Full disclosure: I first met Davis when he was a programmer at The Music Gallery, probably back in the late 1980s. Later on he joined Gamelan Toronto, a community music group I started in 1995; in fact, one of Small World Music's first projects, in 1997, was to present the Gamelan Summit Toronto, a ten-day festival of which I was the founder and artistic director. I have also performed as a musician at SWM-produced concerts since. And over the last decade I've followed various aspects of Small World Music Society's programming and evolution here in *The WholeNote*. One example was when its Small World Centre, a hub for the culturally diverse arts community, opened six years ago; another was my summer 2017 World View column about the 2017 launch of Polyphonic Ground, a multi-organization umbrella group of ten GTA-based music presenters working collaboratively to showcase the voices and sounds of Toronto's global music scene.

So I was all ears when, early this year, SWM announced not only its annual springtime Asian Music Series, but also an ambitious Global Toronto conference. It was all set to go in May as a showcase for select culturally diverse Canadian musicians, plus a place where Canadian and international buyers could meet, greet, hear and book them. Then the COVID-19 crisis suddenly locked (almost) everything down, and both those events were cancelled. End of story it seemed.

But then on the morning of June 24 I received an email release triumphantly announcing, "Small World 2020 - A Vision for the Future and a New Brand Image to match!" It sounded, for all the world, almost like a corporate relaunch! A revived Global Toronto 2020 (pivoted into an online event, scheduled for the end of July) was part of the package. So was a revival of its artist development program, eMERGEance (in partnership with the National Arts Centre) - in the form of a series of socially distanced livestream broadcasts of some of its eMERGEance musicians from its rejigged health and safety-compliant Centre (studio) in downtown Toronto.

In the course of only a couple of days, it seemed, this had once again become a story worth attending to, so I followed up (not for the first time over the years) with a phone call to Davis, reaching him at his office. How much of all this, I wondered, is about brand image and how much of it reflects actual pivotal change?

"It's been almost a quarter century since we embarked on this journey," he reflected. "Much has changed in the years since, but the essence remains. We continue to believe that music is a common language that has the power to unite, that it can be a conduit to build

**We are questioning everything about what a presenter can be, rethinking our role and refocusing our resources to support, inspire and elevate the music sector to truly represent the diversity of our city.**

community and overcome barriers. And that essence is reflected in our new logo, website and community engagement programs," he replied. "It rearticulates our values and launches us into a third decade of supporting diverse artists and celebrating with the community."

On the new website, it is worth noting, that Davis is now identified as founding director, alongside executive director Umair Jaffar, who has been serving the organization for about 18 months in that role. Jaffar brings to the table considerable experience working in areas where the arts, heritage, culture, community and business intersect.

Small World is clearly rethinking its core mission. In a recent online statement Jaffar declared, in part, "We are announcing it loud and clear that Small World is not just a concert presenter. We are questioning everything about what a presenter can be, rethinking our role and refocusing our resources to support, inspire and elevate the music sector to truly represent the diversity of our city."

It's perhaps a more activist new vision: "We are challenging norms and creating new ways of working to enable opportunities for under-represented artists and industry professionals" Jaffar states, "using the power of music to ... build a replicable model that keeps equity at its core."

Also of note, the current Small World management team also includes Jonathan Campbell, as head of programs. An author of a 2011 book on Chinese Rock & Roll, before joining Small World, Campbell has worked with many of Toronto's major cultural institutions in communications and programming. At Small World, he is currently tasked with managing the Global Toronto music industry showcase and eMERGEance.

## eMERGEance

Of the two initiatives, eMERGEance is the easier to wrap the mind around. Described as an "artist development program for underrepresented and marginalized newcomer, refugee and emerging artists," it supports "career sustainability and integration into Toronto's music landscape and the Canadian cultural infrastructure." lofty goals, to be sure, but with an action plan to match them, including



SMALL WORLD MUSIC





Jafar Zabeh, in a June 23 online performance presented by SWM with the National Arts Centre, part of their series called "The Road to Canada, Canada Performs"

career-development workshops, networking opportunities, music incubation, mentorship and performances. Early in the year a cohort of 26 musicians was chosen to participate in the inaugural year's program organized by Small World staff, and with Suba Sankaran, well-known to *WholeNote* readers – most recently as co-curator of Tafelmusik's Indigo Project, as the program's artist mentor.

I had already tuned into its initial series of spirited concerts on YouTube, one performed by Jafar Zabeh and friends, and another by Baobá. But beyond those, Davis waxes enthusiastic about the longer view for the program: "It formalizes what Small World has done to support artists, building on our strengths, reputation and connections. It is timely and well suited to a 21st-century arts organization in a city that is the centre of Canada's music industry and a constant magnet for newcomers. As a music presenter we understand that we need to invest in the next generation in order to reveal that there is a path for underrepresented and marginalized artists."

The eMERGE program grew out of a successful Small World application to Toronto Arts Council's *Newcomer and Refugee Arts* program. A powerful moment in a video shot by Small World encapsulates both the inspiration for the program and the struggles faced by people trying to start a career in a new home. "In the video," Davis explains, "Jafar Zabeh, a newcomer Iranian classical musician, shared a poignant story of frustration about the difficulty of trying to play music when the muscles in his hands are cramped from the demands of his restaurant dishwasher job. We hope to have a positive impact on people such as Jafar, assisting him and others like him, to build a viable life and maintain his musical practice."

As mentioned, the program is loaded with tools and experiences that will sustain careers – career workshops, in-depth one-on-one mentoring sessions, talks by Canadian music industry professionals, monthly jam sessions where cohort members explore music together and break down social isolation, and of course performances. The final component is "collateral creation" which guides participants in making a career promotional audio and video to illustrate their electronic press kit.

#### Global Toronto

And so, finally, we come to Global Toronto, the story that attracted my attention in the first place.

Like so many music-related events, Global Toronto 2020 (GT) has announced that it will pivot online with programs starting Monday, July 27 through Friday, July 31.


Calling the online Global Toronto conference "more than just a marketplace," Small World sees it as hitting a positive note during "these unprecedented times" – an aspirational call for "our sector to emerge from this moment transformed and thriving. We believe GT20 can help make this transformation possible."

Conference details are a bit thin at press time – the event is still a

month away, but seven programming areas have been announced.

As the face-to-face conference was designed to do, these will include panel discussions, professional development webinars and breakout sessions, and artist spotlights where attendees meet the jury-selected GT musicians, with further activities including spotlights on festivals, conferences and other gatherings, regional network meetings, and finally what's dubbed *musical discovery*: "uncovering the best local music from around the world."

How close they can come to fulfilling these "face to face" goals of the original conference in a virtual environment remains to be seen, but if you're anything like me, itching to be freed from your four-month-long lockdown restrictions, you'll be wishing them well. I particularly feel the need to reconnect with friends and colleagues in music. It's already the tail end of June, and it's still unclear how and when these things will once again be possible in any meaningful way. Travel is certainly out for the foreseeable future, cutting all of us off physically from our national and international connections – so key for global musicians.

Meeting with fellow music professionals from around the world online at Global Toronto may be the next best thing at the moment. And for that I'm grateful. 

Andrew Timar is a Toronto musician and music writer. He can be contacted at [worldmusic@thewholenote.com](mailto:worldmusic@thewholenote.com).

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# Playing Changes

STEVE WALLACE

**“P**laying the changes” is jazz argot (jargon?) for navigating the chord changes of any given piece or tune being played, a hard-earned skill, the challenge of which varies depending on how many chord changes there are, and how complex they might be. It’s also referred to as “making the changes,” as in playing notes which fit the chords – a sort of entry-level requirement – or “running the changes,” which can carry a negative connotation of a soloist robotically playing a lot of notes without necessarily making a coherent musical statement of any melodic value.

However, the difficulty of negotiating the labyrinthine chord changes of, say, *Giant Steps*, or *I Got Rhythm*, pale in comparison to the challenges facing jazz musicians during the COVID-19 lockdown of the past three months and counting. “Playing the changes” has taken on a whole new meaning – as in adapting to the catastrophic changes wrought by this virus. These have affected all of us deeply of course, but I would like to address them from a jazz perspective.

I’m slightly reluctant in doing so lest this take on a “woe is me” tone of self-pity, as if jazz players have suffered more than other live performers such as actors, dancers and musicians in other fields. Everyone has surely suffered from the lockdown measures, but as a largely in-the-moment, collectively improvised music – and an economically vulnerable one at that – jazz and its practitioners have been particularly set back by social distancing.

## What Has Been Taken Away?

In a word, everything. Starting with paying gigs, and the opportunity to just get together and play. The widespread cancellation of all gigs from mid-March on has obviously meant financial loss and hardship for many. Given the real spectre of a second wave of the pandemic in the fall, this will continue for the foreseeable future and it would seem that live performance venues – theatres, clubs, concert halls, festivals – will be among the last places to reopen owing to the complex logistics of social distancing and managing necessarily reduced crowds. This could be a while.

Jazz musicians are a resilient and increasingly resourceful bunch because they’ve had to be. Many supplement their gig income with teaching, either at an institution or on a private basis, and this is still possible thanks to online video platforms like Zoom and Skype. Some may be blessed with a spouse who continues to earn a salary, but I know of many couples where both partners derive most, if not all, of their income from live performance, and I despair for them.

There’s much more to the Great Pause than finances, though. Not being able to play in public for months has many other costs – artistic, psychological, emotional-spiritual, loss of momentum. For jazz musicians, a kind of rust, a loss of edge, has set in. Yes, this can be counteracted by practising, which is about all one can do these days to stay in shape. But in jazz that only goes so far. You have to *play* with others as much as possible to really get good at it and to stay good at it; it’s an ensemble music. And more than any other type of music, it thrives on the spontaneous give-and-take of playing closely with others in a real, live situation with or without an audience, but ideally with. Jazz musicians draw inspiration and energy from each other in the moment, and that’s all been taken away. And so have audiences, which complete the circle of performance. In the early days of my career I was largely unaware of the audience, ignored them or even regarded them as the enemy, but I now realize that an appreciative audience is crucial to a truly satisfying jazz performance, probably more than they realize. Jazz fans, we need you and miss you.

So, practising is about all jazz players can do to maintain their



chops, but it’s lonely work that doesn’t quite cut it. Many like me have a sinking feeling that they’ve lost their edge and dread the first few live performances – even while looking forward to them when they eventually happen – for that reason. There will be rust, there will be pain and a lack of stamina; it won’t be pretty.

As a bassist, I may be biased, but this rustiness is particularly true for bassists and drummers. While practising, it’s impossible to duplicate the physical effort, the in-the-fire crucible rhythm players face in live performance. And just as it’s taken only a few months to utterly alter our collective consciousness, so too it only takes a few months off to make one feel they’ve lost whatever backlog of edge they’ve built up over the years. I feel it keenly, and I’ve been at it for 45 years. It’s like the old saying that it takes years to build a good reputation and just one day to ruin it.

Having been at it for so long has its advantages, psychologically speaking. With the immediate future of live jazz so uncertain, at least I and others my age have the comfort of knowing we’ve had our innings, we can look back and realize we’ve had good careers, got to play with some great people and accrued some satisfying memories. It’s not resting on our laurels exactly – that would be laughable in my case – but it does help take the edge of despair off the uncertain future facing all of us.

Every Tuesday I take part in a Zoom cocktail party with a group of musicians more or less my age who’ve known each other for 30 or 40 years. It helps soothe another important aspect of jazz that’s been taken away – the social dimension, the camaraderie and the humour, which we’ve all missed. All of these veterans have expressed a similar philosophical attitude about the shutdown: that, as bad as things are – and they weren’t great before the pandemic began – at least we had a crack at the good times. But we all feel for young players who are just starting out and trying to gain a foothold in a field that’s been so interrupted. They have the advantage of youthful energy and a much longer future ahead of them, but one which seems tenuous now. I have every faith that they’ll bounce back and find a way, I’m just not sure how or when, exactly. Many whom I’ve talked to are practising like fiends to be ready when things reopen. Jazz has always been a leap of faith.

A word on one of the social distancing performance solutions musicians have turned to: the online concert, or recordings made online using separate tracks. While I applaud the entrepreneurial ingenuity of these, the musical results have been mixed. I feel these work best





DON VICKERY

Steve Wallace, centre, in friendlier times, with the Barry Elmes Quintet.

**Many whom I've talked to are practising like fiends to be ready when things re-open.**

**Jazz has always been a leap of faith.**

with a high content of written music, such as several I've heard involving big bands or members of orchestras such as the TSO. But the small group jazz ones are less successful because they're not playing together in real time, which is essential when working without a script. Jazz is intimate, it requires interplay and proximity. These efforts are okay as an alternative but let's not kid ourselves, they're not the same as the real thing. And at this point, we need the real thing.

The late, great pianist Hank Jones once said that playing jazz is largely a matter of concentration and he was right. This has been another casualty of the virus; it has deeply affected our ability to focus. Who can concentrate amid all the dizzying, almost-daily changes? (I've found it hard to concentrate long enough to write each sentence of this article.) Like many of us, I suspect, I'm hearing an internal white-noise hum of confusion, anxiety, self-doubt, loneliness,

uncertainty, the disorientation of too many numbers and too much bad news all at once, which warps time and makes me doubt my ability to discern what is true, or even think straight. This is not good for any of us but trust me, it's lethal for jazz musicians. Jazz requires the ability to think on one's feet and now it's hard to think at all.

**"What, then, is to be done?"** – Vladimir Ilyich Lenin

I don't have any specific solutions for this mess in general, or as it applies specifically to jazz and live performance. Only to say that we must remain faithful, positive and hopeful (no matter how much the playing changes); we must believe in each other and that we can come back from all this adversity, just as prior generations bounced back from a calamity as huge as World War Two. If they did, then we can. Jazz has never been easy, it's always required courage, commitment, a lot of spirit and heart, and these qualities abound in the jazz community, both worldwide and locally.

To all *WholeNote* readers, a safe, healthy and happy summer in these trying times. 🍷

*Toronto bassist Steve Wallace writes a blog called "Steve Wallace jazz, baseball, life and other ephemera" which can be accessed at [Wallace-bass.com](http://Wallace-bass.com). Aside from the topics mentioned, he sometimes writes about movies and food.*

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# How to Fight Pandemic Fatigue? Practise.

JACK MACQUARRIE

**A**s the days drag on into weeks and the weeks drag on into months, with no live music, we are all suffering in some way or other. Finally I have learned from a local columnist that there is a name for our problem. He told me that we are all suffering from “pandemic fatigue.”

While this column has a focus on instrumental music, we recently learned of a vocal number which sums up the feelings of almost all musicians at this time of isolation. There are a couple of choral versions of *What Would I Do Without My Music*. They can be found at [youtube.com/watch?v=CC1HtFCaBys](https://youtube.com/watch?v=CC1HtFCaBys).

## Staying In Touch

In many cases we have heard nothing from bands about how their members are coping. Most, though, are staying in touch with members at least by email. So I have two questions: 1) How are all the bands and their members coping with this situation while they cannot play together? 2) What are the plans for the bands when that distant day arrives, and how will the long absence have affected their morale and performance?

Of the bands that we have heard from, one stands out. Members of Resa's Pieces Concert Band have been receiving an amazing array of messages on coping. I know of at least nine messages covering many basic practice recommendations. The primary recommendation simply states that, if one loves music as much as they claim, they should utilize this time to improve their playing. In other words take advantage of this time to practise because, as the Oxford dictionary defines practice, it is “repeated exercise to improve skill” and there is certainly enough time for that right now.

As for practice techniques, most of us, at some time, learned all of the basics that Resa Kochberg covers in her emails. Her main topics for all instrumentalists practising at home: Playing Position; Breathing Techniques; Articulation; Long Tones; Intonation; and Playing in Tune.

In her final memo she states: “Many great performances have been compromised by poor intonation. Tuning is so important in music because in order for the audience to enjoy listening to your music, you have to be in tune! If the band or the individual is out of tune, it creates an imbalance of sounds between the players and is very displeasing to hear. So how exactly do you play in tune? Follow the number one fundamental rule: “Warm up before tune up.”

So much for practising at home. Some day, though, band rehearsals will return. Here are some of Resa's recommendations for when we do get back to playing in a group once again:

The top of the list is Balance and Blend. Basically, any band, regardless of size or proficiency, is a multipurpose team. They must provide enjoyment for their audiences, but equally important is the sharing of that enjoyment with their fellow band members. The key is balance and blend so that the audience does not simply hear individual instruments. The blend is the key. Good balance and blend is the result of painstaking attentive listening. As a final suggestion, just remember that, if you can't hear the melody, you're too loud. As a rule of thumb, if you don't have the melody, play about 30 percent below the dynamic marking. Many thanks to Resa for all of these



Resa Kochberg

recommendations for maintaining and/or improving one's musical skills while unable to play in a group.

A thought if solitary practice becomes too hard: although most did when they began their music activities, very few members of community bands still take private lessons. While I have not seen any advertised, I am sure that there are some instrumental music teachers who are offering private lessons over Zoom.

## Pyramid Approach

Resa's remarks about balance and intonation got me investigating, on the internet, a concept I have occasionally heard referred to as “The Pyramid Approach.” To my surprise I found no fewer than four different pyramid approaches relating to music. The one that I was looking for is a means of solving problems of balance and intonation, and was defined by composer Francis McBeth. This pyramid approach is based on the theory that, at any given dynamic level, the higher-pitched instruments should be playing softer than the lower-pitched ones. This is consistent with the notion that players should be able to hear the bottom notes of the chord so that they can tune to them. McBeth illustrates the concept with the use of an isosceles triangle divided into four levels. At the peak of the triangle are the higher pitched instruments, piccolo, flute, first trumpet and first clarinet. The next level down would include second and third trumpets and clarinets. The third level has the horn, and alto and tenor saxes. At the bottom, fourth level, are second and third trombones, euphonium, baritone sax, bassoon and tuba. In this model the width of the triangle is a measure of volume, so that the higher the voice, the softer the sound should be.

## Online Stuff

So much for individual practising at home. What about the social component of band membership? Here's where Zooming comes in. When I went to school eons ago, according to my Oxford Dictionary the word zoom meant “move quickly, especially with a buzzing sound.” Now, in 2020, zoom has come to mean something quite different. On my latest check, I learned that Zoom was the “leader in modern enterprise video communication with an easy, reliable cloud platform for video and audio conferencing.”

In the midst of our great pandemic, most musical groups have cancelled all rehearsals and concerts “until further notice.” However, as reported in the last issue, many have now taken to Zoom. While most Zoom sessions are friendly chats to at least retain social contact with friends in the group, some have taken a more challenging approach. I learned recently of a musical group which had not cancelled one of



their regular rehearsals. In keeping with the times they would be rehearsing in the Zoomiverse.

The question then is how do they do that? Using Zoom, a performer is only able to hear their own contribution along with that of the leader. However, there are various ways of producing group music over the internet. Some of these virtual performances are complete with video showing each player in a separate frame. Others just have the integrated sound of all of the performers with no video. A couple of each have caught my attention recently.

### Audio Recording

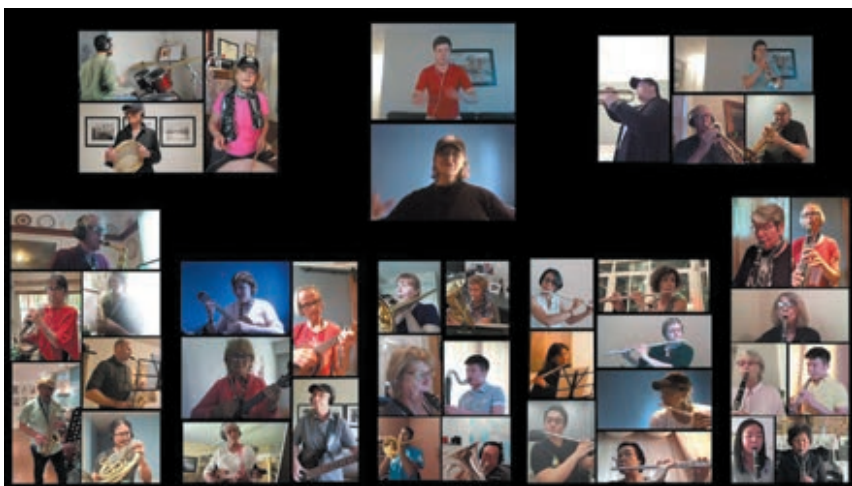
The Uxbridge Community Concert Band (UCCB) is a summertime-only band that usually rehearses from May to August and presents a few regular concerts during that time. At the end of each season band members vote to choose one selection from the season's repertoire which they would like to play during the following season. Their choice to play again in 2020 was *Nimrod* from Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. This year there will be no rehearsals or concerts, but they have produced an excellent performance of *Nimrod* with all members playing at home. All members received their individual parts by email to practise on their own time. When it was time to record, each member listened to a recording of *Nimrod* on some form of earphone on their computer, while watching the conductor on the computer at the same time. They played their parts into the microphone of a separate device such as a cell phone, while reading the music which they had received earlier. The performance, which I subsequently heard, had tone and balance far better than I had anticipated.

### Video Recording

Other forms of "over internet performance" involve different means of providing all performers with the tempo. The vast majority of groups use some form of an audio click track or similar means to provide a beat. We recently had the opportunity to hear and see a virtual performance by the New Horizons Music North York Band under the direction of Susan Baskin.

For their performance they chose a selection which was 54 bars, straight ahead, with no time changes. It was also very easy so that people could concentrate on playing accurately with good tone. Everyone received an audio guide track at 120 bits per minute (BPM), with a sync beep, eight prep beeps and the basic tunes, and then played along with that to create recordings of their individual parts.

Members had a deadline with three weeks to prepare. They all made AV recordings of themselves in their own time. According to Baskin, the hardest thing was teaching everyone how to make and save a recording, and then upload it to YouTube. On the technical side, she had the assistance of family members. Her composer son, in Berlin, created the audio guide track. At home, another son and friends formed the "tech crew." As for the conducting in the video, she says that it is totally fake.



"The sun'll come out ...tomorrow ..." Susan Baskin conducts members of the North York New Horizons Band in a cheerful tune from the musical *Annie*

### Thanks

In the news we are regularly hearing many ways of saying "Thank You" to all of the frontline workers who are dealing with this pandemic every day. In fact there has already been one such thank you in the form of a TV special called *One World: Together at Home*, a musical celebration in support of frontline healthcare workers in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

When that thank-you day arrives, many community musical groups will have, or will be looking for, some form of musical salute to celebrate that day. One composition that I have heard mentioned as a possibility for that day is *Summon the Heroes*. This work was originally written by the American composer John Williams for the opening of the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia. It was dedicated to, and originally played by Tim Morrison, trumpet soloist of the Boston Pops Orchestra. There is now available a concert-band arrangement by John Higgins.

Another possible opener for a post-pandemic concert might be from George Friedrich Handel's Oratorio *Judas Maccabaeus*. Sometimes referred to as *Hail the Conquering Hero*, and sometimes as *See the Conquering Hero Comes*, this is the most famous chorus from that oratorio. Composed in 1746, and first performed in Covent Garden, London in 1747, it has been a concert favourite ever since. I understand that there is now a concert band arrangement available of that.

### Postlude

Let's look ahead to that day when community musical groups get back to regular rehearsals, and we can all enjoy music together, whether performing or listening. 🎵

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



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## Livestreaming, Zooming, Facebook Live?

## Online concerts, fundraisers, workshops, masterclasses?

Share your details so we can publish them!

## “Exquisite Corpse” and Other Coping Strategies

continued from page 7

One of the contributors to our Community Voices feature in our previous issue (Tricia Baldwin from the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts in Kingston) made an astute remark: that COVID-19 “has brought forward the tipping point, [and is] hastening the creation of new structures to support the creation and production of the arts in a different way.”

It’s happening everywhere I look, although “structures” is perhaps too solid a word to describe some of the improvised storm shelters and advance bases springing up: for people wishing for a “new normal” that sounds and behaves more like the old one; and for those of us hoping that the built-in inequities of the old normal never return.

For example, I chatted briefly with Mervon Mehta, executive director, performing arts at the Royal Conservatory in late June. It was right after the RCM made the brave (or foolhardy, depending how the winds blow) announcement of a full season commencing at the beginning of October. Much of what was on his mind had to do with really nitty gritty concerns: How many can we accommodate in our three halls at one-third capacity? How do we get them in and out? Who among our visiting artists will agree to do a 70-minute performance without an intermission at 3pm and repeat it at 8, instead of the one performance they were contracted to do? Things like that. But at the same time he freely admits that the new plan, detailed as it is, may have to go right out of the window if the same dispensations being offered to places of worship, for example, are not extended to the performing arts. Or if the hoped-for stages of recovery don’t pan out and even places of worship are locked down again.

Another example: the Show One Productions/Starvox staging of the Immersive Van Gogh Exhibit now under way at the former Toronto Star building at One Yonge Street. It started first as a “drive through”, thereby capturing the attention of media that would likely not have given the exhibit a second thought. And now it enters a second stage with agreed start time walk-through admission where you must stay within a projected moving circle of space as you move through it. What parts of this, I wonder, have applicability beyond this particular exhibit? Even if only in helping control bottleneck ingress and egress at the larger venues that are Show One’s more usual stomping grounds, and which are themselves in peril if they do not solve these very problems.

Meanwhile for smaller venues without organized “arts” credentials, like our city’s jazz clubs, it’s a different matter. In Mainly Clubs,

Mostly Jazz, Colin Story interviews owner/management at three music venues (The Rex, Burdock, and The Emmet Ray), which, unlike major institutions do not have the benefit of time, major financial resources, and systemic endorsement to stay afloat. Paradoxically, in the longer haul “it is small venues, rather than large, that will have the greater capacity to provide space to diverse programming.”

### Full Circle

Back to the conversation with Ben Finley that sparked this train of thought. Finley is a double bassist, improviser, composer and educator, with deep roots in Campbellford’s Westben Festival, where 2020 was to be the third iteration of Westben’s Performer-Composer Residency (P-CR), with Finley at the helm. In previous years, 11 successful applicants travelled to Westben, some from far afield, for a face-to-face residency, timed to coincide with the performance/audience/showcase opportunities afforded by the festival itself.

This year? No festival. No international travel. So, logically, one would think, no composer residency? Wrong.

Instead of whittling the applicants down to the usual dozen or so, Finley invited all 90 applicants to this year’s program to join a month-long digital residency (all of June) instead. More than 60 accepted and were assigned to 13 ensembles based on intersecting, rather than similar interests.

“So here we are all of a sudden,” Finley says, “having to cross multi-geographical and communication borders, with groups of participants, covering seven different time zones, having to develop innovative and satisfying collaborative strategies for distanced music making.” Crucially, he says, these approaches and strategies didn’t just try to replicate the in-person musical experience but rather to dive into what web-grounded meaningful connections would look like. “It has afforded diverse intergenerational musical practitioners a place to create,” he says. “It’s as though they have been enabled instead to come up with their own temporary musical institution – an exciting new development and something that may not have been possible in person.

This unexpected adventure comes to its close July 5 to July 11, with 13 premiere performances, in Westben’s new digital venue ([www.westben.ca](http://www.westben.ca)), of 15-minute multimedia pieces. All the creative intersections this first Westben digital P-CR has actually provoked in participants will be on display. But that’s just one step on the way.

“We are not in an ordinary time,” Finley says. “COVID has rippled a tremendous impact. And now that ripple is intersecting with a tide – of people coming together to imagine, organize, and participate in an anti-racist and decolonized world. And we need creative and adaptive musical institutions to do this. This global residency has been an (imperfect) experiment in that.”

[publisher@thewholenote.com](http://publisher@thewholenote.com)

What a difference a year makes! Westben Performer-Composer Residency, 2019, Campbellford.



WESTBEN





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2020

# GREEN PAGES

16th Annual Summer Music Guide

Welcome to *The WholeNote's* 16th annual Green Pages guide to summer music! To state the obvious, it is not "business as usual" this summer due to the pandemic. Nevertheless, we invited summer music festivals, the usual way, to let you know what they're up to and how they are adapting to the times. Fifteen responded, some to say they have cancelled outright, others to say they are offering live-streamed and other online events they hope you'll tune in to, and still others to say "Like many of you, we don't know what is coming next yet, but please stay tuned." So have a look at the 15 profiles presented here and on our website at [www.thewholenote.com/green](http://www.thewholenote.com/green), to stay connected to the music you love and the creative artists and individuals who are pivoting to other platforms in these unusual times. Wishing you all a happy and healthy summer!

## 2020 GREEN PAGES TEAM

PROJECT MANAGER: **Karen Ages**

PROJECT EDITOR: **Danial Jazaeri**

LAYOUT & DESIGN: **Susan Sinclair**

WEBSITE: **Kevin King**

For more information about the Green Pages or other *WholeNote* directories, please contact Karen at [karen@thewholenote.com](mailto:karen@thewholenote.com)





**Collingwood Summer Music Festival** Collingwood, ON

## COLLINGWOOD SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVAL

► July 9 to 15, 2020 (postponed to July 2021)

Collingwood, ON

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The Collingwood Summer Music Festival showcases music performances of the highest calibre catering to a wide variety of audiences, presenting internationally renowned artists of classical and world music genres each summer. Our July 2020 events, featuring free noon performances for youth and three Ontario premieres, have been postponed to the summer of 2021. Please subscribe to our newsletter for the latest updates regarding dates, artist lineup, super-special promotions and much more.

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## FESTIVAL OF THE SOUND

► Parry Sound, ON

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## HERITAGE MUSIC FESTIVAL

► August 5 to 8, 2021

Shelburne, ON

It is with great disappointment that the Rotary Club of Shelburne must inform our loyal supporters that we have made the decision to postpone the Heritage Music Festival and 70th Canadian Open Old Time Fiddle Championship. To this end, the Heritage Music Festival and 70th Canadian Open Old Time Fiddle Championship will take place August 5 to 8, 2021. We are excited to bring you an amazing line up of talent and special added features for our 70th celebration. We thank you for your continued support and we wish you all the best of health and happiness until we see you at the HMF and 70th Fiddle Championship in 2021.

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## MUSIC AND BEYOND

► July 4 to 17, 2020

Ottawa, ON K1N 6Z9

Music and Beyond is a classical music and multi-disciplinary festival that takes place in Ottawa each July. Our mandate is to link music with a wide range of art forms and cultural disciplines. Music and Beyond also places a strong importance on developing new audiences for classical music, particularly young people. Music and Beyond was named "Event of the Year" at the 2018 Ottawa Tourism Awards. In its first ten seasons, Music and Beyond has presented a total of over 900 concerts and events, as well as over 3,800 "mini-concerts". The festival has presented some of Ottawa, Canada and the world's greatest musicians, artists, performers and writers. Music and Beyond will release a very exciting series of videos from July 4 to July 17, 2020. Please visit [www.musicandbeyond.ca](http://www.musicandbeyond.ca)

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## MUSIC MONDAYS

► August to November, 2020

Toronto, ON

A lunchtime concert series at the Church of the Holy Trinity - welcome to our 29th season! Our concerts take place in the warm acoustics of Holy Trinity Church, just steps away from the Eaton Centre. We feature an eclectic mix of everything from classical solo and chamber music to jazz, fusion and world music. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Music Mondays has been postponed to August. We hope to offer a shortened series of live-streamed concerts beginning on Monday, August 3, running until November 2. Please check our website for the most up-to-date information as program changes may occur. Please plan to join us online every Monday at 12:15pm from August to November.

416-598-4521

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

[@MusicMondaysToronto](https://www.instagram.com/MusicMondaysToronto)

[@musicmondayscs](https://www.instagram.com/musicmondayscs)

[www.youtube.com/user/MusicMondaysHT](https://www.youtube.com/user/MusicMondaysHT)



## OTTAWA CHAMBERFEST

➤ Ottawa, ON

Ottawa Chamberfest offers Chamber Chats: At Home, Chez vous, hosted by celebrated broadcaster/writer Eric Friesen. Taking place on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2pm EDT, these 45-minute interactive episodes combine chat with pre-recorded and live performances and feature guest artists and lecturers from all over the world.

Chamberfest brings together the boldest names in ensemble and solo performance for musical celebration in the nation's capital, through its concert series, community engagement and education (CEE), and its summer festival.

613-234-8008

[www.chamberfest.com](http://www.chamberfest.com)

[www.facebook.com/ottawachamberfest](https://www.facebook.com/ottawachamberfest)

[twitter.com/Chamberfest](https://twitter.com/Chamberfest)

## SOUTH COAST JAZZ & BLUES

➤ September 18 to 20, 2020

Port Dover, ON, world-wide online free shows

Welcome to the 7th annual South Coast Jazz festival on Lake Erie, Port Dover, September 18 to 20. Join our social media @southcoastjazz1 for free concerts and up-to-date information.

2020 features Jackie Richardson and Micah Barnes, Jazz West, Queen Pepper, Ian Bell Aaron Bell Aleef Mehdi, Ben Duff and more. Free Online concerts and prizes, too!

Visit our website for all bios, videos, event schedules, tickets and information and email us at [info@southcoastjazz.com](mailto:info@southcoastjazz.com).

519-774-2787

[www.southcoastjazz.com](http://www.southcoastjazz.com)

[www.facebook.com/southcoastjazz1](https://www.facebook.com/southcoastjazz1)

[www.twitter.com/southcoastjazz1](https://www.twitter.com/southcoastjazz1)

[www.youtube.com/roartsca](https://www.youtube.com/roartsca)

## SUMMER MUSIC IN THE GARDEN AT HOME

➤ Starts July 5

[harbourfront.live](http://harbourfront.live)

Just as our gardens come to life again, so too does the music of Toronto. Harbourfront Centre's Summer Music in the Garden series is virtual this year, bringing the sounds of the Toronto Music Garden right to your home. Concerts start July 5, every Sunday at 4 and Thursday at 7, online at [harbourfront.live](http://harbourfront.live) and features artists from Ontario, Quebec and around the world. Music by Bach, Ravel, Borodin and Telemann are accompanied by meditative raags and ancient lute techniques. Sign up for reminders at [harbourfront.live](http://harbourfront.live) to remain up to date on concerts and even a few surprises. With Summer Music in the Garden at home, the garden's never been closer!

905-973-4000

[harbourfront.live](http://harbourfront.live)

## SUMMER OPERA LYRIC THEATRE

➤ Robert Gill Theatre, University of Toronto,

214 College Street, Third Floor

Toronto, ON

Founded in 1986, Summer Opera Lyric Theatre has been bringing together young vocalists, professional singers and teachers of great stature. SOLT features the stars of tomorrow, as our young artists advance towards careers



Music and Beyond Ottawa, ON



at the national and international level. Sadly, SOLT 2020 Opera Mini-Festival is cancelled due to the COVID-19 and concerns for the safety of our audience and artists. We are looking forward to the next summer with our singers, creative teams and Masters presenting Mozart's *La Clemenza Di Tito*, Menotti's *The Medium* and Puccini's *La Rondine* at the Robert Gill Theatre. Please support Summer Opera Lyric Theatre and many emerging artists.

416-922-2912

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

[www.facebook.com/summeroperalyrictheatre](https://www.facebook.com/summeroperalyrictheatre)

[twitter.com/OperaSOLT](https://twitter.com/OperaSOLT)

## SUN LIFE UPTOWN WATERLOO JAZZ FESTIVAL

➤ July 17 to 19

Waterloo, ON

We are disappointed that this year's Festival was cancelled due to the pandemic. We will miss the live music and the feeling of community it brings. Work has already begun on the 2021 Festival which we hope will be our best yet! Stay safe everyone and see you next year.

519-279-0189

[www.waterloojazzfest.com](http://www.waterloojazzfest.com)

@WaterlooJazz

@Waterloojazz

## SWEETWATER MUSIC FESTIVAL

➤ SweetWater Music Festival Presents "Surreal"

August 1 to November 15, 2020

Owen Sound and Meaford, ON

SweetWater is changing with the times. Its 17th festival is postponed until 2021. But the music continues with SweetWater: Surreal. The multifaceted, music experience will include live and virtual music performances, special events, music education and more from late Summer 2020 until late Fall 2020 in Owen Sound and Meaford, Ontario. Surreal will include three featured concerts (most will be livestreamed to a wider audience) as well as community-based, small scale concerts on September 19 and 20 featuring a talented string quartet performing classical works led by artistic director Edwin Huizinga. Watch for more details throughout



**SweetWater Music Festival**  
Owen Sound and Meaford, ON



this summer and regularly check for updates at [sweetwatermusicfestival.ca](http://sweetwatermusicfestival.ca)  
519-477-1403  
[www.sweetwatermusicfestival.ca](http://www.sweetwatermusicfestival.ca)  
[www.facebook.com / SweetWater-Music-Festival-215841015101623](https://www.facebook.com/SweetWater-Music-Festival-215841015101623)  
[www.twitter.com / SweetWaterNotes](https://www.twitter.com/SweetWaterNotes) [www.youtube.com /](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqmZ4nAIKZzmHQky-B7o0Lw)  
[channel / UCqmZ4nAIKZzmHQky-B7o0Lw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqmZ4nAIKZzmHQky-B7o0Lw)

## TD MARKHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL

► September 2020 - March 2021 (postponed from August 14 to 16)  
Markham, ON

The TD Markham Jazz Festival regrets that in keeping with COVID-19 guidelines, and to be careful that our audiences and artists stay safe, we have had to cancel this year's festival, which was to take place August 14 to 16, 2020. However, we recognize that jazz in all its genres brings joy to listeners – and never was this more important than now, during this pandemic environment, where we cannot gather in mass to celebrate all that music has to offer. And so, TDMJF is pleased to announce that we will be bringing jazz to all of our patrons in the form of a combined live (ticketed) and virtual (live-streamed) concert series that will take place from the end of September 2020 to the end of March 2021. Schedule, locations and dates to be announced by the end of July.

905-471-5299  
[www.markhamjazzfestival.com](http://www.markhamjazzfestival.com)  
[www.facebook.com / Markhamjazzfest](https://www.facebook.com/Markhamjazzfest)  
[twitter.com / markhamjazzfestival](https://twitter.com/markhamjazzfestival)  
[www.youtube.com / channel / UCTj8XTT-wnrFut4tgf2X](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTj8XTT-wnrFut4tgf2X)

## TD NIAGARA JAZZ FESTIVAL

The TD Niagara Jazz Festival is a cutting edge celebration of all types of jazz, performed in intimate indoor and outdoor venues in the heart of Niagara's stunning wine country. The TD Niagara Jazz Festival presents the finest Canadian and internationally-acclaimed jazz musicians by way of spectacular concerts, wine, craft beer, and culinary packages, and free performances throughout Niagara-on-the-Lake and selected locations throughout Niagara.

1-844-548-5299  
[niagarajazzfestival.com](http://niagarajazzfestival.com)  
[www.facebook.com / jazzniagara](https://www.facebook.com/jazzniagara)  
[twitter.com / jazzniagara](https://twitter.com/jazzniagara)  
[www.youtube.com / channel / UCEwc5b9cgExQOz-7w75U-SA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCewc5b9cgExQOz-7w75U-SA)

## TORONTO SUMMER MUSIC

► July 16 to August 1 2020

Toronto Summer Music is delighted to announce its first-ever online festival! Save the dates: July 16 to August 1, 2020. Since the announcement that we had to cancel our in-person Beethoven Unleashed Festival, we have been working diligently to create a new digital Festival during this unique summer. Thanks to our generous supporters, we have a fabulous lineup of artists and concerts to present, all in high-quality audio and video – from emerging artists to international stars, kids concerts to multidisciplinary productions – there will be something for everyone! We will be announcing full details in early July. Stay tuned!

647-430-5699  
[www.torontosummertime.com](http://www.torontosummertime.com)  
[www.facebook.com / torontosummertime](https://www.facebook.com/torontosummertime)

## WESTBEN CONCERTS AT THE BARN

► May 30 to August 2, 2020  
Campbellford, ON

Sunshine Ahead! Bringing people together through music – reimagined Westben is genuinely sorry that Concerts at The Barn 2020 will not take place as originally planned. We do remain however fully committed to “bringing people together through music”. To reimagine this mandate, we have launched the new digital “Sunshine Ahead!” program including Musical Moments to soothe, Music for a While podcasts to inspire, interactive activities for kids and the new “Digital Concerts at The Barn” series. In keeping with improvisation and innovation, Westben's Performer-Composer Residency has shifted online where all 80 applicants from around the world have the opportunity to participate, create and share new works. Westben is focusing on sunshine now and ahead and hoping to stay connected with you.

705-653-7369  
[www.westben.ca](http://www.westben.ca)  
[www.facebook.com / westbenconcerts](https://www.facebook.com/westbenconcerts)  
[@westbentheatre](https://twitter.com/westbentheatre)  
[bit.ly / 2Xv4Uu4](https://bit.ly/2Xv4Uu4)



# Small Venues Surviving Suspension, and Moving Forward

COLIN STORY

In the wake of ongoing worldwide protests in support of anti-racist social reform, major Canadian arts institutions have expressed statements of commitment to look inward and address their own programming selections, hiring practices and artistic choices.

Amidst promises to do better, major institutions have the benefit of time and major financial resources to stay afloat; meanwhile, Toronto's clubs face an uncertain future. Though it is imperative that venues of all sizes think critically about their own internal biases, it is small venues, rather than large, that have the greater capacity to provide space to diverse programming, having a mandate to develop and serve their communities, rather than their donor base.

So, with the advent of summer, and a recent move into Stage 2 of the province's reopening framework, I connected with representatives of three Toronto venues – The Rex, The Emmet Ray and Burdock Music Hall – to discuss the suspension of live performances, surviving the financial hurdles of quarantine, and moving forward.

## On the initial experience of postponing/cancelling shows:

**Andrew Kaiser, Owner/Operator, The Emmet Ray:** The first thing we did was empty all stock and money offsite. We then called all local suppliers and got them to stop sending any standard orders. As for bookings, we had nearly 14 shows per week; most groups were cancelling before the official lockdown, but [we] got in touch with the remainder of the [acts] that were left and cancelled them. We laid off staff right away, [as] we knew getting E.I. would be something of a challenge and wanted the staff to have the best chance to get it. I also got on the phone with banks and spent a lot of time trying to secure loans or credit lines to get us through. We had no idea what support if any would come.

**Tom Tytel, General Manager, The Rex:** Unfortunately (or fortunately, not sure) [the process of cancelling shows] proved easier than I would've originally assumed. Due to the fact that it was a health-related issue I think most of the people we had to contact were already under the assumption that everything was "on hold" until further notice anyway, so it made the cancellation process more amenable. Laying off the staff proved to be a necessary evil (so they could more quickly go through the EI and then CERB process) and was a very personal and painful ordeal for the ownership and myself. As for the rest of the operation... we are ordinarily open in

some capacity 24/7/365, so it was very unusual to have to scale everything down.

**Richard Haubrich, Music Hall director, Burdock Brewery:** The cancellation emails started rolling in around March 10. We had our last show on Friday March 13 and subsequently closed the Music Hall. The restaurant side of Burdock closed Sunday March 15. Many bookings were outright cancelled, but whenever possible I tried to postpone shows that were already announced and up for sale. Most of our wedding bookings were simply pushed back one year. We struggled with how to handle cancelling all upcoming work for our Music Hall staff. We were obviously very relieved when CERB was announced.

## On pivoting, surviving, and building under quarantine:

**RH (Burdock):** We closed the restaurant on Sunday March 15. On Monday we launched a free local beer delivery service, and by Tuesday morning I switched from Music Hall Director to beer delivery driver and was out on the road with our first batch of 26 orders using a trial version of the top Google result for delivery routing software. Since then we iterated and grew the delivery operation substantially. We also do third party deliveries for various Toronto wine agencies. We converted the restaurant area into a packing and staging area for orders. We have up to five vans delivering and picking up agency orders daily.

**AK (The Emmet Ray):** The Emmet Ray started Dinner and Show, [for which] we created heat-and-eat meals: roast chicken, vindaloo, lasagna, fried chicken and more. Each dinner came with a couple sides or sauces as well as cookies or some kind of [dessert]. They cost \$19.99 each, free delivery and no hidden fees and \$5 went to the artist we booked, who performed live online, streaming mostly through Facebook. At first it was a great success: people supported and everyone talked about how great the idea is. However, even with good reviews of the food, it seemed like everyone loved the idea but it took too much planning for people, or they didn't like the idea of having to heat it up. Whatever the case, we have stopped the program because no one was ordering anymore. However, the online streams and artists seemed to be doing well through direct online tips during the shows. I am in the process of coming up with another idea, but right now we will just advertise the shows booked through or associated with The Emmet Ray and try to get the artists a wider audience and more tips. However, The Emmet Ray won't see any money from the shows.



The Rex

**TT (The Rex):** We've taken the opportunity (a terrible word, I apologize, but a realistic fact here) to perform much-needed renovations to help both modernize The Rex and bring us into compliance into what we think will be the new, post-COVID world. While we've been completely "dark" on stage (the same stage which we rebuilt completely with new soundproofing and a beautiful wood finish), we've tasked our social media directors to build "Rex Performers Story Sessions" so that we can hopefully keep the music alive in the interim. Everyone we reached out to through our platforms (website, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook) has been extremely gracious with [their] time and talent, and the feedback from customers has been most appreciated.

### On pursuing change and addressing BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) representation

**RH (Burdock):** In early 2020 I had the opportunity to book two music festivals. There were 46 performances, and more than 80 percent of the performers were white. Obviously this isn't even close to reflecting the talent in Toronto. Burdock has managed to gain a bit of a reputation for presenting diverse programming but a critical look at the stats shows that we can do a lot better. Burdock is a white-owned business, and I am a white booker. I personally am looking at my position as the booker and trying to figure out how/when is the best time to step aside and leave space for BIPOC bookers. The short-term plan is to develop a ticketing system for livestreaming concerts and work with as many BIPOC presenters as possible. We also hope to take more wedding, book launch, and private event livestream bookings soon. I see my role as a facilitator of this building phase, and passing the booking to others that can better amplify BIPOC voices.

### On gratitude, and the precariousness of the gig economy:

**TT (The Rex):** We feel very strongly that it be mentioned that our wonderful staff and musicians are really surviving this pandemic with a level of grace, professionalism and fortitude that is commendable. This crisis really magnifies how tenuous their employment is in our gig economy (for the servers and bartenders the loss of their tips, for the musicians the loss of their steady performances) and without fail when I speak to almost any of them they are staying hopeful and excited about coming out with us here at the club on the other side of this mess.

### The future, in the short and long term: reopening strategies and livestreaming

**RH (Burdock):** Livestreaming from Burdock has been amazing so far — we are working with Varey Sound who switches between multiple cameras. We have also done a lot of acoustic treatment to dampen the stage sound, making it ideal for live sound capture. We want to offer the best quality and most engaging livestream concert experience for Toronto artists. Indoor gatherings feel like a distant possibility at this time, so we are putting our focus on livestreaming.

**AK (The Emmett Ray):** I think it is possible that the relationship between venue and artists might be over as we know it. Restaurants might hire jazz groups as a value-added experience, but I am not sure the jazz group as a focal point will be the case. I hate to leave on a negative [note], but finding positives for a live music venue is very hard right now, with so many closing. The Emmet Ray will fight to continue to be a live music venue, but without support we might have to pivot away.

**TT (The Rex):** I can say without hesitation that I don't see a reopening process for us here unless we can do it on all fronts: rehiring our full amazing staff, a decent percentage of bar service available both inside and on the patio, full kitchen service, all hotel services and amenities, and some form of live jazz performances. We just don't feel it's worthwhile (or safe for that matter) to open up until we can offer what makes us The Rex Hotel in our entirety. We are encouraged by the phased reopening plans of the city/province and are eager to follow whatever directions come our way from health experts. We are in this for the long haul and want to make sure we are reopening for the right reasons... not just throwing some patio tables out there at half speed and hoping for the best.

These interviews have been condensed and edited. **©**

*Colin Story is a jazz guitarist, writer and teacher based in Toronto. He can be reached at [www.colinstory.com](http://www.colinstory.com), on Instagram and on Twitter.*

## In the Clubs (Mostly Jazz)

• **Alleycatz**  
2409 Yonge St. 416-481-6865  
[alleycatz.ca](http://alleycatz.ca)  
All shows: Call for cover charge info.

• **The Blue Goose Tavern**  
1 Blue Goose St. 416-255-2442  
[thebluegoosetavern.com](http://thebluegoosetavern.com) (full schedule)

• **Bloom**  
2315 Bloor St. W. 416-767-1315  
[bloomrestaurant.com](http://bloomrestaurant.com) (full schedule)  
All shows 7pm 19+. Call for reservations.

• **Burdock**  
1184 Bloor St. W. 416-546-4033  
[burdockto.com](http://burdockto.com)  
Ticket prices vary by show, but typically \$10-\$20; check website for individual show prices.

• **Cameron House**  
408 Queen St. W. 416-703-0811  
[thecameron.com](http://thecameron.com)

• **Castro's Lounge**  
2116 Queen St. E. 416-699-8272  
[castrolounge.com](http://castrolounge.com) (full schedule)  
All shows: No cover/PWYC

• **C'est What**  
67 Front St. E. (416) 867-9499  
[cestwhat.com](http://cestwhat.com) (full schedule)  
All concerts are PWYC unless otherwise noted.

• **Emmet Ray, The**

924 College St. 416-792-4497  
[theemmetray.com](http://theemmetray.com) (full schedule)  
All shows: No cover/PWYC

• **Grossman's Tavern**  
379 Spadina Ave. 416-977-7000  
[grossmantavern.com](http://grossmantavern.com) (full schedule)  
All shows: No cover (unless otherwise noted).

• **Hirut Cafe and Restaurant**  
2050 Danforth Ave. 416-551-7560 [hirut.ca](http://hirut.ca)

• **Home Smith Bar – See Old Mill, The**

• **Jazz Bistro, The**  
251 Victoria St. 416-363-5299  
[jazzbistro.ca](http://jazzbistro.ca) (full schedule)

• **Jazz Room, The**  
Located in the Huether Hotel, 59 King St. N., Waterloo. 226-476-1565  
[kwjazzroom.com](http://kwjazzroom.com) (full schedule)  
Attendees must be 19+. Cover charge varies (generally \$12-\$25)

• **Lula Lounge**  
1585 Dundas St. W. 416-588-0307  
[lula.ca](http://lula.ca) (full schedule)

• **Manhattans Pizza Bistro & Music Club**  
951 Gordon St., Guelph 519-767-2440  
[manhattans.ca](http://manhattans.ca) (full schedule)

• **Mezzetta Restaurant**  
681 St. Clair Ave. W. 416-658-5687  
[mezzetrestaurant.com](http://mezzetrestaurant.com) (full schedule)

• **Monarch Tavern**  
12 Clinton St. 416-531-5833  
[themonarchtavern.com](http://themonarchtavern.com) (full schedule)

• **Nawlins Jazz Bar & Dining**  
299 King St. W. 416-595-1958  
[nawlins.ca](http://nawlins.ca)  
All shows: No cover/PWYC.

• **Nice Bistro, The**  
117 Brock St. N., Whitby. 905-668-8839  
[nicebistro.com](http://nicebistro.com) (full schedule)  
Live jazz and dinner, \$45.00 per person. Dinner from 6pm and music from 7pm to 9pm.

• **Old Mill, The**  
21 Old Mill Rd. 416-236-2641  
[oldmilltoronto.com](http://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](http://theonlycafe.com) (full schedule)

• **Pilot Tavern, The**  
22 Cumberland Ave. 416-923-5716  
[thepilot.ca](http://thepilot.ca)  
All shows: 2:30pm. No cover.

• **Poetry Jazz Café**  
224 Augusta Ave. 416-599-5299  
[poetryjazzcafe.com](http://poetryjazzcafe.com) (full schedule)

• **Reposado Bar & Lounge**  
136 Ossington Ave. 416-532-6474  
[repsadobar.com](http://repsadobar.com) (full schedule)

• **Reservoir Lounge, The**  
52 Wellington St. E. 416-955-0887  
[reservoirloounge.com](http://reservoirloounge.com) (full schedule).

• **Revolucion, La**  
2848 Dundas St. W. (416) 766-0746  
[larevto.com](http://larevto.com) (full schedule)

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

• **Salty Dog Bar & Grill, The**  
1980 Queen St. E. 416-849-5064  
[thesaltydog.ca](http://thesaltydog.ca) (full schedule)

• **Sauce on Danforth**  
1376 Danforth Ave. 647-748-1376  
[sauceondanforth.com](http://sauceondanforth.com)  
All shows: No cover.

• **The Senator Winebar**  
249 Victoria St 416 364-7517  
[thesenator.com](http://thesenator.com) (full schedule)

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



# the WholeNote LISTINGS

**Event listings in *The WholeNote* are free to all eligible music presenters.**

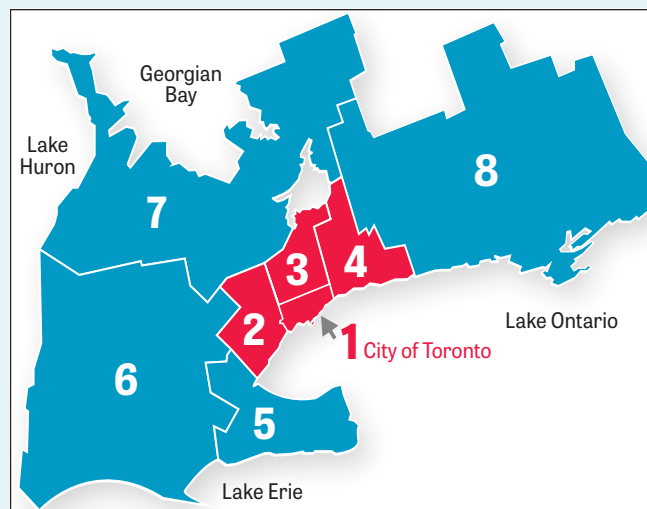
Under ordinary circumstances the listings in the magazine are arranged in five sections: **GTA** and **BEYOND GTA** (concerts); **MUSIC THEATRE**; **CLUBS**; and what we call our **ETCETERAS**, (all kinds of date-related musical events that don't fit the other 4 sections).

But these are not ordinary circumstances. So right now **ETCETERAS** are all you will find here, mostly in the area of online and livestreamed concerts, fundraisers, masterclasses, etcetera. These are being updated online on a weekly basis, so our web listings are the place to be to keep up with online events as well as live listings as they start to come back, and new seasons as an when they are announced.

Most of our online listings can be searched in various ways – by date ranges, types of music and geographic zones (see map to the right). These expanded **ETCETERAS** are still a work in progress!

Visit [thewholenote.com/justask](http://thewholenote.com/justask) for performance listings, and [thewholenote.com/etcetera](http://thewholenote.com/etcetera) for online activity.

All further inquiries should be addressed to our listings editor John Sharpe at [listings@thewholenote.com](mailto:listings@thewholenote.com) or 416-323-2232 x27. **(Please note we do not take listings information over the phone.)**



## HOW TO LIST:

Send event information

- a) by using the convenient online form at [thewholenote.com/applylistings](http://thewholenote.com/applylistings)
- b) by email to our listings editor, John Sharpe at [listings@thewholenote.com](mailto:listings@thewholenote.com)

## DEADLINES:

Listings for an upcoming print issue need to be submitted by the listings deadline stated in the **Dates and Deadlines** at the foot of page 7 of every issue. For the coming issue (covering September 1 to October 7), the deadline is August 15. Listings received after deadline will be posted to the online listings as soon as feasible.

Listings may also be submitted in advance for an entire concert season. Inquire to [listings@thewholenote.com](mailto:listings@thewholenote.com)

thewholenote.com/etcetera

**Livestreaming, Zooming,  
Facebook Live?**

**Online concerts, fundraisers,  
workshops, masterclasses?**

**Share your details so we can publish them!**

**ETCETERAS** are musical events other than live performances. *In this issue, all events submitted for listing fall into the realm of online and/or live-streamed activity.* Excuse all the links! for interactive browsing visit [thewholenote.com/liveonline](http://thewholenote.com/liveonline)

**NOTE: All times are Eastern Time unless otherwise noted.**

● **Arts@Home.** A hub connecting Torontonians to arts and culture. Designed to strengthen personal and societal resilience through the arts. Features resources for educators and people of all ages in Art, Dance, Music, Theatre, Media, and more. Subsections include Film and Photography, as well as offerings from Indigenous arts organizations. All tools and activities are free of charge. Created and curated by Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada's National Ballet School, Harbourfront Centre, the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, Prologue for the Performing Arts, RCM, To Live, the TSO, and Young People's Theatre, with City of Toronto support, in consultation with arts educators from various school boards. Visit [artsathome.ca](http://artsathome.ca).

● **Array Ensemble.** *Living Room Talk #8: Composer Germaine Liu.* A discussion with composer/performer Germaine Liu about her works commissioned by Arraymusic, *See* (2020) and *Draw* (2020), along with videos of The Array Ensemble performing their world premieres at our *Four New Works* concert January 25th, 2020 -- David Schotzko and Rick Sacks, percussion; Sheila Jaffe, violin; and Lydia Munchinsky, cello on *See*; and David Schotzko, percussion, Lydia Munchinsky, cell, and Germaine Liu, drawing, on *Draw*. To check out Arraymusic's complete offerings in June with artist bios, program notes, and more, visit [www.arraymusic.ca](http://www.arraymusic.ca).

● **Kevin Barrett.** *Live from Lockdown. Every Friday.* A live-streamed set of solo guitar tunes, directly from lockdown in his studio in Kensington Market, Toronto, timed for West Coast late lunch (1pm PDT), Toronto/Ottawa/ NYC late afternoon (4pm EDT), and 9pm in Edinburgh and the UK!. Special requests and dedications, birthday shout-outs, and a few opinions. But, mostly, lots of music! Tune in to Kevin's Facebook page on Friday! [facebook.com/kevin.barrett.165470](https://facebook.com/kevin.barrett.165470). If you can't join live, the video will be available afterwards on Kevin's page. And each week's episode is archived on his YouTube channel.

● **Beaches Jazz Festival.** *Starts July 17 at 6pm.* Free streaming from July 17 to 26. In support of the Michael Garron Hospital front line workers. Nine days of incredible free virtual performances, workshops, lectures and more. Grab your favourite drink and festival snack and get ready, ... all from the comfort of your own home! Streamed online on our website [beachesjazz.com](http://beachesjazz.com), YouTube, Facebook Live and IGTV. For more information: [info@beachesjazz.com](mailto:info@beachesjazz.com)

● **Canadian Brass:** welcomes friends around their virtual fireplace for learning and laughs. All events take place on [facebook.com/canadianbrass](https://facebook.com/canadianbrass)

● **Canadian Opera Company #Opera at Home** is an initiative to share one clip **every day** at 11am on social media channels to help bring opera to our audiences during this challenging time. There are already 44 of these for viewing, so you might have some catching up to do! Find the link on their homepage [coc.ca](http://coc.ca)

● **Canadian Opera Company.** *Opera Makers:*

*Activities for Young Creatives.* A new video series teaching a wide range of creative skills. Each week, a new video tutorial led by a leading teaching artists will focus on a different aspect of opera production, with topics ranging from singing and composing to movement and set design. Hands-on experience to develop skills invaluable on and off the stage. Registration not required; parents/guardians can sign up to receive these FREE mini-tutorials straight in their inbox by visiting [coc.ca/OperaMakers](http://coc.ca/OperaMakers). **Upcoming:** July 2 - Brain & Body Boost; July 8 - Aria Mad Libs

● **Canadian Opera Company.** *Songs of Hope: From Our Homes to Yours.* **July 9 at 7:30pm.** Building on the historical tradition of at-home salon concerts, the young artists of the COC Ensemble Studio invite you into their homes to share a personally selected piece that we hope will bring you all a bit of solace and cheer. Available to view online at [coc.ca/SongsOfHope](http://coc.ca/SongsOfHope). Sign up there to have concert information delivered straight to your inbox, as well as performance reminders. For an overview of COC digital programming and initiatives, visit the COC Digital Content Hub at [coc.ca/Hub](http://coc.ca/Hub)

● **Dr. Jelena Cingara.** *Online Piano Recital.* **July 4 at 7:30pm.** Mussorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition for solo piano and works by Dora Pejačević. Streamed on [facebook.com/events/872418063262440/](https://facebook.com/events/872418063262440/). For info: 908-992-9211. Single ticket price \$15 at [eventbrite.com/myevent?eid=108496435760](https://eventbrite.com/myevent?eid=108496435760)

● **Classical Jukebox** Founded as a response to the days of COVID-19 social separation, this site enables you to sing and perform your favourite classical pieces from the comfort of your own home, with accompaniments by organ and piano accompanist, Matthew Larkin. In addition, Classical Jukebox offers another service - assisting with the creation of Virtual Choirs and virtual choir videos for those missing that collaborative and artistic outlet in their lives. [Classicaljukebox.ca](http://Classicaljukebox.ca)

● **Collingwood Summer Music Festival.** *Virtual Concerts.* Artistic Director Daniel Vnurowski is running a series of FREE virtual concerts throughout the summer months. For information: 705-300-2405 or [collingwoodfestival.com](http://collingwoodfestival.com). Visit [ePianist.com](http://ePianist.com) for information about the virtual concerts.

● **Dr. Mike Daley.** *Legends of Vocal Jazz.* **Starting June 15 at 9am.** Live, streamed lecture series. **June 29** - Billie Holiday, **July 13** - Ella Fitzgerald. [eventbrite.ca/e/the-legends-of-vocal-jazz-tickets-105995976820](https://eventbrite.ca/e/the-legends-of-vocal-jazz-tickets-105995976820)

● **Esprit Orchestra.** *Soundbites Series.* Glances into selected excerpts from compositions Esprit has performed in recent seasons, selected by the composers themselves, who also, in the associated Soundbite Insights links, provide brief personal commentaries on how the music was inspired and created, why the music is meaningful to them and what effect it is intended to have on the listener. Soundbites and Soundbite Insights can provide you a way for deeper appreciation of pieces you've heard at our concerts or with a new musical adventure!

[espritorchestra.com/media/soundbites](http://espritorchestra.com/media/soundbites)

● **Harbourfront Centre.** *Summer Music in the Garden at Home.* **Starts July 5, every Sunday at 4pm and Thursday at 7pm.** Just as our gardens come to life again, so too does the music of Toronto. Harbourfront Centre's Summer Music in the Garden series goes virtual, bringing the Toronto Music Garden right to your home. Featuring artists from Ontario, Quebec and around the world. Music by Bach, Ravel, Borodin and Telemann are accompanied by meditative raags and ancient lute techniques. Sign up for reminders at [harbourfront.live](http://harbourfront.live) to remain up to date on concerts and even a few surprises. For information 905-973-4000. Website: [harbourfront.live](http://harbourfront.live)

● **International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation.** *IF 2020.* **Aug 8 at 8pm.** An all-night, online celebration of improvisational arts that will feature video performances from 150+ artists from 15+ countries. This 24-hour festival is free to attend and will feature a dynamic array of improvisational artists, including musicians, spoken word poets, dancers, and theatre practitioners. [improvfest.ca](http://improvfest.ca)

● **International Resource Centre for Performing Artists.** *Conversation with Jazz Icon Sheila Jordan and Ori Dagan.* **July 15 at 3pm.** Sheila Jordan is a legendary figure in jazz history--an NEA jazz master and critically acclaimed singer-songwriter. She has recorded as a session musician with an array of critically acclaimed artists in addition to recording her own albums. Jordan pioneered a bebop and scat jazz singing style with an upright bass as the only accompaniment. Charlie Parker often introduced Jordan as "the singer with the million dollar ears." Zoom in free with RSVP or questions to [info@ircpa.net](mailto:info@ircpa.net).

● **Istituto Italiano di Cultura.** *So Long, Toronto: Musical Soundbites.* A series of musical presentations by Luca Dell'Anna, piano; Mirko Signorile, piano; Claudio Jr. De Rosa, sax; and Redi Hasa, cello. Due to the restrictions in place, future plans for a return performance in Toronto had to be cancelled. Their time in Toronto was incredibly special, and so, they have each agreed to present a live, online concert, as an homage and a thank you to our city. Luca Dell'Anna - **July 2.** Visit the Istituto Italiano di Cultura website for more information.

● **Kingston Symphony.** *Finale of Beethoven's Third Symphony (Eroica).* Forty members of the orchestra perform the finale of the Eroica, Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 while in isolation in their homes. To view the virtual performance, please click on [youtube.com/watch?v=F2eVauBqIAY](https://youtube.com/watch?v=F2eVauBqIAY). For more information to the Kingston Symphony, please visit [kingstonsymphony.ca](http://kingstonsymphony.ca).

● **Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony** *Friday Night with the KWS.* Online broadcasts of archival concerts every **Friday at 8pm.** Select broadcasts will feature video and others will be audio-only. Content for each concert will be announced each week via KWS social media platforms. [facebook.com/kwsymphony](https://facebook.com/kwsymphony) and [youtube.com/user/kwsymphony/videos](https://youtube.com/user/kwsymphony/videos).

● **Koerner Hall CONCERTS FROM HOME** There are more than 25 classical, jazz, and roots music concerts currently available online. [rcmusic.com/performance/live-from-koerner-hall-concert-livestream](http://rcmusic.com/performance/live-from-koerner-hall-concert-livestream)

● **Danny Michel.** *Live From Lockdown* Sundays. A weekly live, interactive online concert on **Sundays at 3pm**, on ZOOM from his studio in the woods. Unlike Facebook live, fans can see each other, interact, chat, play along & be a part of the show. Buy a ticket for \$7.00, get a private link in your email and join the party on Zoom (free download available) [dannymichel.com](http://dannymichel.com)

● **Music Gallery at Home.** *Summer Reruns* featuring Bandcamp watch-parties on **Fridays at 7pm** and talks on **Mondays at 7pm.**

● **July 13 - Future of Creative Music Toronto** (X Avant Festival 2019). Moderated by David Dacks, with Michael Rancic (NOW Magazine), Jessica Cho aka Korea Town Acid, Amanda Smith (FAWN Chamber Creative) and Rich Brown (Rinsethealgorithm, Jazzcast.ca).

● **Aug 7 - Bandcamp Watch Party: SlowPitch-Sound** (MG Remixed, 2016) + co-presented with IF: Improvisation Festival.

● **Aug 10 - Forward Together** (X Avant Festival 2019). Moderated by Del Cowie, with Cheryl Duval (Thin Edge New Music Collective), Ange Loft (YAMANTAKA // SONIC TITAN), Chelsea McBride (Socialist Night School) and Keysha Freshh (The Sorority).

● All performances and talks will be streamed live via the Music Gallery Facebook Page and via : [musicgallery.org/live/](https://musicgallery.org/live/)

● **New Music Concerts.** *NMC Media Archives.* Available now. A NMC performance on Apr 12, 1987, of Igor Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat* (*The Soldier's Tale*) at the Premiere Dance Theatre with renowned puppeteer Bill Baird's marionettes. Max Ferguson, narrator; Bill Baird's Marionettes directed by Peter Baird; Stanley McCartney, clarinet; Peter Lutek, bassoon; James Spragg, cornet; Robert Aitken, conductor. Follow along with the score at [youtu.be/JgSGT036zUs](https://youtu.be/JgSGT036zUs) and visit [vimeo.com/430082565](https://vimeo.com/430082565) for the video.

● **Opera Revue.** *Isolation Series.* Comic operatic duo Danie Friesen and Claire Harris film and record operatic parodies as well as legit opera and art song for a weekly release. This week features a long distance collaboration with two singers in Glasgow, Scotland. Platforms: Facebook/YouTube. Join us **every Saturday**. For info: [operarevue@gmail.com](mailto:operarevue@gmail.com)

● **Orchestre Métropolitain.** *Live stream of Beethoven Symphonies Nos. 1-8.* On the websites of Orchestre Métropolitain and Bourgeois Hall over the course of the summer of 2020. [orchestremetropolitain.com/en/](https://orchestremetropolitain.com/en/) and [mbam.qc.ca/en/bourgeois-hall-news/](https://mbam.qc.ca/en/bourgeois-hall-news/)

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

● **Project: Humanity.** *Online Benefit Concert with Linda McRae, Singer-Songwriter.* **July 1 at 8:00pm.** Benefit COVID-19 Artist Partnership Program (CAPP). Visit [lindamcrae.com/tour](http://lindamcrae.com/tour) to reserve your free ticket.

● **Recollectiv:** Currently holding on-line meetings. A unique musical group made up of people affected by memory challenges caused by illness (such as dementia) or brain injury (stroke, PTSD, etc.) and their care partners. Volunteers of all ages also form part of the band, making this a positive intergenerational experience for all. Participation is free



with pre-registration. Contact [info@recollectiv.ca](mailto:info@recollectiv.ca) for meeting times, information and registration. [recollectiv.ca](http://recollectiv.ca)

● **Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts. a-P-art {of}** performance series, every Thursday at 7:30pm on [facebook.com/RHCPA](https://www.facebook.com/RHCPA)

● **Suite Melody Care:** virtual performances created for hospital patients and elderly in Canada and the United States to bring them some joy through music during these challenging times, in the safety and comfort of their own rooms and with their own personal devices. The first of these performance videos is available at [youtu.be/UEg4YsVVHdk](https://youtu.be/UEg4YsVVHdk) [suite melodycare.com](http://suite melodycare.com)

● **Tafelmusik. Tafel Talks: Musicians & Physicians. June 23 at 7 PM.** Online panel discussion and Q&A with Emi Ferguson, Kensho Watanabe, and Dr. Jennifer Wilson, moderated by Meghan Moore. Exploring the parallels between two professions that demand intensive training, continual improvement and reassessment, and a high level of precision. Moderator Meghan Moore will join three panelists with personal experience in both fields to discuss the overlap of skills, talent, and aptitude required to practise music and medicine professionally. Tickets are \$5 and are now on sale at [tafelmusik.org](http://tafelmusik.org)

● **TD Niagara Jazz Festival. The Virtually Possible Festival. May 19-July 18.** Featuring nine virtual, captivating, Big Easy-centric "Sessions" (curated and hosted by musician and New Orleans resident Christopher Butcher of "Heavy Weights Brass Band") that will explore the art, history, food, famous locations and especially the music of New Orleans – sort of a "Mardi Gras 101" that will culminate in the TDNJ's Mardi Gras event itself on July 18! For the latest information please click on [niagarajazzfestival.com/niagarasummermardi-gras/](http://niagarajazzfestival.com/niagarasummermardi-gras/). To access the exclusive "Mardi Gras Sessions" hosted by Christopher Butcher, visit [niagarajazzfestival.com/mardigras-sessions](http://niagarajazzfestival.com/mardigras-sessions)

● **Temple Sinai. Musical Mondays. June 29 at 2:00 p.m.** Hosted by David Eisner. Musical and artistic creativity have been integral parts of the Temple Sinai experience since the beginning. This series gives our members an opportunity to meet some of the folks who have contributed and will contribute to this tradition. Join us on June 29 for an interview with our member, guitarist and vocalist Danny Marks. For more information visit us online at [templesinai.net](http://templesinai.net) or email [programs@templesinai.net](mailto:programs@templesinai.net) or call the Temple Office at 416-487-4161.

● **Toronto Concert Orchestra. Symphony in Your Garden.** All concerts at 7:30pm. Visit [torontoconcertorchestra.com](http://torontoconcertorchestra.com). We round out the program by taking a trip down memory lane as we recall some of our most memorable "O Canada" performances: **July 14 - Stories of Piaf; July 28 - Around the World in 40 Minutes; Aug 11 - Songs Under the Stars; Aug 25 - Grand Finale: Tribute to Kerry [Stratton].**

● **Toronto Consort. Explorer: Discovering the World of Early Music.** Explorer is a blog for the curious; a place of learning, sharing, and community, presenting an assortment of curated content in a range of formats, like original short- or long-form articles, original video and audio recordings, and educational content on relevant topics relating to Early Music, history, and world music, as they

relate our beloved repertoire. Visit [torontoconsort.org](http://torontoconsort.org) for further information.

● **Toronto Operetta Theatre. Video Series: The Gypsy Baron.** We miss your presence in the theatre and we want to be back there as soon as possible. While we wait for such time, we have prepared memorable stage moments from our archival records. Starting with excerpts from Johann Strauss's THE GYPSY BARON (Performed at St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts in Dec 2019/Jan 2020). Visit [here](http://here) to play this excerpt. More will come in a few weeks – stay tuned!

● **Toronto Summer Music** announces its first-ever online festival! Save the dates: **July 16 – August 1 2020.** Since the announcement that we had to cancel our in-person Beethoven Unleashed Festival, we have been

working diligently to create a new digital Festival during this unique summer. A fabulous lineup of artists and concerts, all in high-quality audio and video – from emerging artists to international stars, Kids Concerts to multidisciplinary productions – there will be something for everyone! Full details in early July. Stay tuned by visiting [torontosummermusic.com](http://torontosummermusic.com).

● **Toronto Symphony Orchestra:** The TSO Facebook page hosts a regular series on Facebook Live on Tuesday and Friday afternoons called #TSOatHome. The TSO can also be found on Instagram ([torontosymphony](https://www.instagram.com/torontosymphony)), on Twitter ([@TorontoSymphony](https://twitter.com/TorontoSymphony)), and YouTube [youtube.com/user/TorontoSymphony](https://www.youtube.com/user/TorontoSymphony). Orchestra members are also represented on Facebook and other

platforms. They share content on Facebook (TSO Musicians), Instagram ([tsumusicians](https://www.instagram.com/tsumusicians)) and Twitter ([@TSOmusicians](https://twitter.com/TSOmusicians)). The TSO has also partnered with *The Toronto Star* for a collection of "Musical Moments" on Thursdays. [thestar.com/musicalmoments](http://thestar.com/musicalmoments)

● **URGNT Live** This ad hoc crowd-funded livestream concert series was created in response to the covid-19 outbreak. You can pay a cover charge which will contribute to paying a nominal fee to all involved parties, and help with lost gigs and wages as a result of the quarantine. Presenting a wide range of performances, including, on May 8, a 10-show, one day festival that includes the Gryphon Trio, and Stewart Goodyear [urgnt.ca](http://urgnt.ca)

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**THE OAKVILLE SYMPHONY** has begun the search for a Music Director/Conductor, to begin at the start of the 2022-23 season. Four candidates will be chosen to audition during the 2021-22 season and the successful one will be announced at the end of that season. The job posting can be viewed on the Orchestra's Canada Job Posting Site at Job Board

–Orchestras Canada/Orchestres Canada or at the Oakville Symphony's Website at Music Director job posting | Oakville Symphony

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# Editor's Corner

DAVID OLDS



It's just about a year since I retired from New Music Concerts after two decades as general manager, but I can't seem to get away from the (great) memories. At the invitation of artistic director Robert Aitken, the 2000/2001 season began with the **Caput Ensemble** of Iceland, a country that had previously captured my imagination and sparked dreams of travel. Although it

would be more than a decade before I would experience the magic isle in person, this was my first exposure to the wonderful people and culture of the fabled land. It created an impression that stuck with me and was confirmed in 2012 during a two-week visit to Iceland with Bob Aitken, his wife Marion and my wife Sharon. As a result of his career as a flute soloist and chamber musician it was Bob's 16th trip there. He seemed to know everyone in the country and we were made to feel almost like family.

It was truly a trip of a lifetime for me, and one I realize I have mentioned again and again in this column. My excuse this time is a new **Caput** recording, **Atonement**, featuring music by **Páll Ragnar Pálsson** (**Sono Luminus DSL-92241 sonoluminus.com**). Pálsson, who began as a rock musician, changed his focus in his late 20s. After undergraduate work at the Iceland Academy of Arts he went on to a master's degree at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre where he studied with Helena Tulve (one of many international composers I had the pleasure of meeting during my tenure at NMC). It was there that Pálsson met his future wife, soprano Tui Hirv, whose voice is featured extensively on this disc.

The title track is a setting of a poem by fellow Icelander Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir for soprano, flute, piano, violin, viola and cello. The quiet, eerie instrumentation and the poem's final stanza – "Coming to terms with a new world, finally the moment you were waiting for" – aptly sets the stage for what is to come. The second piece *Lucidity* is an abstract work that adds clarinet and percussion to the mix (without soprano or viola). Hirv returns for *Stalker's Monologue*, from Andrei Tarkovsky's classic film *Stalker*, set for the whole ensemble (all of the above plus harp). A multilinguist and musicologist in addition to her exquisite vocal skills, Hirv provided the English translation of Tarkovsky's Russian text that appears in the booklet. *Midsummer's Night*, another poem by Gunnarsdóttir, is set for just flute, clarinet, harp and percussion with recitation by the author. Incidentally, I find myself writing this column on Midsummer's Eve, June 23. Both of Gunnarsdóttir's poems are in English. The disc culminates in *Wheel Crosses Under Moss* with a text assembled from various Swedish hymns from Vormsi Island in West Estonia. Featuring the "Pierrot" core of the ensemble in support of the guest soprano, it draws this striking portrait of the first Icelander to win the International Rostrum of Composers to a quietly dramatic close.

It has been 20 years since I first heard, and met, the members of Caput. There has been a complete change in personnel during that time with the exception of founding clarinetist Guðni Franzson who now serves as the group's conductor. Two things that haven't changed are Caput's commitment to contemporary Icelandic composers and its skill in bringing their music to life.

It seems that I'm not the only one. **Sono Luminus** CEO Collin J. Rae is also enamoured of Iceland's music and that small Virginia-based label has become a major promoter of Nordic culture under his stewardship. Hot on the heels of *Atonement* comes **STARA**, a portrait of another, younger Icelandic composer **Halldór Smárason** (**DSL-92242 sonoluminus.com/store/stara**) featuring the **Siggi String Quartet** and



**Friends**. Smárason, was born in Ísafjörður, Westfjords in the northwestern part of Iceland in 1989. He completed an Advanced Level Piano Examination in 2009, a B.A. degree in composition from the Iceland University of the Arts in 2012 and an M.M. degree from the Manhattan School of Music in 2014. Smárason has received the Artists' Salaries four times, a state-funded support

for selected Icelandic artists.

Founded in 2012, the members of **Siggi String Quartet** have worked with Björk, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Ensemble Modern, Atli Heimir Sveinsson, Caput, Slátur, Bedroom Community and Errata Collective as well as being key players of the Reykjavík Chamber and Iceland Symphony Orchestras.

The disc includes three string quartets, two mixed chamber works and *Skúptúr 1* for solo guitar and electronics performed by Gulli Björnsson. The quartet *Stara*, the earliest work on the disc, dates from 2012 during Smárason's American studies, where it won the Manhattan Prize. *draw + play*, the second quartet, heard first on the disc, was commissioned by the Siggi quartet. It is inspired by the accordion and the title is extracted from an old Icelandic word for the instrument. I find it intriguing how the composer uses the string instruments to replicate the sounds of distinctive extended contemporary accordion techniques. *BLAKTA*, the third quartet, is the most recent piece on the album. It was commissioned to celebrate Iceland's 100 years as a sovereign state and depicts a flag fluttering in various weather conditions, characterized by distinctive vibratos of different speed and density. Very atmospheric.

For the mixed ensemble works *stop breathing* and the intriguingly titled *\_a\_at\_na* the quartet enlists the help of "Friends" Emília Rós Sigfúsdóttir (bass flute), Geirprúður Ása Guðjónsdóttir (violin), Helga Björg Arnardóttir (clarinet) and Tinna Thorsteinsdóttir (piano), as required. The latter piece is based on the composer's personal struggle with anxiety, and the title is a puzzle requiring the Icelandic word for anxiety to solve. Even the stage setup is affected by this very personal subject, with the piano isolated in the middle of the audience and the rest of the performers spread around the periphery. Evidently this can be heard in the fully immersive audio version of the album on the Pure Audio Blu-ray™ disc that accompanies the standard CD, although it is not available on the digital files from which I am working. Regardless of that, the angst certainly comes through convincingly, completing a very personal portrait of an important new voice.

It was in April 2003 that I had another "brush with greatness" thanks to New Music Concerts when **George Crumb** and his family came to Toronto to work with our musicians. Crumb had been an important part of the NMC family from the very early days to the extent that four of his pieces were included on an extended European tour in 1976. The first Crumb portrait concert had taken place at Walter Hall in 1974, with another at Premiere Dance Theatre in 1986 that included the premiere of *An Idyll for the Misbegotten*, dedicated to Robert Aitken, and then another at Glenn Gould Studio in 2003 as mentioned above. On that occasion Teri Dunn was featured in *Federico's Little Songs for Children* and daughter Ann Crumb sang the recently completed cycle *Unto the Hills*. Crumb was 74 at the time and he showed no signs of slowing down creatively.

It seems that is still true and the latest **Bridge Records** release **George Crumb Vol.19** is testament to this (**bridgerecords.com**). On it **Marcantonio Barone** performs *Metamorphoses (Book I)* (2015-2017) subtitled "Ten Fantasy-Pieces (after celebrated paintings)" for amplified





piano. Amplification has often been an important aspect to Crumb's instrumentation – the flute in *An Idyll for the Misbegotten*, the string quartet in *Black Angels*, and in almost his entire extensive piano repertoire. In most cases this is not to make the music loud, but rather to make the quietest subtleties of harmonics and extended techniques audible.

The pianist is required not only to play upon the keyboard, but to venture inside the piano to pluck and strum and dampen strings, use fists, brushes, yarn sticks and other materials to caress and strike various wire, wood and metal surfaces, vocalize and employ a variety of small, mostly percussion, instruments to expand the solo piano into a real orchestra of timbre.

Highlights of the set for me include *Goldfish* (Paul Klee, 1925) with its echoes of Debussy's *Poissons d'or* and sustain-pedal, open-string resonance, *Crows over the Wheatfield* (Vincent van Gogh, 1890) with eerie cawing from the pianist, *The Fiddler* (Marc Chagall, 1912/13) with zither-like string strumming and dancing melodies, *Contes barbares* (Paul Gauguin, 1902) featuring Tahitian incantations and percussive outbursts, and *The Persistence of Memory* (Salvador Dalí, 1931) with nods to some of Crumb's favourite pieces, Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto*, Beethoven's *Op.110* and the iconic hymn *Amazing Grace*. There are many references to Crumb's earlier compositions and in many ways these new works sound familiar. One sometimes wonders "Why does Grandpa keep telling the same stories?" but listen carefully; you'll find vast new worlds buried within them.

Although *Book I* is dedicated to Margaret Leng Tan, Crumb was evidently so taken with Barone's performance that he is the dedicatee of *Book II*, completed earlier this year, the composer's 91st. So, still not slowing down! I look forward to hearing the sequel and to future Bridge releases documenting the ongoing legacy of this great American composer.



#### IN BRIEF

Another *Metamorphosis* crossed my desk this month featuring 2004 Banff International String Quartet Competition laureates the **Jupiter Quartet** (Marquis Classics **MAR499** [marquisclassics.com](http://marquisclassics.com)). The disc, which will be released on August 7, honours the 250th anniversary of **Beethoven's** birth with his *String Quartet*

*Op.131 in C-sharp Minor*, a work that violist Liz Freivogel describes as one that "quartet musicians picture [as] their ideal chamber music experience [...] There are few other works that require such a

prolonged and intense communion with one another." She goes on to say that Jupiter "naïvely" tried to learn the work in their first year together with limited success, but now, almost two decades later, feel they understand "a few more of the elements that make it so powerful." This performance is a fully mature one that convincingly captures the depth and breadth of Beethoven's masterpiece. Jupiter has paired it with one of the seminal quartets of the second half of the 20th century, **Ligeti's** *Quartet No.1 "Métamorphoses nocturnes."* Completed in 1954, the work is reminiscent of the quartets of Bartók and looks backward as much as forward while remaining rooted in the abrasive textures of the recent avant-garde, before metamorphosing to a "melancholy and lonely close."



Once again the quartet excels, confirming not only its command of the literature in all its intricacies, but also its creativity when it comes to programming.

What to say about yet another recording of the *Bach Cello Suites*? Literally, my shelf runneth over, so it is actually a blessing to be working from digital files during the COVID crisis. But I do welcome this latest addition to the **PentaTone** catalogue, **Bach Weilerstein** ([pentatonemusic.com/bach-cello-suites-alisa-weilerstein](http://pentatonemusic.com/bach-cello-suites-alisa-weilerstein)) featuring 2011 MacArthur Fellow **Alisa Weilerstein**.

As Jason Stell declares in the program notes, "The Six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello by J. S. Bach loom larger than any other works in the genre. They are the veritable Alpha and Omega of a cellist's art." It is no wonder then that every cellist aspires to "conquer" this summit, but it must also be daunting to try to find a new path where so many have gone before. I'll let Weilerstein explain her decision to undertake this journey:

"With their delicacy and nakedness, their strength and restraint, the cello suites present a unique and humbling challenge. After many years telling family, friends, and myself that I would attempt a recording only when I was much older, I decided that what had seemed like prudence was, in fact, a misunderstanding of the suites' nature. The intrinsic impossibility of this music is the very source of its freedom."

"I have been living with these suites since further back than memory can reach, and I have grown with them throughout my life with the cello. Great music is a reflection of life as it is lived, and this recording is a reflection of myself, in 2019, at 37 years old, steeped in and still discovering Bach's unparalleled accomplishment."

I'm very happy to have been invited to share this monumental undertaking with one of the finest artists of her generation. You should too! **🎻**

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## AND

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What we're listening to this month:

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**Franz Asplmayr: Six Quartets, Op. 2**  
**Eybler Quartet**  
Eybler Quartet continues its mission to bring to light little-known composers of the Classical era with this first recording of the sparkling quartets of Franz Asplmayr.



**Schumann – Waldszenen; Nachtstucke; Humoreske**  
**Zoltán Fejérvári**  
Pianist Zoltán Fejérvári makes his ATMA debut with a recording devoted entirely to the music of Robert Schumann.



**Gli equivoci nel sembiante**  
**Capella Intima, The Gallery Players of Niagara**  
Musica Omnia presents the world premiere recording of this pastoral comedy from 1679, which launched the career of 18-year-old Alessandro Scarlatti. Available for purchase at [www.galleryplayers.ca](http://www.galleryplayers.ca)

# STRINGS ATTACHED

TERRY ROBBINS



The only problem with my reviewing CDs by guitarist **Michael Kolk** is that I keep running out of superlatives, and his latest disc – **20th Century Guitar Sonatas** – presents the same welcome problem ([michaelkolkguitar.com](http://michaelkolkguitar.com)).

There are several connecting themes with the works here. Both the *Sonata para guitarra* from 1933 by the Spanish composer Antonio José (born in 1902 and a victim of

the fascist regime in 1936) and the 1927 *Sonatina* by Cyril Scott (1879–1970) were the only works those composers wrote for guitar. In addition, both works were unknown or lost until their relatively recent publications, the José in 1990 and the Scott in 2002.

This also applies to the 1994 *Sonata in A Minor* by the Austrian composer Ferdinand Rebay (1880–1953), most of whose solo and chamber guitar music has only recently been discovered. The 1967 *Sonata No.1*, the first of three by the Argentinian composer Carlos Guastavino (1912–2000) completes an outstanding recital.

Technically Kolk – as always – seems flawless, but it's the range of tone, colour and dynamics as well as the constant sense of a highly developed musical intelligence and an innate understanding of and feel for form, line and phrase that continually impresses. Beautifully recorded in the Church of Saint Mary Magdalene in Toronto and engineered by Kolk's duo partner Drew Henderson, it's another masterclass in guitar performance.



Violinist **Lara St. John** has always been a bit of a free spirit and not afraid to take risks, so you would be safe in assuming that her latest CD, **Key of A**, featuring Beethoven's *Violin Sonata No.9 in A Major*, "Kreutzer" and the Franck *Violin Sonata in A Major* with pianist **Matt Herskowitz** ([Ancalagon ANC144 larastjohn.com](http://Ancalagon.com)), would be anything but

routine playing.

St. John says she wanted a pianist "free of traditional ideas" for the Franck, and one who would "be able to keep up with the extremes" she envisioned for the Beethoven, tempo and volume-wise. Well, she certainly got her wish with the brilliant Herskowitz. The Beethoven features breathtaking tempos for the two outer movements with a wide dynamic range, St. John using portamento and an almost violent attack at times, with Herskowitz matching her step for step. It's hair-raising stuff.

The Franck features almost decadently Romantic playing, with St. John never afraid to pull things around in the tempestuous second movement, sounding almost improvisatory in the third and never resorting to the usual merely smooth and flowing melodic line in the canonic finale. It's not often that this piece sounds different, but this is risk-taking at its best and most exciting, with tremendous piano work from Herskowitz.

Fritz Kreisler's *Schön Rosmarin* completes a quite startling CD.

The **Eybler Quartet** is back with another superb 2CD set of works by a neglected 18th-century composer, this time **Franz Asplmayr Six Quartets, Op.2**, early works by the Austrian composer who lived from 1728 to 1786 (**Gallery Players of Niagara GPN20001 [galleryplayers.ca/shop/music](http://galleryplayers.ca/shop/music)**).



Although best known for his theatre works, Asplmayr produced 41 symphonies, 70 trios and 43 string quartets, the six four-movement works here – in G, D, F, E, C and E-flat majors – described in Patrick Jordan's erudite and insightful notes as being "wonderfully unique and highly underappreciated." They were published by Huberty in Paris in 1769, although probably written much earlier.

The Eybler players are in top form again, displaying their customary perfect ensemble, faultless intonation and vitality and warmth, with technique to burn. Recorded at the Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto, sound and balance are both ideal in simply delightful performances.

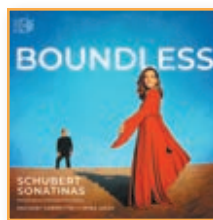


The superb **Duo Concertante** husband-and-wife team of pianist **Timothy Steeves** and violinist **Nancy Dahn** add another stellar CD to their discography with **Franz Schubert Music for Violin and Piano** (**Marquis Classics MAR611 [marquisclassics.com](http://marquisclassics.com)**).

The duo's trademark musical qualities – perfect ensemble, clarity, tone, a fine grasp of phrase and form, and an exquisite sensi-

tivity – are all fully evident in a recital consisting of the *Fantasy in C Major Op.159 D934*, the *Sonata in A Major Op.162 D574* and the *Rondo in B Minor Op.70 D895*. These works are available digitally as well as on CD, while the three *Sonatinas Op.137: No.1 in D Major D384; No.2 in A Minor D385; and No.3 in G Minor D408* are available only from streaming and download services.

In another Glenn Gould Studio recording the sound and balance are ideal, capturing every nuance of Steeves' rich piano and Dahn's expressive and distinctive violin. In the booklet notes the players comment on the vocal quality of Schubert's melodic writing. It's a clear insight into their approach to this recording project, for it's a CD that sings from beginning to end.



The three Schubert *Sonatinas* are also featured on **Boundless – Schubert Sonatinas Performed on historical instruments**, a new **Sono Luminus** CD with another husband and wife team, violinist **Zachary Carrettin** and pianist **Mina Gajić** (**DSL-92240 [sonoluminus.com](http://sonoluminus.com)**). Carrettin plays a rare Franz Kinberg violin with gut strings, set up for late classical and

early-Romantic performance, and uses a late classical John Dodd pre-Tourte bow c.1800. Gajić's piano is an Érard concert grand from 1835.

We're obviously in another sound world here, with less power and different sonority in the piano and less vibrato from the violin, which sounds a bit drier but not necessarily softer. The playing is top-notch technically, with accuracy and agility, but despite the different tonal colours it tends to lack the warmth of the Duo Concertante sound.

It's clearly closer to what Schubert would have heard in his lifetime, though, the performers describing the choices regarding pedalling, chord voicing, balance, articulation and score indications as a fascinating exploration as they sought – successfully, clearly – to pay homage to the original intent as well as to the authentic sounds.



**Impressions – The Rediscovery of Henriëtte Bosmans** ([leahplave.com/media](http://leahplave.com/media)) is the debut album from McGill graduate cellist **Leah Plave**, accompanied by pianist **Dan Sato**.

Bosmans (1895–1952) was a distinguished Dutch pianist and composer who was much admired in her time. As a bisexual Jewish woman her music was banned by the Nazis,

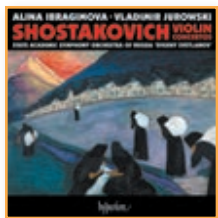


but she kept performing and composing in secret. For many years following her death her music remained virtually unknown, even in the Netherlands.

Plave's CD contains Bosmans' complete works for cello and piano, music that reflects a personal style that mixed German Romanticism with French Impressionism. The 1919 *Cello Sonata* is a four-movement work with a strong, brooding opening movement. The *Trois Impressions* from around 1926 – I. *Cortège*; II. *Nuit Calme*; and III. *En Espagne* – feature a quite lovely middle movement and some dazzling piano writing in *En Espagne* that not only reflects Bosmans' abilities as a pianist but also draws terrific playing from Sato.

Two short pieces – *Chanson* and the lovely *Arietta* – complete the CD. Plave gives effective and committed performances, strongly supported by Sato's fine accompaniment.

Interestingly, all nine tracks appear to be available on YouTube under Top Tracks – Leah Plave.

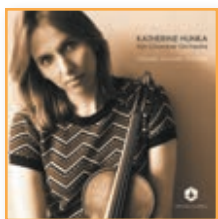


There's another terrific CD of the two **Shostakovich Violin Concertos**, this time with the brilliant and always exciting **Alina Ibragimova** with the **State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Russia 'Evgeny Svetlanov'** under **Vladimir Jurowski (Hyperion CDA68313 hyperion-records.co.uk)**.

The *Concerto No.1 in A Minor Op.77* was written for David Oistrakh in 1947/48, but withheld due to the infamous Zhdanov decree and not premiered until October 1955. It's a four-movement work, with an ethereal, uneasy opening *Nocturne*, a demonic *Scherzo* and a massive central *Passacaglia* leading to the famous, towering solo cadenza. Ibragimova is superb throughout, opting to play the opening theme of the following grim-humoured *Burlesque* on the violin, as originally scored by Shostakovich before he re-scored it for orchestra alone at Oistrakh's request to enable the soloist to at least wipe his brow. It's the first commercial recording thus.

The *Concerto No.2 in C-sharp Minor Op.129* was written in 1967 for Oistrakh's 60th birthday, albeit a year early. There's simply beautiful playing from Ibragimova in the middle movement, and another tough cadenza handled superbly.

Great sound, great balance, dazzling playing and interpretation all add up to an outstanding disc.



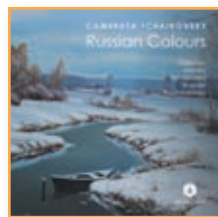
Violinist **Katherine Hunka** is the soloist as well as the director of the **Irish Chamber Orchestra** on a new CD of music for strings by Piazzolla, Schubert and Schnittke (**Orchid Classics ORC100130 orchidclassics.com**).

Leonard Desyatnikov's arrangement of Piazzolla's hauntingly beautiful *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* adds direct quotes

from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* in what is almost a recomposition. The resulting work is extremely effective, drawing sumptuous playing from Hunka that is stylistic, warm and impassioned. The ensemble matches her in a vividly successful re-imagining of Piazzolla's highly personal sound.

Schubert's lovely *Rondo in A Major for Violin and String Orchestra D438* shows clear influence of Mozart's violin concertos. The Schnittke work is *Moz-Art à la Haydn* from 1977, described in the notes as combining "an unfinished fragment by Mozart – his *Pantomime Music K446* – with the theatricality of Haydn's *Farewell Symphony*." The noise of the players changing positions is deliberately audible, complete with heavy footsteps, wailing and crying!

A beautifully idiomatic performance of *Oblivion*, one of Piazzolla's most celebrated and traditional tangos, provides a lovely close to an excellent CD.

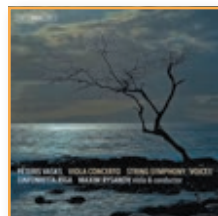


The London-based Russian violist **Yuri Zhislin** is the conductor and arranger as well as the soloist on **Russian Colours**, a CD of music from the Russian Romantic era arranged for string orchestra and featuring his own ensemble, the **Camerata Tchaikovsky (Orchid Classics ORC100136 orchidclassics.com)**.

Zhislin is the fine soloist in his own transcription of Alexander Glazunov's *Concerto in E-flat Major for Alto Saxophone and String Orchestra Op.104* from 1934, a fairly brief four-movement work that doesn't appear to lose anything in the transcription, the warmth of the viola – especially in the middle register – being very close to the saxophone timbre.

Anton Arensky's three-movement *String Quartet No.2 in A Minor Op.35* from 1894 is the other major work, its second movement *Variations on a Theme by Tchaikovsky* proving so popular that Arensky himself arranged it for string orchestra as Op.35a. It's the only track on the CD not arranged by Zhislin.

Three perennial favourites complete a beautifully played and highly enjoyable CD: the *Andante* from Tchaikovsky's *String Quartet No.1* from 1871; Borodin's *Nocturne* from his 1881 *String Quartet No.2*; and Rachmaninoff's 1912 *Vocalise Op.34*.



**Maxim Rysanov** is the viola soloist and also conductor of the **Sinfonietta Riga** on **Viola Concerto/String Symphony 'Voices'** featuring music by the Latvian composer **Pēteris Vasks (BIS 2443-SACD naxosdirect.com)**.

The *Concerto for Viola and String Orchestra* from 2014/15 was dedicated to Rysanov and premiered by him in 2016; the performance here is a world premiere

recording. It's a quite beautiful, highly tonal and deeply emotional work, in which Vasks "returns to two essential concepts: chant and monologue." The opening movement rises to the heights of serenity and despair, with the second movement a joyful – but still minor-key – contrast. Despair seems to be the dominant factor in the final two movements.

The *Symphony for Strings* was written in 1991 as Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania were breaking free from the crumbling Soviet Union. "The new beginning was difficult," says Vasks. Certainly the work reflects that feeling, with tenuous openings to both the first and the fairly hostile middle movement, followed by a quite brutal third movement which eventually dies away to nothing. ●

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



**Is This -Nois -Nois**

Winner of top prizes from the Fischhoff and M-Prize competitions, saxophone quartet -Nois releases its debut album featuring the music of Chicago composers



**Frankenhorn Audrey Ochoa**

Trombonist Audrey Ochoa is a rising star on the Canadian jazz scene – she is decidedly captivating and original, and has dedicated herself to expertise while remaining relevant and light-hearted.

# Keyed In

## Le Rappel des Oiseaux

Luc Beauséjour

Analekta AN 2 8797 ([analekta.com/en](http://analekta.com/en))



► Now here's a real treat: a full course of tastefully chosen Baroque miniatures of the aviary art from a rich trove of 18th-century French harpsichord works by Rameau, Couperin, D'Agincour, Daquin, Dornel, Duphy, Dandrieu and Février. The love of birds would seem to be a Gallic specialty, whether it be imitative (Messiaen reigns supreme in the 20th century) or allegorical;

all are amply stuffed with scrumptious ornaments for your delectation. Hens, cuckoos, nightingales and swallows abound, along with the amorous adventures of the turtle doves.

Luc Beauséjour is well known for his mastery of the Baroque keyboard repertoire and has released over 35 recordings throughout his career. He performs here on a harpsichord from the Montreal atelier of Yves Beaupré, a sweet two-manual instrument modelled after a 1681 design by Vaudry, expertly recorded by Carl Talbot.

Speaking of birds, the quills of this harpsichord are fashioned from the feathers of indigenous Canada geese, which Beauséjour carves himself. It's finger-lickin' good.

Daniel Foley

## Debussy; Rameau

Víkingur Ólafsson

Deutsche Grammophon 4837701 ([deutschegrammophon.com/en](http://deutschegrammophon.com/en))



► Fresh on the heels of last year's array of accolades and honours, the young Icelandic pianist, Víkingur Ólafsson, has just released his third record on the Deutsche Grammophon label. He is known for communicative and colouristic prowess, winning the hearts and ears of many listeners with uncommon interpretations of keyboard music by J.S. Bach and Philip Glass.

For this new album, Ólafsson interweaves short pieces by Jean-Philippe Rameau and Claude Debussy – repertoire written nearly 200 years apart – in a winsome, 28-track presentation that reveals intriguing textural kinships. (Ólafsson considers the two composers “soulmates.”)

This insightful pianist perceives relationships amongst the repertoire on various levels from which components of sonority, texture and polyphony are admirably distilled with interpretive command. The resulting (and likely intended) effect is of partial fusion and mutual application: the impressionist, painterly sonic canvases of Debussy begin to sound like Rameau's elegant, clean-lined character pieces of the High Baroque, and vice versa.

While this curatorial vision is appealing, the disc tends to resemble a recital program rather than a long-playing album. The live concert experience of such repertoire might be more compelling, even revelatory. At the recording's midpoint, the multidimensionality that Ólafsson seeks to convey devolves into two-dimensional space, bereft of varied access points. As we journey from Rameau to Debussy and back again, the programmatic permutations lose their lustre, a case in point for urging the differentiation of genre, i.e. The LP Album ≠ The Recital Program.

Adam Sherkin

## Schumann – Waldszenen; Nachtstücke; Humoreske

Zoltán Fejérvári

ATMA ACD2 2816 ([atmaclassique.com/En](http://atmaclassique.com/En))



► A perfectly considered new album from Hungarian pianist, Zoltán Fejérvári, presents three works by Robert Schumann in reverse chronological order: the *Humoreske*, *Op.20*, the *Nachtstücke Op.23* (both written in 1839) and the later *Waldszenen*, *Op.82* of 1849.

Recorded at Domain Forget's Salle de concert, this all-Schumann record features slightly offbeat choices from the composer's catalogue. But taking the road less travelled has paid off for Fejérvári, as he brings a unique sensibility to Schumann's music and dwells happily in the curious – at times unnerving(!) – realms of these three cycles.

One can, rather fancifully, divide the nine pieces of the *Waldszenen* into two groups: those that depict the natural world (i.e. the life of the forest and its nonhuman inhabitants) and those that do not (i.e. a hunter, an inn and a farewell). Fejérvári delivers a slight heft-of-hand in this playing, rather effective for those *human* narratives that require warmth and tonal weight; the more ephemeral music, (inspired by the woodland itself), urges a defter touch.

The latter two-thirds of the record are filled, quite simply, with beautiful music making. Fejérvári embraces *Opp.23* and *20* with spirited imagination and stylistic aplomb. A personalized probing of material is balanced with refinement of sonic design and the mercurial nature of Schumann's art is coalesced for the listener with a favourably fresh approach that connects hallmark performance practice from the early Romantic piano with that of our present day.

Adam Sherkin

## Janáček – Solo Piano Works

Thomas Adès

Signum Classics SIGCD600 ([naxosdirect.com](http://naxosdirect.com))



► The mighty Thomas Adès has long commanded almost any stage he graces with tireless innovation and a lion's share of good musical sense. Audiences have marvelled at his performative abilities (alongside his compositional skill) since the brink of his career and a recent disc from Signum Classics, featuring Adès in readings of piano music by Leoš Janáček, is no exception.

Janáček is, arguably, the archetypal composer's composer, celebrated for his singular musical voice as both a Slav and cosmopolitan craftsman of the 20th century. The strides made by this innovative Czech composer are inevitably admired today by those musicians and audiences *in the know*.

How fitting, then, for Adès to investigate the cornerstones of such a composer's piano repertoire and present his findings. In many respects, the two men have much in common: they have both sought out an individuality of expression through the musical tools of their own time. As such, their art greets the contemporary listener with an immediacy – recognizable in a way – but with a unique perspective possessing blindingly ingenious modes of construction.

From the first note of this record, comprising the 14 parts of *On an Overgrown Path*, the two-movement sonata *From the Street* and the four-part *In the Mists*, Adès lays bare his discoveries and convictions regarding Janáček's art. Despite the lone harsh-sounding *fortissimo* chord or the odd fuzzy trill, this is recommended listening for any music lover worth their salt. (The cover art too should be noted, certainly inspired by “The Barn Owl Has Not Flown Away!” from Series I of *On an Overgrown Path*.)

Adam Sherkin



**French Piano Rarities**  
**Ralph van Raat**  
**Naxos 8.573894 (naxosdirect.com)**



► This fascinating disc opens with Debussy's shimmering first version (1915) of his *Étude, Pour les arpèges composés*, discovered in 1977 and published as *Étude retrouvée*. His last-known piano piece, *Les Soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon* (1917, discovered in 2001), was an appreciative gift to his dependable wartime coal-supplier. In both substance and mood, it

closely resembles his crepuscular *Prélude No.4*.

In 1944, the 19-year-old Pierre Boulez began studies with Olivier Messiaen. His 27-minute *Prélude, Toccata et Scherzo* from that year, here receiving its first recording, reflects Messiaen's influence with

its gamelan-like percussiveness. The following year, his 12 *Notations*, most lasting under a minute, reveal Boulez newly embracing Webern's succinct serialism, introduced to him by another mentor, René Leibowitz. Boulez's last completed piano work, the four-minute *Une Page d'éphéméride* (2005), filled with abrupt outbursts, was composed as a piece for piano students.

Messiaen himself is represented by four selections. *Morceau de lecture à vue* (1934), written as a sight-reading exercise for his students, would later provide the *Thème d'amour* for his piano-masterpiece, *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*. Birdsongs of several different species saturate *La fauvette passerinette* (1961, discovered in 2012) and two movements for solo piano from Messiaen's monumental orchestral work *Des canyons aux étoiles...* (1974).

The CD ends with Ravel's exquisite, antique-sounding, one-minute-long *Menuet in C-sharp Minor* (1904). Each of these "rarities" merits greater exposure; Dutch pianist Ralph van Raat's richly-coloured performances enhance this disc's eminent recommendability.

**Michael Schulman**

**VOCAL**

**Alessandro Scarlatti – Gli equivoci nel sembiante**  
**Capella Intima; Gallery Players of Niagara; Nota Bene Baroque Players; Bud Roach**  
**Musica Omnia mo0803 (musicaomnia.org)**



► Alessandro Scarlatti's first opera, *Gli equivoci nel sembiante*, was conceived and performed in the dark days of the papacy of Innocent XI. The virtual ban

on secular art meant that the defiance of its composition and its performance, albeit privately, in 1679 must rate as one of the most glorious conceits of the religious censorship of the Baroque era. This extraordinary recording captures the dizzying episodes of mistaken identity with delightfully translucent obfuscation and appropriate comedy.

The shepherd Eurillo and Clori, a nymph

and object of his affection, are engaged in a hilarious, dizzy mix-up with a Eurillo look-alike, Armindo, and Clori's envious younger sister Lisetta. Each is swept up in an inter-linked romantic affair that becomes so awkward that it takes a near-miraculous appearance of all four characters together at once to unknot the whole affair.

Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725), the most celebrated name in Baroque opera, composed more than 60 operas during his life, changing with the times and influencing the genre through significant artistic reform. His brilliant work is brought to life with uncommon vividness by these performers. The vocalists of the Capella Intima embrace the radiance and foibles contained in Domenico Filippo Contini's libretto. The Gallery Players of Niagara and the Nota Bene Baroque Players – playing period and contemporary instruments beautifully – add colourful realism to Scarlatti's exquisite music. Bud Roach adds his masterful direction to bring it all to life.

**Raul da Gama**

**Mozartissimo**  
**Rolando Villazón**  
**Deutsche Grammophon 4837917**  
**(rolandovillazon.com)**



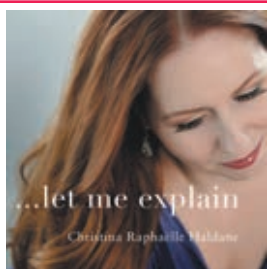
► Mexican lyric tenor Rolando Villazón has justly become world famous while conquering most of the bel canto and even the heavier roles (e.g. Don

Carlo, Werther etc.) and has become the darling of the opera-loving public by teaming up with Anna Netrebko creating a "dream couple" with their youthful and attractive looks, natural compatibility and lovely stage presence. His youthful exuberance, intensity and taking of chances unfortunately led him into trouble and surgery, but he successfully recovered. Now he has turned to Mozart whom he reveres and calls his "most beloved composer and dearest friend."

My first encounter with him in Mozart was a recent recording by DG of *Don Giovanni*,

What we're listening to this month:

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



**Let Me Explain ...**

**Christina Raphaëlle Haldane**  
 Christina's debut album is a collection of Canadian art songs, featuring works by David Jaeger C. M., Carl Philippe Gionet, Samy Moussa and Oscar Peterson.



**Marin Marais: Badinages**  
**Mélisande Corriveau; Eric Milnes**  
 Discover the richness of the bass viol in this new recording entirely devoted to French composer Marin Marais.



**PEP CD Vol. 3**  
**PEP (Piano and Erhu Project)**  
 PEP's 3rd CD with new works by Gabriel Prokofiev, Sergei Prokofiev, Michael Finnissy, Lucas Oickle, Stephen Chatman, Somei Satoh, Gao Ping, Marc Mellits.



**Angelus**  
**John Aylward/ECCE Ensemble**  
 Angelus is a monodrama for voice and ensemble featuring soprano Nina Guo that sets a series of texts that speak to themes of displacement.

which I reviewed in these pages (April 2016), singing Don Ottavio and bringing an erotic Latin sensuality to the part. Since then DG has recorded all seven Mozart operas with him taking the tenor role in most. This new issue contains almost all of Mozart's work for the tenor. A tremendous undertaking.

Villazón begins with the two famous arias from *Don Giovanni* including my favourite *Il mio tesoro intanto*, immediately showing his virtuosity with a voice that triggers varied emotions often within the same aria. What follows are excerpts from *Così fan tutte*, *Abduction from the seraglio*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *La clemenza di Tito* and *Die Zauberflöte* where he takes the role of Papageno, again showing his versatility with this buffo role. All the foregoing are accompanied by the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe conducted with exquisite Mozartian style by Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

A most rewarding disc that should be enjoyed piecemeal, one or two items at a time, to come to you fresh with each listening.

**Janos Gardonyi**

**Sturm und Drang Volume 1**  
**Chiara Skerath; The Mozartists; Ian Page**  
**Signum Classics SIGCD619**  
**(signumrecords.com)**



► The Sturm und Drang movement (often translated as “Storm and Stress”) was a brief moment in post-Baroque art, lasting from the 1760s to the 1780s, characterized by extremes of subjectivity, passion and sentimentality. In some ways this movement anticipated the ideals of Romanticism, using dramatic and turbulent musical ideas to express intensely moody atmospheres, but it was also reactionary and revolutionary against the rococo backdrop of the late Baroque era.

This disc, the first in a seven-volume series exploring the Sturm und Drang movement incorporates iconic compositions from the 1760s by Gluck and Haydn, as well as largely forgotten or neglected works by less familiar names such as Niccolò Jommelli and Franz Ignaz Beck.

Whether the composer and the repertoire are firmly in the contemporary canon or not, these works are clearly connected in style and substance. Beck's *Symphony in G Minor*, for example, has all the characteristic features of an early symphony by Mozart or Haydn, including formal structures, modulatory formulae and thematic development, while Jommelli's opera *Fetonte* is, in retrospect, a decidedly Mozartean effort. It is essential to note, however, that Jommelli was born in 1714, 42 years before Mozart, and it is Jommelli who is credited for advancing opera

seria to a level of freedom and complexity that paved the way for Mozart and his contemporaries.

A universal feature of the Sturm und Drang composers is a juxtaposition of relatively simple melodic and harmonic material with vibrant, aggressive and engaging rhythms. It is paramount that a performer conveys the vitality of these rhythms while still reflecting the chiaroscuro subtleties of the overall work. Fortunately, conductor Ian Page and the Mozartists are enormously capable interpreters and breathe life into these works in a way that sounds both effortless and tremendously satisfying.

**Matthew Whitfield**

**Verdi – Otello**  
**Jonas Kaufmann; Orchestra e Coro dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia; Antonio Pappano**  
**Sony Classical 19439707932**  
**(jonaskaufmann.com)**



► My fondest memory of *Otello* was, as I recall, around 1960, walking in from the street to the Royal Alexandra Theatre to hear Jon Vickers sing the title role!

Seven dollars for the ticket. Those were the good old days...

Now in the 21st century it is world-famous German heldentenor Jonas Kaufmann who steps into a long line of great Otellos: Vickers, Ramon Vinay, Mario del Monaco, Plácido Domingo, José Cura et al. But it took a long period of hesitation and gestation before he decided to attempt this Mount Everest of tenor roles. Much like it took Verdi, who hadn't composed anything for the stage for 15 years, a great deal of agonizing before he was persuaded by a brilliant librettist, Arrigo Boito, and the Shakespearean subject matter, to write again at age 74. The result was an astounding masterwork, unlike anything he had written before.

Kaufmann's first attempt to sing the role was in 2017 at Covent Garden under Antonio Pappano's masterly handling of the score and it was a breakthrough success. Sony Classical decided to make a recording in Rome with the same principals and the famed Santa Cecilia Orchestra and Chorus. This is actually the second “Roman” *Otello*, the first being from 1960 with Vickers, Rysanek and Tito Gobbi, Tullio Serafin conducting.

Kaufmann superbly delivers a role that exhausts all emotions, the power, the passion, the grief, but also lyrical tenderness in *Gioia nella notte dense*, one of the most beautiful love duets ever written. His triumphant entry, the exuberant *Esultate*, is shattering. Italian soprano Federica Lombardi is an ideal Desdemona who “successfully brings off a marvellous musical depiction of wounded

innocence” with her beautiful, many-shaded voice. Of course there is Iago, Carlos Álvarez, a veteran of the role who is suitably conniving and malevolent, but Kaufmann and Pappano's collaboration is symbiotic and the magnum force that binds it all together. “An *Otello* for the ages.” (The New York Times)

**Janos Gardonyi**

**Schoenberg – Gurre-Lieder; Janáček – Glagolitic Mass**  
**Soloists; Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks; Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks; Rafael Kubelik**  
**Urania Records WS121388**  
**(naxosdirect.com)**



► This sprawling, two-disc release pairs Arnold Schoenberg's *Gurre-Lieder* with Leoš Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass*. There is an unexpected symbiosis achieved

from juxtaposing the two works, both masterstrokes of their respective composers' catalogues.

The record opens with the *Gurre-Lieder*. Bavarian Radio Symphony and Choir and Rafael Kubelik offer a gilded rendition of the orchestral prelude, celebrating its expressionist sonorities with a vibrant, contemporary veneer to the sound profile and design. One feels that this could almost be the work of an orchestralist titan of our own century: John Adams or Kaija Saariaho. Of course, this is due in no small part to the expert insights and overarching concept Kubelik brings to Schoenberg's art; the conductor has a remarkable talent for breathing urgent new life into scores from the past, imbuing everything he touches with brilliance and finesse.

The singing itself and delivery of text is equally compelling. Every voice contributes a unique component to the narrative arc, expertly balanced and stylistically suitable to such sumptuous orchestral direction. The final installment of *Part III*, “The Summer Wind's Wild Hunt,” proves an impressive convergence of all elements in a whirling, bristling finale where not a single musical stone goes unturned – a thrilling end to a monumental work of love and tragedy.

The second half of Disc Two is occupied by Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass*, JW III/9. As is typical of the composer's best scores, this music boasts laser-precise allocations of material: instruments and voices are grouped via singular senses of registral timbre and colour. The efficiency of expression here almost surpasses Schoenberg's longer work, as Janáček finds the perfect compositional solution for each verse of text and instrumental interlude.

Additionally, the composer's penchant for writing choral music is on full display – not to mention the infamous organ solo! – all



expertly enhanced by impeccable diction from the vocal soloists. While more modest in scope than the *Gurre-Lieder*, Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* is performed here with a breadth of expression and understanding that matches the lineage of pan-Slavic history and its corresponding inheritance. The darker Eastern tunes of old fittingly conclude this indomitable two-disc set, worthy of a second – and even a third – listen!

**Adam Sherkin**

**Parry – Songs of farewell**  
**Westminster Abbey Choir; James O'Donnell**  
**Hyperion CDA68301**  
**(hyperion-records.co.uk)**



► For lovers of choral music, the British label Hyperion has championed the genre ever since its founding in 1980. This latest offering, featuring works by

Parry, Stanford and Gray performed by the Westminster Abbey choir under the direction of James O'Donnell, is a splendid addition.

The disc opens with Stanford's three *Latin Motets Op.38*, one of the composer's few settings of church music using Latin texts. Completed in 1892 and published 13 years later, they have long been regarded as among his finest choral compositions. The Westminster choir approaches the music with a satisfying conviction, with the second, *Caelos ascendit hodie*, sung with particular buoyancy.

Alan Gray was Stanford's successor as organist at Trinity College. His *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* for double choir from 1912 make use of attractive counterpoint and antiphony, while Stanford's *Magnificat in B-flat* was written as a "truce" to his friend Hubert Parry with whom he had had a brief falling out. Completed in 1918, the piece draws from Renaissance and early Baroque mannerisms, and at times contains a hint of the great *Magnificat* by J.S. Bach.

The bulk of the recording is devoted to Parry's six *Songs of farewell*, written between 1914 and 1915 using texts spanning a 200-year period. The choir's wonderful control of phrasing and dynamics, in addition to the superb acoustics of the All Hallows Church in London, make this a memorable performance.

The final song, *Lord let me know mine end* based on Psalm 39, is not only the lengthiest of the set, but also the most moving and personal. It contains a range of varying tempos but ends quietly, thus bringing the set – and the disc – to a satisfying conclusion.

**Richard Haskell**

**Massenet – Thaïs**  
**Erin Wall; Joshua Hopkins; Andrew Staples; Toronto Mendelssohn Choir;**  
**Toronto Symphony Orchestra; Sir Andrew Davis**  
**Chandos CHSA 5258(2) (naxosdirect.com)**



► Jules Massenet may be best-known for his operas *Manon* and – his magnum opus – *Werther*, but it is for his opera *Thaïs* that he wrote arguably his most iconic

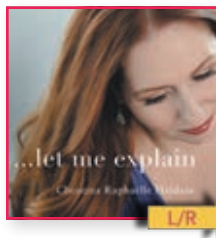
piece of music: the gossamer-like *Méditation* for violin and orchestra. This five-and-a-half-minute interlude – a theme for everything that flows out of the *Premier Tableau*, *Chez Thaïs* – just after *Thaïs, idole fragile*, from where the entire work is raised to a level of great intensity and exquisite delicacy.

Massenet's work is Wagnerian in more ways than one. Not only does he adopt (Wagner's) dramatic, Germanic tradition but also dwells on the inner struggle between the spiritual and the sensual. *Thaïs* (1894/98), like his celebrated oratorio *Marie-Magdeleine* (1873), explores this theme. *Thaïs*, like other French music of the day, also reveals Massenet's fascination with, and affection for, orientalism.

Based on Anatole France's eponymous book, the story is woven into the cultural topography of Coptic Egypt – specifically Hellenistic Alexandria – where *Thaïs* earns the consternation of the Cenobites, especially Athanaël, the most rigorous ascetic of them all; and beguiles, among others, the wealthy voluptuary, Nicias. The titanic battle for *Thaïs*, body and soul – the struggle between spirituality and sensuality in Louis Gallet's French libretto – is magnificently directed in this version by Sir Andrew Davis. Erin Wall's *Thaïs* is lustrous and magical. Joshua Hopkins' Athanaël is magical; Andrew Staples' Nicias is superb, the TSO and the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir are in top form throughout.

**Raul da Gama**

**...let me explain**  
**Christina Raphaëlle Haldane**  
**Redshift Records TK464**  
**(redshiftrecords.org)**



► It would be a travesty if the celebratory and *de rigueur* noise of multiculturalism should drown out the voice of home-grown Canadiana in poetry and song. But worry no more,

for here is an outstanding recording by a breathtaking artist that celebrates just that.

Christina Raphaëlle Haldane's recording of contemporary Canadian compositions ... *let me explain – a collection of Canadian Art Songs* is a marvellous performance of contemporary Canadiana that brings together poetry and music in repertoire that is at once silken in its lyricism and powerfully and vividly atmospheric in colour and tone texture.

Haldane's inspirational and poetic soprano throughout this repertoire is something to treasure for a lifetime. Her traversal of pianist and composer, Carl Philippe Gionet's *Three Acadian Folklores* is sweetly scented poesy, floribunda that would fill a whole flower-shop. The pervasive melancholy of *Ahania's Lament* is deeply affecting. David Jaeger's delicately coloured music for the singer's father Seán Haldane's poems in *The Echo Cycle* is the record's crowning glory. Haldane brings exquisite tenderness, expressive depth and consummate beauty to this cycle.

Haldane also, thankfully, celebrates the legendary Oscar Peterson with two pieces – *Why Think About Tomorrow*, the lyrics for which were penned by Peterson himself, and *Land of the Misty Giants* from his iconic *Canadiana Suite*. Sharing the spotlight with Haldane are the brilliant pianist Stu Harrison and bassist Ross MacIntyre. Both men perform this music with outstanding integrity and a wholly appropriate sense of occasion.

**Raul da Gama**

**Alice Ping Yee Ho – The Monkiest King**  
**Canadian Children's Opera Company; Teri Dunn**  
**Centrediscs CMCCD 28020**  
**(cmccanada.org)**



► *The Monkiest King* is Canadian composer Alice Ping Yee Ho's fourth opera. Commissioned by the Canadian Children's Opera Company for its

50th Anniversary, the 60-minute one-act opera features the most excellent soloists of the CCOC and six choruses of different ages interpreting over 30 characters.

Marjorie Chan's libretto is based on Wu Cheng'en's *Journey to the West*, a 16th-century novel considered one of the greatest classical works of Chinese literature. The opera is mostly set in an ancient and imaginary magical world and follows Sun Wukong, the Monkey King. Initially a bit of a trickster, the Monkey King's journey leads him on a series of adventures where he learns about personal responsibility, compassion and, ultimately, courage.

Primarily sung in English with Mandarin and Cantonese words, the language is accessible to a young audience, yet the story is compelling for a variety of ages. Personal growth is explored via life themes and lessons

as opposed to the old-fashioned fable. The use of Chinese instruments such as the dizi, erhu, gaohu, pipa and guzheng allows children of all backgrounds to either connect with sounds they are familiar with or make exciting new discoveries. Ho's skillful contrast between Chinese and Western instruments, the well-placed dissonances and the numerous vocal and instrumental glissandi provide a unique and vibrant listening experience. Most exquisite, Chan's libretto and Ho's music are expertly woven together, seamlessly moving the action forward. *The Monkiest King* was nominated for two Mavor Dora Moore Awards in 2019 for Outstanding Performing Ensemble and Outstanding Original Opera.

**Sophie Bisson**

## CLASSICAL AND BEYOND

**Marin Marais – Badinages**  
**Mélisande Corriveau; Eric Milnes**  
**ATMA ACD2 2785 (atmaclassique.com/Fr)**



► French musician and composer Marin Marais (1656–1728) served at the Sun King's Versailles court, composing as many as six operas – and fathering 19 children.

Another point of interest, he was one of the earliest composers of program music; his *The Bladder-Stone Operation* includes detailed descriptions of the surgery. Marais was, however, best known for his supreme skill in capturing the rich, deep, silky and nuanced voice of the viola da gamba. He poured all his skill and passion into his vast five-volume lifework *Pièces de viole* (1686–1725).

Together with harpsichordist and conductor Eric Milnes, *Marin Marais: Badinages* features Québécoise viola da gamba virtuosa Mélisande Corriveau. *Gramophone* magazine hailed her as leading “a new generation of players bringing formidable performing skills and knowledge of period practices.”

*Badinages* is devoted to 20 excerpts from Marais' remarkable bass viol repertoire of some 500 works. He toyed with convention in some, presenting a series of character pieces rather than the dance forms then favoured.

These suites demand a high degree of virtuoso technique, application of appropriate period performance practice, and taste. Corriveau is fully up to the challenge. She renders the numerous period ornaments with finesse, the sound-swelling *enflés* and one- and two-finger vibratos among them, conveying a stylish, sensuously delicate musical affect.

Adventurous both melodically and harmonically, Marais' music marks a high water mark of the French Baroque. And to

our contemporary ears, Corriveau and Milnes' evocative performance on this album firmly sites this music in that very particular time and place.

**Andrew Timar**

**Beethoven – Nine Symphonies**  
**MSO Festival Chorus; Tuomas Katajala;**  
**Derek Welton; Kate Royal; Christine Rice;**  
**Malmö Symphony Orchestra; Robert**  
**Trevino**  
**Online ODE 1348-5Q (naxosdirect.com)**



► Young conductors must look forward to recording their first Beethoven cycle the way adolescents wait for their chance to get the keys to the car.

Not every car is as finely tuned as the Malmö Symphony Orchestra, and not every kid knows how to drive as well as Robert Trevino. Still, the task must cut any ego down to size, so overdone is this amazing artifact of orchestral repertoire. What hasn't been done with it? From the turbulence of Toscanini's NBC recordings, at breakneck pace, to the several versions from Berlin with von Karajan, Chicago with Solti, and on and on...

And how to summarize what Trevino has achieved? First and foremost, his reading is lyrical. Beethoven can seem all elbows and knees, his angles and bangings claiming too much attention of those who only see the storm clouds gathering on the brow of his famous portrait. Trevino claims a different outlook on the famously tortured genius' musical expression. After the jarring sequence of dominant seventh chords that opens *Symphony No.1*, the violins are encouraged to fill their instruments with romantic lush sound, and they manage the effect without excessive vibrato. In the iconic *Fifth*, whenever it stops knocking fatefully at the door, the same quality enters, especially in the first movement's second subject.

Any symphony cycle will chart LvB's progress from his early punk-Haydn phase, through the tormented Heiligenstadt period of encroaching silence to his late mystically elevated, even serene mastery. His greatest two symphonies mark the divisions between those three periods: the *Seventh*, which precedes his late period; and the greatest of them all, his *Third Symphony*, subtitled *Eroica*, the one famously dedicated and then undedicated to Napoleon. Consider the slow movements of each. In the earlier one, the mood is extreme tragedy, which Trevino milks by taking a tempo more than ten points below the indicated 80 bpm. The only way it can work is by complete dedication to the line. He allows the pace to move forward in the *fuguetto*, where the composer seems to cry for mercy or justice or just relief, and then lets it positively take off in the codetta that

precedes the return of the opening material, yet he never returns to that opening dirge-like pace. This is pretty radical, to my ear, and I love it. In the more recognizable *Marche funèbre* from the *Seventh*, as much as Trevino allowed flexibility in the example above, here he maintains an assiduous observance of a uniform but never mechanical pace. This earns him a standing ovation from this quarter. I cannot abide this piece given the inadvertent gradual *accelerando* one sometimes hears; it makes me want to drive off a cliff. Both movements perch on the precipice of despair, but the later one seems less angry, more resigned, and Trevino observes this difference, it seems to me.

A story Trevino tells in the notes about having attempted a strange move in a Schumann symphony with Leipzig's Gewandhaus orchestra (the organization that premiered Schumann's works) has him finally agreeing to try it *their* way, and thanking them subsequently for “making [him] a better conductor.” Malmö has perhaps significantly younger and, it might be, more flexible personnel. The ignition at the heart of this high-performance vehicle is undoubtedly a spectacularly well-regulated wind section: pitch-perfect solos and ensemble work enhance the lyrical element. Trevino loves the middle voices, and makes sure we hear them. He gives the strings license when supplying repeated rhythmic fill to celebrate the meeting of gut and horsehair. And he helps the players achieve the most startling crescendi. It's lovely to hear Beethoven that isn't all bumps and bruises, although the brass and (classical) timpani provide just enough of those. The low strings in the recitativo of the finale of the towering *Ninth Symphony* serve notice, if any were needed, that the entire band, from trunk to transmission, are an ensemble worthy of the ace driver on the podium.

**Max Christie**

**Clara – Robert – Johannes: Darlings of the Muses**  
**Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra;**  
**Alexander Shelley; Gabriela Montero**  
**Analekta AN 2 8877-8 (analekta.com/en)**



► British-born conductor Alexander Shelley assumed the role of music director of Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra in 2015 and this Analekta

recording is the fourth to be released under his leadership. Titled *Clara-Robert-Johannes: Darlings of the Muses*, it features Venezuelan pianist Gabriela Montero and is the first in a series of four to be released exploring the personal and professional connections among Robert Schumann, his wife Clara and Johannes Brahms.



Completed in just over a month in 1841, Schumann's *Symphony No.1 in B-flat Major "Spring"* was the composer's first attempt at orchestral writing, and its buoyant, optimistic mood was reflective of a particularly happy time in his life. From the opening fanfare, the NACO approaches the score with much panache – the playing is full and robust with a satisfying balance among the strings and brass.

In contrast, the opening mood of Brahms' *Symphony No.1 in C Minor* is dark and foreboding, aided by the steady beat of the timpani – is that really fate knocking at the door? Shelley and the orchestra successfully convey a true sense of majesty throughout the work, and today, it's difficult to believe that this work was the source of such controversy at the time of its premiere in 1876.

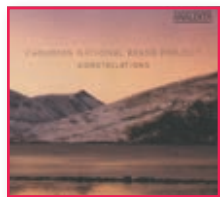
For years, Clara Schumann was too often known as "an accomplished pianist who composed" – surely an unfair assessment. Her *Piano Concerto Op.7* was an early work written in 1835 when she was all of 14. Gabriela Montero delivers a polished performance with the demanding solo passages allowing her ample opportunity to display a flawless technique. Clearly this music was not intended for amateurs!

Interspersed with the three major works are short improvisations by Montero based on music by Schumann, aptly demonstrating her talents as both pianist and composer.

In all, this is a promising start to an engaging series we can look forward to. Recommended.

**Richard Haskell**

#### Constellations Canadian National Brass Project Analekta AN 2 8924 (analekta.com/en)



► The Canadian National Brass Project, founded in 2015 by artistic director James Sommerville (principal horn, Boston Symphony Orchestra) and

administrative director Sasha Johnson (principal tuba, National Ballet of Canada Orchestra) is comprised of 25 Canadian brass players and three percussionists selected from 15 major Canadian and U.S. orchestras. This unbelievably outstanding big ensemble performs brass/percussion arrangements here with musicality and precise pitch/intonation.

Wagner's *Elsa's Procession to the Cathedral*, arranged by Jay Friedman, opens with flawless delicate lyrical lines. As the volume and intensity build to the final majestic ending, the background musical supports hold it together while never being overwhelming. Angus Armstrong's arrangement of Holst's *Mars* and *Jupiter* from *The Planets* includes the infamous virtuosic rapid lines, loud detached notes, low rhythms and dramatic percussion crashes, performed here

with so much enjoyment! Robert Fraser's arrangement of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* works so well for this instrumentation from the mood-setting quiet start to the infamous melodic line, horn fanfares and breathtaking, never over the top, closing build.

Contrapuntal brass playing with vocal-like breathing and detached notes drive Timothy Higgins' arrangement of Gabrieli's *O Magnum Mysterium* and *Sancta Maria*. Two 20th-century works are given a brass flavour. Taz Eddy's arrangement of Ola Gjeilo's *Sanctus* incorporates its conversational sounds. Silvestre Revueltas' dramatic *Sensemaya* is so well suited to the percussion and low brass of Bruce Roberts' arrangement.

High production values and musicianship give each work an out-of-this-world sound!

**Tiina Kiik**

#### Tchaikovsky – Symphony No.4; Leshnoff – Double Concerto Clarinet & Bassoon Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra; Mannfred Honeck Reference Recordings (pittsburghsymphony.org)



► On this 2020 release by Reference Recordings as part of their Pittsburgh Live! series, the majestic *Symphony No. 4 in F Minor* by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky,

with its famous opening clarion call that immediately commands listener attention, is paired with a lesser-known, but no less stirring, work by the American-born Jonathan Leshnoff.

Pairings of this sort (a warhorse coupled with something new) are, of course, familiar within live musical performance practice, but here we are in a world wherein there is no current ability to mass gather and experience powerful symphonic music (perhaps one of the least socially distant musical forms). So, the recording medium will have to suffice. Good thing then that this album captures the dependably great Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, under the musical direction of Manfred Honeck, in fine form. The performance brings musical urgency and vitality to two important works capable of cleansing the banality of everyday life from one's musical palette, and affording listeners the kind of hopeful optimism that only great music can provide during a time when, without the engagement of socialized work, friends, nightlife or human interaction, it is perhaps most needed. In this way, both works (*Symphony No. 4* and Leshnoff's *Double Concerto for Clarinet and Bassoon*), the skillful way in which their performances were undertaken and the clear recording capture, are good for the soul.

This indeed is life-affirming music during a difficult time, and it is nice to be reminded of

the heights of human creativity and expression. Recommended!

**Andrew Scott**

#### Mahler – Symphony No.7 Minnesota Orchestra; Osmo Vänskä Bis BIS SACD-2386 (minnesotaorchestra.org)



► Mahler's *Seventh Symphony* might be considered the antidote to the intense pessimism of his *Sixth*, so-called "Tragic," *Symphony*.

Portions of this

symphony (movements two and four) were in fact conceived concurrently with the *Sixth*, and there is an architectural similarity between the opening movements of the two works.

The unjustly neglected *Seventh* is Mahler's most "modern" symphony, an outlier whose progressive tonality and free-associative structure foreshadow the dissolution of the Romantic era. Darkness pervades the heart of this work, culminating in the frightening central *Scherzo*, yet it ends in brilliant sunshine. Beneath the surface of the frantic marches, haunted waltzes, militant fanfares and moments of deep tenderness lies a subliminal ambiguity that only fully reveals itself on deeper reflection. This is especially true in the mock-triumphalism of the finale of the work, which imposes an interpretive challenge far greater than that of any of the previous or indeed subsequent symphonies. In the words of the pre-eminent Mahler biographer Henri-Louis de la Grange, "To fathom the meaning of this enigmatic *Rondo*, we need, perhaps, to refer to more recent music in which quotations, borrowings and allusions to the past constitute the principal aim."

It takes a light and nimble hand to guide us through these thickets. Osmo Vänskä and his Minnesota musicians rise to the challenge in this brilliantly recorded performance which ranks amongst the finest interpretations known to me of this oracular masterpiece. Highly recommended.

**Daniel Foley**

#### Manuel de Falla – El Sombrero de tres picos; El amor brujo Marina Heredia; Carmen Romeu; Mahler Chamber Orchestra; Pablo Heras-Casado Harmonia Mundi HMM902271 (harmoniamundi.com)



► This exciting new issue from Harmonia Mundi presents de Falla's two best stage works back to back on a single CD conducted by the

young, energetic, brilliant Spanish conductor Pablo Heras-Casado who is very much in demand these days. Both of these scores pulsate with fiery flamenco rhythms and melodies, so Heras-Casado is in his element and enjoying himself thoroughly.

*El sombrero de tres picos* (The Three-Cornered Hat) is the more elaborate of the two. It is a comedy ballet/pantomime, a morality tale with the message “love belongs to the young and old fogeys should not chase young women.” The old fogey in this case is the village magistrate (El Corregidor) with a three-cornered hat who is after the Miller’s pretty young wife. She flirts with him for a while, but in trying to catch her he keeps stumbling and falling on his face to the ridicule of the village folk. Simple enough story, but full of delightful dances one after another, each different and each assigned to a different soloist – the *Fandango* (Miller’s wife), the *Minuet* (Corregidor), the *Farruca* (Miller) or the gentle rollicking *Seguidilla* for the neighbours celebrating St. John’s night, the night of love. At the end is a real apotheosis where it all comes together in the *Final Dance*, the *Jota*, with everyone dancing and all is forgiven.

As a contrast *El amor brujo* (Love the Magician) is much more serious although also a ballet. It tells of a young woman trying to exorcise the ghost of her unfaithful husband and be ready for a new love. It’s a dark score, full of mystery and black magic with dances like the *Dance of Terror* or the famous *Ritual Fire Dance*, but the story has a happy ending in a major key (*Dance of the Game of Love*) and all the bells are ringing. Excellent sound, great entertainment.

Janos Gardonyi

### Exiles in Paradise – Émigré Composers in Hollywood

Brinton Averil Smith; Evelyn Chen  
Naxos 8.579055 (naxosdirect.com)



► By the early 20th century, Los Angeles had become the centre of the nascent film industry, although at the time, the city was little more than orange groves punctuated with the Hollywood Dream Factory that would pull the world out of the Great Depression and through WW II. With the evil rise of Eastern European anti-Semitism, numbers of brilliant, classical musical artists began flocking to La La Land with the idea of bringing their skills to the movies that were being churned out on a daily basis. These brave musicians planted their roots into the thin, sandy soil and began the painstaking process of bringing artistic culture to the Wild West.

With this exquisite release, magnificent pianist Evelyn Chen and equally magnificent

cellist Brinton Averil Smith have created a project that celebrates these wonderful artists – many of whom directly contributed to the film industry. Included on the recording are interpretations of works by Sergei Rachmaninoff, Igor Stravinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, Miklós Rózsa, Franz Waxman and George Gershwin (born Jacob Gershowitz).

Stravinsky’s hauntingly beautiful *Berceuse* (from *The Firebird*) is presented here by Chen and Smith with a deep, emotional undercurrent that informs their sumptuous performances, perfectly enhanced by their contemporary sensibilities. One of the most thrilling tracks is *Night Owls – Fantastic Variations* by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, who, after fleeing Mussolini’s Italy, scored over 200 films for MGM and taught a string of future film composers such as André Previn, Henry Mancini and John Williams. One can almost feel the kinesthetic, evocative, nighttime Florence that the composer has created. Familiar to the listener will be Waxman’s *Carmen Fantasie* (drawn from Bizet’s opera) as well as Gershwin’s *It Ain’t Necessarily So* from his controversial, 1935 “Folk Opera” *Porgy and Bess*.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

### LA Phil 100

Los Angeles Philharmonic; Gustavo Dudamel; Zubin Mehta; Esa-Pekka Salonen  
Cmajor (naxosdirect.com)



► The Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra was founded in 1919 by the millionaire and amateur musician William Andrews Clark Jr. who had the ambition and the funds to create best orchestra in the United States. One can

only imagine the general excitement of the population at that time. Their first principal conductor was British-born Walter Henry Rothwell. Rothwell, a member of the musical elite, had connections, having been a member of the Vienna State Opera and had served as assistant to Gustav Mahler. Following Rothwell’s death in 1927 he was succeeded by these eminent conductors: Georg Schnéevoigt 1927-29; Artur Rodzinski 1929-33; Otto Klemperer 1933-39; Alfred Wallenstein 1943-56; Eduard van Beinum 1956-59; Zubin Mehta 1962-78; Carlo Maria Giulini 1978-84; André Previn 1985-89; Esa-Pekka Salonen, 1992-2009 and thence Gustavo Dudamel, who is the current music and artistic director. Mehta is the conductor emeritus and Salonen is the conductor laureate.

There are two DVDs. The Los Angeles Philharmonic Centennial Birthday Gala

Concert was recorded live in the unique Walt Disney Concert Hall in October 2019. Zubin Mehta conducted the *Prelude to Die Meistersinger* and Ravel’s *La Valse*. Esa-Pekka Salonen conducted Lutoslawski’s *Symphony No.4*, and Dudamel offered a thrilling suite from *The Firebird*. Finally, a commissioned work by Daniel Bjarnason titled *From Space I saw the Earth*. For this atmospheric, mysterious, “outer-space” work the orchestra was divided into three, each with its own conductor, namely Dudamel, Salonen and Mehta.

The second disc is an informative documentary, with lots of interesting interviews and commentaries about the founding and the growth of the orchestra. *The New York Times* in 2017, just before the 100th Anniversary, headlined that “Los Angeles Has America’s Most Important Orchestra. Period.” This unique and most interesting package is testament to that.

Bruce Surtees

### MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY

The Spirit and the Dust  
Beverley Johnston; Mark Djokic; Amici Ensemble  
Centrediscs CMCCD 27920  
(cmccanada.org)



► Dubbed, “a champion of new, genre-busting works” (*DRUM! Magazine*), Canadian percussionist Beverley Johnston is a *rara avis* in this country:

a percussion soloist with an international career. Over four decades Johnston has built an enviable reputation for her musically intelligent performances, her deft classical transcriptions sharing the stage with contemporary compositions and dramatic presentations. Her career highlights and honours have been too many to list here.

In 1986 Johnston released her first solo album *Impact* (Centrediscs, JUNO Award nominee), followed by seven more, as well having appeared on numerous other recordings. Her newest, *The Spirit and the Dust*, features her signature instruments, marimba and vibraphone. She is joined by violin virtuoso Mark Djokic and the illustrious Amici Chamber Ensemble in six works by four prominent Canadian composers, Christos Hatzis, Richard Mascal, Norbert Palej and Dinuk Wijeratne.

*The Spirit and the Dust* for solo marimba by Wijeratne is a dual musical meditation, skillfully reflecting on themes of life and death inspired by world literature, as well as on the richly varied tonal palette of the marimba itself. Johnston reveals her vulnerable side in Palej’s dramatic yet intimate *ser con Él* (be



with Him). She whispers and sings words of yearning for someone unnamed while simultaneously playing vibraphone. Two fragmentary Chilean texts are separated by five centuries, one by an anonymous Inca poet, the other by Gabriela Mistral.

While the absence these poets suggest may only be an illusion, the musical and emotional landscapes Johnston evokes on this album feel only too real.

**Andrew Timar**

**PEP (Piano and Erhu Project)  
Volume 3  
Redshift Records (redshiftrecords.org)**



▶ The duo of erhu virtuosa Nicole Ge Li and contemporary music specialist, pianist Corey Hamm, known as PEP (Piano and Erhu Project), issued

its first CD release in 2015, the second following soon on its heels. I reviewed both for *The WholeNote*, commenting that PEP's core repertoire exemplifies a "fluid interplay between these two instruments, each an icon of its respective culture. Rather than an intercultural vanity project, their collective music-making focuses on polished, musically engaged readings of recently commissioned scores."

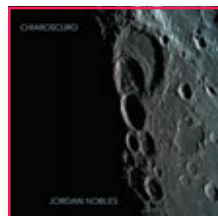
PEP's *Volume 3* extends that project to nine richly varied compositions. The carefully curated collection includes international composers working in many of today's classical music streams. In addition to two Canadian works by Lucas Oickle and Stephen Chatman, new compositions by Michael Finnissy (UK), Gao Ping (China), plus existing works by Sergei Prokofiev (Russia/USSR), his grandson Gabriel Prokofiev (UK), Somei Satoh (Japan) and Marc Mellits (USA) are on this rich smorgasbord.

The album gets off to a rollicking start with the percussive first movement of Chinese-born composer Gao Ping's *Hu Yan* (2017). The work's six sections are each characterized by contrasting techniques and moods. Pizzicato passages in both piano and erhu in the third movement are certainly arresting, as are the eerie finale's final moments: bass piano clusters thud while the erhu holds a still, high vibrato-less tone.

The album concludes with an arrangement of Sergei Prokofiev's *Scherzo* from his *Flute Sonata* (1943), later arranged for violin and piano by the composer. Hamm energetically nails down the two-fisted piano accompaniment while Li handles her difficult erhu part with panache. She makes it sound like the 77-year old work was written for her. It's an espresso nightcap to PEP's exhilarating program.

**Andrew Timar**

**Jordan Nobles – Chiaroscuro  
Various Artists  
Redshift Records TK477  
(redshiftrecords.org)**



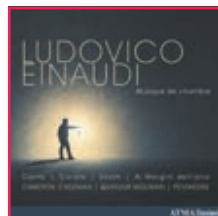
▶ Gentle pulse, deep echo, and the alluring heat of mirage; this is the mysterious sonic imagery evoked throughout the enchanting music of *Chiaroscuro* – a

new release by Canadian composer Jordan Nobles. *Chiaroscuro* is a term used in visual art referring to the careful use of light and dark to create the illusion of three-dimensional volume on a flat surface. Nobles' brilliant use of instrumental colour does exactly that: the artifice of tone painting creating multi-aural brush strokes of vast hyper-chroma.

Although the music seems to provide a static environment on the surface, a masterful and beautiful complexity unfolds beneath. It is a space propelled forward by shimmering strings, luminous harp flourishes, fluttering winds and vocal wisps – messages from another world that travel by wind to ear. Nobles treats the large instrumental forces with such care that one seems to forget that there are separate voices: the resultant amalgam presented as unified iridescence. The two pieces on the disc offer oceans of spiritual radiance for the listener – make the time and dive in.

**Adam Scime**

**Ludovico Einaudi – Chamber Music  
Cameron Crozman; Quatuor Molinari;  
Pentaèdre  
ATMA ACD2 2805 (atmaclassique.com/En)**



▶ Considered by many to be the world's most popular classical composer, Italian Ludovico Einaudi's vast collection of compositions has appeared

in films, television series and on countless albums recorded by soloists, ensembles and the composer himself. *Musique de chambre* features four of Einaudi's extended works, written for both soloists and chamber ensemble, performed by prominent Quebec musicians.

Each of the pieces on this album demonstrates Einaudi's ability to create an atmospheric soundscape using harmony and rhythm, incorporating minimalist elements to great effect. This is not classical music in the style of Mozart and Beethoven: rather than being foundational material, melodic lines are the exception to the rule; throbbing, pulsing rhythms and large-scale harmonic

shifts bring Philip Glass and Michael Nyman to mind, but with the striking contrasts of dynamic and character that are indicative of Einaudi's unique compositional voice.

*Corale*, for example, juxtaposes vital and exuberant string passages with soft and subdued statements, the "choral" sung amidst the outbursts. *Zoom* (aptly titled, given our current reliance on the eponymous technology) combines a lengthy, slow opening with a speedy and chaotic conclusion – what begins as a seemingly ironic subversion of the title erupts into a virtuosic reflection of what it means to "zoom."

*Canto* and *Ai margini dell'aria* are, in both title and sound, reflective of vocal music, featuring prominent lines, sometimes many at once, over discordant accompaniment. For those who appreciate Einaudi's style and want to look beyond the keyboard works, *Musique de chambre* is a fine place to start.

**Matthew Whitfield**

**CLASSICS from the Rascali Klepitoire  
(teaser) EP  
John Oswald  
fony (pfony.bandcamp.com)**



▶ This Toronto composer/saxophonist/improviser/electronics/artistic genius John Oswald release is an exciting cross section of masterfully created old and new projects

illuminating Oswald's unique talents in electronic and live sound creation, something this reviewer can attest from decades playing free improvised music with him in various settings.

Oswald recently revised an earlier dance piano/ensemble soundtrack to disklavier for *from exquisite lune*. Linda Caitlin Smith's score is one that Oswald subcontracted for his suite based on Debussy's *Clair de Lune*, and here her slow reflective piece with wide spaces is breathtaking to the final high-pitched piano sounds. The Oswald and James Rolfe co-composition *bird*, based on Leonard Cohen, is fascinating with the opening solo female voice warbling, high notes, pace change, spoken words and final almost folk oompah groove backdrop.

Plunderphonics galore in *a sum of distractions\** (concerto for conductor and orchestra), as the conductor/soloist is wired for sound, and fingertip triggers set off musical quotes against flute melody, intermittent orchestral crashes and superimposed familiar lines for new listening experiences. *sounds of sigh...* opens with a Simon and Garfunkel *Sounds of Silence* – sounding riff as overlapping symphonic held notes, groove patterns, intense sustained horn and atonal effects abound.

Also included are *lontanofaune*, and *aria-ture & panorama*. But the biggest thrill is the "silly bonus track" *5th*. Beethoven's classic symphony now contains such treats as electronically produced sounds, squeaks,

instrumental effects, grunts, all in classic Oswald plunderphonics bravado.

Oswald has also been releasing reissues on Bandcamp. Highlights include *Grayfolded* “radio edit” (1994), his infamous groundbreaking reworking of music played by the Grateful Dead. *Discosphere* (1991) is a cross section of Oswald’s “soundtracks for dance.” *Kissing Jesus in the Dark* is a 1970s “found sound” release by Pause Pirate – Oswald, Marvin Green and Miguel Frascóni.

Timeless fun music by a great Canadian musician!

**Tiina Kiik**

## New England Trios

**Joel Pitchon; Marie-Volcy Pelletier; Yu-Mei Wei**

**Bridge Records BRIDGE 9530**  
(bridgerecords.com)



▶ With the release of this exquisitely produced, recorded and performed disc, the skilled trio of John Pitchon (violin), Marie-Volcy Pelletier (cello) and Yu-Mei Wei (piano)

have explored the New England connection between iconic American composers Ronald Perera, Walter Piston and Leonard Bernstein. All three of these seminal, 20th-century artists found common ground in their mutual New England upbringings and their education at Harvard University in Boston. Written at the age of 19, Bernstein’s 1937 trio is a very early work by the genius who would ultimately blur the lines between classical, jazz and ethnomusics, which led to the very definition of contemporary American musical theatre. Interestingly, recordings of the other three trios (the two by Piston from 1935 and 1966, and the Perera from 2002) have not been available in recent years, making the disc an especially important addition to the catalogue.

Highlights of the ambitious CD are Piston’s *Allegro* from *Piano Trio No.1*, a vivacious, intense and passionate interpretation, punctuated by strong, sinuous, unison lines and deep, throbbing cello work from Pelletier, and Bernstein’s aforementioned *Adagio non Troppo – piu mosso – Allegro Vivace*, which is almost unbearably romantic, and yet rife with dark references to all-consuming passions, creative obsession and an all-too-brief creative euphoria. How prophetic those unguarded motifs are when viewed in context with Bernstein’s life and work.

In Perera’s *Incisivo*, Pitchon shines with appropriate incisor-like attack and intonation, and all three trio members move through this piece as an unstoppable single-celled organism. Of special mention is Piston’s *Allegro con Brio*, which is a technical thrill ride, with pianist Wei dynamically clearing the path through the mysterious pizzicato forest. On this composition, Piston, being the senior of this composing triumvirate, displays

his joy of experimentation that would echo generations into the future.

**Lesley Mitchell-Clarke**

## Heard in Havana

### Third Sound

**Innova Recordings 990 (innova.mu)**



▶ In 2015, the American Composers Forum sent a delegation of musicians and composers to Cuba. Their mission: to present a program of contemporary

classical American music at the Festival de Música Contemporánea de La Habana. It was the first such concert to take place in Cuba since the Cuban Revolution.

The ensemble chosen to perform was the newly formed New York City-based quintet Third Sound, comprising some of NYC’s top chamber musicians. In preparation, ACF and Third Sound held a national call for scores for flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano. *Heard in Havana* showcases the ten works chosen, the product of a diverse group of composers from across the USA reflecting the variety of American classical composition today.

I admire much of the music of the truly international Kati Agócs. Though born in Windsor, Ontario and a JUNO Award winner, she retains three citizenships, American, Canadian and Hungarian (European Union). Her work embraces both her North American and Hungarian parental and musical lineages. Agócs’ elegant and elegiac 2007 *Immutable Dreams II: Microconcerto [in memoriam György Ligeti]* on this album is no exception. Writes the composer, it is a “miniature piano concerto... a tribute to my Hungarian roots and to György Ligeti’s influence.” I also hear multiple echoes of the music of another great 20th-century Hungarian: Béla Bartók. Agócs’ *Microconcerto* concludes with a haunting, musically enigmatic and gentle metacrusis.

Summing up the album, there aren’t many common threads among the ten pieces chosen. But perhaps that’s the point. An abundant variety of artistic expression is a core value I can also get behind.

**Andrew Timar**

## Chinary Ung Vol.4 – Space Between Heaven and Earth

### Various Artists

**Bridge Records 9533A/B**  
(bridgerecords.com)



▶ American-Cambodian composer Chinary Ung began his career writing music highly inspired by 20th-century

modernist techniques in what was typical in the post-Second Viennese School climate. After a ten-year hiatus from composing to help with the Cambodian genocide and resultant refugee crises, Ung re-emerged to write in a new and highly personal compositional voice exploring cross-cultural practices. This is doubtless a by-product of Ung’s efforts to preserve Khmer traditional music during the Cambodian crises. In an effort to create a substantial document of Ung’s mature style, Bridge records has committed to a series of recordings of the composer’s mature works.

In Volume 4 we receive a two-disc collection of five vastly original and accomplished chamber works. Ung has created a world of highly ritualistic gestures and mysterious auras. In the Grawemeyer Award-winning composer’s own terms, his mature style may be summarized as “futuristic folk music” – a term that aptly describes Ung’s use of quotation and evocation in a truly contemporary landscape. Throughout each piece, we as listeners are surrounded with entwined modal intricacies, suggestive drones, and shimmering percussive magic – all creating the elixir of undiscovered, and yet familiar, cultural scenery. This, together with world-class performances from the musicians, transports the listener to a place where time seems lost, and instead, sound pervades a sense of instance.

**Adam Scime**

## PBO & Caroline Shaw

**Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale; Nicholas McGegan**

**Philharmonia PBP-12 (philharmonia.org)**



▶ Listen to this: an unexpected, lush, open-hearted triumph of a record featuring an oratorio and song cycle, written for period instruments by the

singular, esteemed, Caroline Shaw (USA, b.1982). Recently, the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra established a “New Music for Old Instruments” initiative, aimed at creating fresh works expressly for period instruments. The fruits are already being born, as radiant, alluring music by Shaw proves on this disc, featuring extraordinary artistic talents such as Anne Sofie von Otter.

Opening with a song trilogy, *Is a Rose*, this album immediately transports the listener to a vibrant, fantastical soundworld fashioned from bygone Baroque molecules, now re-energized anew. The terrific musicianship of the PBO and its longtime director, Nicholas McGegan is on full display here. Glorious sonorities complement von Otter’s soaring vocal lines. (This will be McGegan’s final recording with the orchestra.)

And it just gets better: *The Listeners*, a



full-scale oratorio by Shaw, is up next, brimming over with cosmic warmth and light. The libretto is derived from five centuries of English poetry, supplemented with recorded excerpts from Carl Sagan's *Golden Record*, as launched into space in 1977.

Oratorio is the ideal vehicle for Shaw's creativity and an idiom that seems to be gaining newfound popularity these days amongst other composers. The genre's inherent humanity is perhaps what remains attractive and we need it today more than ever, as our 21st-century world faces novel challenges, now in its third, disquieting decade.

**Adam Sherkin**

**Philip Glass – Music in Eight Parts**  
**Philip Glass Ensemble**  
**Orange Mountain Music**  
**(orangemountainmusic.com)**



► There is a type of sensual, corporeal and self-encompassing sensation that can occur with grand-gesture music – Eduard Hanslick's “warm bath” of the symphony, for example. This visceral feeling is equally true here, as listeners are invited to slip in and immerse ourselves in this “new” Philip Glass work, which is actually a 1970 score that went missing, and accordingly, unrecorded, until surfacing at Christie's Auction House in late 2017.

Like much of Glass' work, repetition, in this case dynamically intensifying and iteratively building over eight parts, takes on a hypnotic effect, lulling attuned listeners to an otherworldly place of self-reflection and meditation. It is precisely this sort of self-reflexivity that gloms onto Glass' sometime identification as a post-modern composer, as the repetition brings with it a type of sameness that allows the mind to wander and find its own truths, experience and beauty within the music. In this way, *Music in Eight Parts*, reminds me of David Foster Wallace's (another artist who bristled with the post-modern label) unfinished, and posthumously released, *The Pale King*, where the banal minutiae of the everyday vocational routine of Peoria-based IRS collectors during the 1980s is presented with such intricate detail that readers are potentially swept away to a higher level of mindfulness and consciousness.

While *Music in Eight Parts* may be a composition from the Nixon era, this recording (remote assembling?) is truly of the 2020 pandemic age, with all parts recorded separately by Philip Glass Ensemble members, and then produced, mixed and mastered by Michael Riesman, without togetherness, in-person interaction or “performance,” at least not in the way that many have traditionally understood that term. However, despite the appropriate and necessary distanced and

clinical construction of how the recording came together, the result is warm, inviting and well worth adding to your music collection.

**Andrew Scott**

**William Susman – Scatter My Ashes**  
**Octet Ensemble**  
**belarca belarca-004 (belarca.com)**



► Let us begin with props where they are deserved. OCTET, the ensemble dedicated to performing William Susman's music, and possibly others' as well, is a good bunch of players. Their work on this just-released collection is fine and tight, although there occur a few instances of pretty rough intonation, notably toward the end of *Triumph*, the third movement of *Camille*. Among the instrumentalists, of whom the composer is one, a vocalist adds the human voice to the collective timbre. Mellissa Hughes more than meets the requirements; the beauty of her tone draws my ear to her and everything sounds like a song. There are in fact two song cycles on the disc: *Scatter My Ashes* and *Moving to an Empty Space*. Hughes delivers the text of Sue Susman, the composer's sister, with remarkable clarity, and recording engineer John Kilgore does well to balance voice with ensemble.

Susman's a kid in the candy store when it comes to rhythmic groupings, and it's fun to follow along as he keeps dipping into one jar after another of irregular divisions of regular bars. The music is consistently upbeat, chipper, heartening. Consistency is not entirely a virtue, however, and one of the record's faults is with the tonal palette of the music. He favours a kind of colouristic minimalism, tending toward bright poly-tonal alternating sound plateaus. Usually two per number. Often sounding very like the ones used in other numbers. Which begins to wear. On the ear. Like a series of incomplete sentences. Used for critical effect.

The third piece, Susman's *Piano Concerto* breaks the mould at least in terms of variety of texture and tonality. Although he begins the piece with the same trope as he uses in *Triumph* (a C-major scale building into a cluster), by placing the piano in the role of soloist, he gains more freedom to explore textural possibility. And the second-to-last song, *Begging the Night for Change* (aptly) manages to step away from the narrow range of keys/tonalities favoured, and is to my mind the most effective piece on the disc.

**Max Christie**

**Pēteris Vasks – Works for Piano Trio**  
**Trio Palladio**  
**Online ODE 1343-2 (naxosdirect.com)**



► When Pēteris Vasks, Latvia's pre-eminent contemporary composer, visited Toronto in the mid-1990s, he left me with vivid memories of his intensely gripping *String Symphony* (“*Stimmen*”) and his no less intensely gripping handshake.

This CD begins with the 15-minute *Lonely Angel* (2019), Vasks' rearrangement of the *Meditation* from his *String Quartet No.4* (1999). Vasks writes, “My guardian angel has had to do an awful lot of guarding during periods of my life... Sometimes even he must feel like it is all just too much.” This is pensive music, with long, soulful string lines over gentle piano ripples and bell-like notes.

Vasks writes of *Episodi e canto perpetuo* (1985), “It is like the hard road through evil, delusion and suffering to a song centred in love.” In eight movements, the 28-minute work encompasses restless turbulence, hushed solemnity, heavily rhythmic coarseness and a prolonged cry of anguish that finally fades away.

*Plainscapes* (2011) is Vasks' rearrangement of a 2002 composition for violin, cello and chorus. He writes, “This is in late spring... after this rising of nature, a sense of infinity and eternity with those immense starry heavens, returns to the music.” The 18-minute piece begins with soft rustlings suggesting (to me) a forest at dawn and crescendos to a life-affirming climax and the clamour of nature untrammelled, subsiding as nightfall brings stillness.

These compelling, expressive works are thrillingly performed by Trio Palladio, each member a leading Latvian soloist. Strongly recommended!

**Michael Schulman**

**Magnus Lindberg – Accused; Two Episodes**  
**Anu Koms; Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra; Hannu Lintu**  
**Online ODE 13452 (naxosdirect.com)**



► Nothing much happens in Finnish composer Magnus Lindberg's song cycle *Accused*. During the French Revolution a protester fighting for freedom and equality is asked by her jailer how she is doing. In the midst of the Cold War an East German citizen is grilled by the secret police about reading the popular West German news magazine *Der Spiegel*.

More recently, in the trial of WikiLeaks whistleblower Bradley (now Chelsea) Manning, a prosecution witness is cross-examined about Manning's idealism.

The texts, in French, German and English, are taken from transcripts of actual interrogations. At odds with their matter-of-fact banality, the music packs a real punch. All six roles are sung with relentless theatricality by the virtuosic soprano Anu Komsu. Canadian soprano Barbara Hannigan gave the world premiere in London in 2015, and Komsu sang the North American debut in Toronto two years later in a memorable concert with the Toronto Symphony, one of six co-commissioners.

The versatile Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, led by Hannu Lintu, gives a dynamic account of the dangers lurking beneath the ominous orchestral textures. But there is hope – in the resilient pizzicato strings, the defiant brass fanfares, and, at the end, the sublime vocalise with the soprano abandoning words altogether. It's a brilliant *coup de théâtre*.

Lindberg wrote *Accused* in 2014, but its timeliness is uncanny. Here it has been effectively paired with Lindberg's inventive *Two Episodes*, written two years later. Fortunately, texts and translations are included.

**Pamela Margles**

**John Aylward – Angelus  
Ecce Ensemble; Jean-Philippe Wurtz  
New Focus Recordings FCR261  
(newfocusrecordings.com)**



► The title of John Aylward's recording *Angelus* is derived from its Christian incipit – those first few words of the text: *Angelus Domini nuntiavit Marice* (The Angel of the Lord declared

unto Mary). Perhaps the angels called upon by these ten musical prayers are in fact more ancient mystical creatures of the Abrahamic Universe; or an even older one. No matter which you choose to believe – and even if you do not “believe” – otherworldly visions of your own are bound to ensue upon listening to this exquisitely ethereal music.

Aylward's *Angelus* is a series of reflective supplications and declaratives. They are prayers and inner meditations on, or with, spirit beings, albeit in the material world. They are also dialogues and existential arguments with the spiritual self. The composer makes no effort at all to disguise this in these works. In being drawn to this kind of contemplation, Aylward – like Luciano Berio – explores complex interactions of music and text; of recitation, singing with unusual and often complex instrumentation.

Vocalist Nina Guo's performance is wonderfully spry; at times even marvellously

deranged. Her declamatory cries in *Angelus Novus* and metaphorical conjuring in *Dream Images* is absolutely breathtaking. Meanwhile, the performance of the Ecce Ensemble is an inspired one. Their musicians intertwine their individual sensuous utterances playing winds, reeds, strings and percussion to make Aylward's ghostly compositions shimmer with something resembling an extraordinary awakening of real and imagined beings in the flesh and in the spirit.

**Raul da Gama**

**Affinity  
Sharon Isbin; Elizabeth Schulze; Isabel  
Leonard; Colin Davin; Maryland Symphony  
Orchestra  
Zoho ZM 202005 (zohomusic.com)**



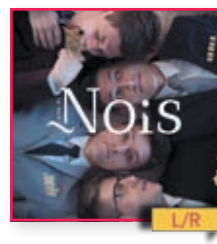
► Musical greats, in any genre, tend to possess a studious knowledge of musical tradition, channeled into a unique personal voice. It is this distinctive,

mature, yet vivacious sound we hear when listening to guitarist Sharon Isbin, and it only takes a cursory glimpse at her discography or biography to confirm a thorough education in classical guitar lineage. Her 2020 release *Affinity* is an impressive undertaking that offers a modern take on recurring themes from her prolific career. Most notably, her virtuosity and commitment to broadening the repertoire of the instrument through commissioned works.

The recording takes its name from *Affinity: Concerto for Guitar & Orchestra*, by Chris Brubeck. Brubeck's writing showcases Isbin in both technique and grace, providing an opening to the disc that is exciting, while not devoid of tender moments. At first I expected to hear more guitar, but after continued listening, Brubeck's orchestral writing balances perfectly with its soloist. A mature rendition of *El Decameron Negro*, written for Isbin by Leo Brouwer, is heard here a quarter century after Isbin's first recording the piece. The second unaccompanied guitar number we hear is by Grammy Award-winning Chinese composer Tan Dun, and has a more abstract sound, providing a welcome contrast to the aforementioned pieces and Antonio Lauro's *Waltz No.3*. The album's well-programmed closer, Richard Danielpour's *Of Love and Longing*, is a succinct yet compelling song cycle that truly keeps a listener on their toes until the last note.

**Sam Dickinson**

**Is This ~Nois  
~Nois  
Independent (noissaxophone.com)**



► *Is this ~Nois* (pronounced “noise”) opens with an intense performance of a riveting work: Hans Thomalla's *Albumblatt II*. The sounds are both discordant

and beautiful with half the quartet playing long vibrato-less tones alongside the others who play extremely drawn out multiphonics. The contrast and volume builds for most of the piece's four and a half minutes. It is a no-holds-barred introduction to this young quartet from Chicago. Craig Davis Pinson's *Dismantle* has all four players on alto saxophone and combines effective use of pad slapping, multiphonics and altissimo register in a very percussive and rhythmic piece. Niki Harlafti's *Vaisseau Fantôme* has the quartet playing seven saxophones over its length and is inspired by Ornette Coleman's album *Free Jazz*.

The quartet is “dedicated to the creation and performance of contemporary music” and has commissioned several of the pieces on the album. Most works utilize extended ranges, multiphonics and use of different saxophone configurations outside the standard soprano, alto, tenor and baritone quartet. This album is fresh and intense and I have to compliment the quartet on their bold and unique commitment to saxophone repertoire. Let's have more ~Nois!

**Ted Parkinson**

**Dawn Chorus  
Grand Valley State University New Music  
Ensemble  
Innova Recordings 044 (innova.mu)**



► Since 2014, the New Music Ensemble at Grand Valley State University (Allendale, MI) under director Bill Ryan has commissioned 20 American

composers to respond musically to U.S. national parks, with the ensemble subsequently touring to perform at these sites. In their fifth release, the eight astoundingly talented student musicians perform 11 of these commissioned works.

The musical styles travel across many musical paths. Title track *Dawn Chorus* by Phil Kline features birdsong-like flute, clarinet and flamboyant glockenspiel parts in slightly atonal counterpoint, emulating springtime early morning birdsong in Badlands National Park. More Badlands



inspiration as *Bite the Dust* composer Molly Joyce uses faster, slightly dissonant piano pulsing, loud, full-orchestration held notes and descending intervals to describe its disappointing land erosion.

Repeated low dark atonal pitches and circular minimalist fluttering flute star patterns recreate Arches National Park's night sky drama in former GVSU ensemble member Ashley Stanley's *Night Sketches*. Patrick Harlin's more traditional *Wind Cave*, inspired by Wind Cave National Park, features wind sounds painted by rapid violin swirls, tonal orchestral melodies and closing ripples. Big fun sound surprise in closing track *Canvas the Bear*, as composer Niko Schroeder sonically recreates a childhood sighting of a Yellowstone Park bear while riding in his granddad's jeep, using jazz/pop melody overtones, toe-tapping bear-walking rhythms, and unexpected ensemble one-two-three-four mid-piece vocal count.

Works by Biedenbender, Deemer, Herriott, Gardner, Matthusen and Biggs complete this nature-inspired sound painting release.

**Tiina Kiik**

## JAZZ AND IMPROVISED

### Speak Your Name HiFiLo (Todd Pentney) Independent (hifilo.com)



► *Speak Your Name* is the debut solo release from keyboardist/producer HiFiLo, better known as Todd Pentney. Pentney is probably best known for

his role in the JUNO-award-winning Allison Au Quartet, though he's active in many genres from modern straight-ahead acoustic jazz to indie, pop and hip-hop. In many ways, *Speak Your Name* can be understood as a synthesis of Pentney's various musical experiences: sweeping, stereo synths give way to dense harmony; athletic solos are juxtaposed with sections of sparse, ethereal melody; relaxed backbeats coexist with pulsing, dance-inflected moments. In and of themselves, these qualities are not new. Over the last 15 years, many recordings that fall under the expansive umbrella of jazz have contained some combination of these features, and *Speak Your Name* shares some similarities with recent works by Thundercat, Mehliana and Knowler. What is unique about *Speak Your Name* is that Pentney is doing all of this on his own.

With the exception of three special guests (flutist Rob Christian, vocalist Alex Samaras and guitarist Robb Cappelletto) – and some uncredited vocals on the album's final track – *Speak Your Name* is all Pentney. The end result speaks to a model of musical production that has more in common with modern

artists like Flying Lotus and Kaytranada than it does with the kind of jazz fusion that the mention of synths might evoke. With *Speak Your Name*, Pentney has crafted a beautiful, expansive album, and has thoughtfully reimagined the role of the producer in a jazz setting.

**Colin Story**

### Ascension Robert Lee Independent (robertleemusic.com)



► Up-and-coming Toronto acoustic bassist, composer and bandleader Robert Lee, has released this delightful debut album, an energizing and unique

foray into the contemporary jazz world. The record maintains an interesting balance showcasing Lee's talent as a composer and bassist while putting the spotlight on the other fantastic musicians featured throughout, such as JUNO Award-winning saxophonist Allison Au, well-known guitarist Trevor Giancola and vibraphonist Michael Davidson. The album takes inspiration from songwriters such as Bon Iver, Christian McBride, Brian Blade and Iron & Wine, making for a unique musical blend of "modern chamber music, jazz and contemporary folk."

Whether the listener likes traditional or more modern jazz, each piece brings forth elements of both, making this a downright treat for the ear. The title track starts off the album and is a deeply personal and introspective story about "searching for the greater meaning in life" which is reflected in the wandering, yet positivity inducing saxophone melody and a general sense of discovery felt throughout the piece. *Burton's Bounce* is a great, swing-style piece with nimble movement in Lee's pizzicato bass line and the dancing saxophone, vibraphone and guitar solos. Closing out the album is *Cardinal on the Cobblestone*, a beautiful track in which Mingjia Chen's captivating voice, Ginacola's soft guitar riffs and Lee's gracefully plucked notes meld together for an uplifting and wonderful end to this musical journey.

**Kati Kiilaspea**

### Franken Horn Audrey Ochoa Chronograph Records CR-080 (audreychoa.com)



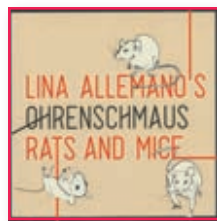
► Surely many jazz enthusiasts who have kept up on contemporary artists have come across famed Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews

and his unique style of trombone-centric jazz, but Canadian Audrey Ochoa's newest release proves yet again that we have our own northern version of the aforementioned golden horn talent. Ochoa manages to successfully blend the old and the new, invoking feelings of nostalgia while introducing elements of modernism through electronic remixes of some tracks by electronica DJ Battery Poacher alongside more traditional pieces. Genre boundaries are cast aside here as we travel through sultry Latin-flavoured tracks to chamber music and unique string arrangements by Ochoa herself thrown into the mix.

*Swamp Castles* starts off the album with a driving drum and bass groove which is overlaid by an energetic trombone line supported by a beautiful and captivating counter melody within the strings. *Benchwarming* takes the listener into a Latin musical world with smooth trombones, Chris Andrew's diverse chord progressions on the piano and Luis Tovar's sizzling conga rhythms pulling everything together. The track *The Huggy Dance* is a personal favourite as it really showcases how electronica can be successfully brought into the jazz world to add a fascinating contemporary flavour that is just delightful to listen to, a lo-fi groove that pulls you right in. A true breath of fresh air suitable for anyone getting into the jazz scene or just looking for something new.

**Kati Kiilaspea**

### Rats and Mice Lina Allemano's Ohrenschmaus Lumo Records LM 2019-10 (linaallemano.com)



► Splitting her time between Toronto and Berlin, local trumpeter Lina Allemano now has a European combo to complement her long-standing Canadian

bands. Rock-solid German drummer Michael Griener and agile Norwegian electric bassist Dan Peter Sundland bring startling originality to the trumpeter's compositions which broaden from Allemano's cunning use of extended techniques. Frequently shadowing Allemano's lead, the bassist's thumb pops and moderated slaps perfectly augment trumpet timbres whether they're spit out at a speedy pace or as grounded gurgling growls. As for the drummer, his tasteful side clips and rolling ruffs ensure the tunes maintain a steady pulse.

Allemano's lead encompasses everything from creating expanded multiphonics, spitting out shrill brass runs, hand-muted effects and unexpected basso snarls. She exhibits a variety of effects on a track like *Ostsee*. Mixing textural advances and heraldic overblowing, positioned drum cracks help

establish the tune's horizontal groove which she then decorates with repeated note patterns sequentially squeezed from the high and low pitches. While her aggressive capillary asides and the bassist's juiced twangs sometimes threaten to upset the session's ambulatory pace, the trio is sophisticated enough to avoid sonic stalemates. You can hear this on *Hooray Norway*, the final, extended track which includes Allemano answering her own brassy trills with tongue flutters, as string slaps and cymbal beats help preserve a notable theme which emphasizes grace as well as melancholy. Overall, Allemano's tale of two cities has an obviously happy ending.

**Ken Waxman**

### Toronto Streets Tour Harrison Argatoff Independent (harrisonargatoff.com)



▶ With the release of his debut solo recording, uber-talented, Toronto-based tenorist Harrison Argatoff has rendered a recording of remarkable creativity.

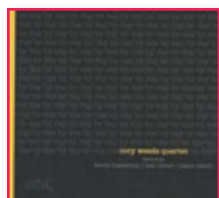
In 2019, Argatoff undertook a daunting project – he performed 30 consecutive solo concerts on the streets of the Tdot, which were exclusively promoted by releasing only the postal codes of the concert locations! Subsequently, the (I assume) highly motivated music listeners had to embark on an urban quest (throughout the revealed postal code area) for the exact location of the concert in question.

Originally from Kelowna, B.C., Argatoff is a recent graduate of the University of Toronto jazz program. He has included nine original compositions here, as well as the traditional Zimbabwean folk song, *Muroro* (taught by Moyo Mutamba) and the haunting Russian lullaby *White Acacia*, which comes directly from Argatoff's own Doukhobor heritage, and which he heard sung by his grandmother as a child. Both Argatoff's gorgeous singing voice and his lyrical tenor sound are featured here.

On *Wait*, Argatoff presents us with not only the hiss and whirr of Big Smoke traffic, but also a trance-inducing, Philip Glass-ish piece, rife with circular breathing and an almost whimsical air. Conversely, the delightful *Muroro* bobs and weaves through melodic intervals and comforting triads. A true standout is the deeply moving *Rainfall*, which seems to conjure all of the sadness and longing that the human heart can hold. Long, powerful, sinuous tones define this piece and also underscore Argatoff's considerable technical skill. With *Flicker*, Argatoff transforms his tenor into a resonant fog horn, a helicopter and perhaps the sprockets of a Super 8 projector; while *Outro* perfectly parenthesizes this innovative, and thought-provoking recording.

**Lesley Mitchell-Clarke**

### Day by Day Cory Weeds Quartet Cellar Music CM082619 (cellarlive.com)



▶ Cory Weeds has made so many recordings with David Hazeltine that you wouldn't be wrong in assuming that the two are musical twins. *Day by Day* offers more

evidence of this. The recording, an exquisite borehole into the jazzy stratum, reveals a treasure of both standards and original material, masterfully arranged by Hazeltine. Joining in the festivities are two other West-Coast masters: percussion colourist Jesse Cahill and Ken Lister, a bassist with a glorious rumble. Far from being on the sidelines, they play themselves into the proverbial thick of things.

Trios have captured our musical imagination from Art Tatum to Oscar Peterson, Keith Jarrett and Jimmy Giuffre among others. But this quartet does so too, reminding us of another classic quartet where magic occurred time and again. Weeds' alto saxophone and Hazeltine's piano are the lead voices and they sing mighty songs – song after song – as they jostle and joust with one another. Two bodies, one brain is a phrase that comes to mind. Once *Blues de Troye* kicks things off there's no stopping them. This repertoire is riveting from start to finish. Not many recordings have that quality these days.

Hazeltine's arrangements ensure that there is plenty of showtime for all four musicians. The joys of this music are also heartily celebrated by Cahill whose fizzing brushes and sticks are goaded by Lister's gravitational bass. Put this all together and indeed you have *the* classic Canadian quartet.

**Raul da Gama**

### Baker's Dozen – Celebrating Chet Baker Johnny Summers Cellar Music CM100819 (cellarlive.com)



▶ How timely, amid this global pandemic, with folks who have never so much as turned on an oven now cultivating sourdough starters and baking up a

storm, that I have the pleasure of reviewing Calgary-based trumpet player and vocalist, Johnny Summers' *Baker's Dozen: Celebrating Chet Baker*. Most notable, and impressive, about Summers' tribute to the jazz great is that rather than emulate Baker's style, he takes us on a refreshing journey of some of Baker's classics, putting his own distinctive spin on each track, of which there are 13 (as you likely surmised by the album title).

Take *My Funny Valentine* for example. While Baker's approach is spare and ruminate, here Summers ingeniously employs the talents of both a string quartet and the 17-piece Calgary Jazz Orchestra, which he founded in 2004 and leads with his trumpet. The result is a lush and layered arrangement, featuring Summers' warm, inviting vocals and beautiful horn work.

Other lovely, and lively, turns can be heard in the strictly instrumental versions of *Time After Time* and *You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To*, where the bass, piano and drums really swing, and Summers' solo work is stellar!

Summers' vocal work on *Embraceable You* and *You Go To My Head* is also outstanding: luxurious, sensitive and sensual; some serious crooning there. So, while you're waiting for that loaf of sourdough to rise, kick back with a julep or two and enjoy some time with this delectable *Baker's Dozen*.

**Sharna Searle**

### Resist Gordon Grdina Septet Irabragast Records 012 (gordongrdinamusic.com)



▶ Vancouver-based guitarist and oud player Gordon Grdina has emerged forcefully over the past decade, whether integrating jazz and Middle Eastern music or

blending free jazz and fusion with a series of all-star bands. *Resist* is his most ambitious recording to date, both as composer and bandleader. The group combines two of Grdina's Vancouver ensembles, his trio with bassist Tommy Babin and drummer Kenton Loewen and the East Van Strings with violinist Jesse Zubot, violist Eyvind Kang and cellist Peggy Lee. There's also a special addition, saxophonist Jon Irabagon, whose intensity and invention often come to the fore.

The title track is the main event, a 23-minute suite that begins with an elegiac string passage that compounds a distinctive musical language from the Second Viennese School and microtonal elements that suggest Middle Eastern modes. Other movements include an oud interlude that dramatizes an intense isolation, while passages of tumult are focused by Irabagon's inventive squall. At the conclusion, rising string patterns express resolute determination.

Two other tracks isolate and develop materials from *Resist: Resist the Middle* intensifies a central passage, with Irabagon and the classical strings slashing and twisting through one another's phrases; *Ever Onward* revisits a passage of the strings and oud with a stark, welling drama. There are also two distinct pieces that hold promise for the future: an evocative classical guitar composition,



*Seeds 11*, and the incandescent free jazz of *Varscona* from Grdina, Babin, Loewen and Irabagon.

**Stuart Broomer**

### **Irrational Revelation & Mutual Humiliation Peripheral Vision Independent ([peripheralvisionmusic.com](http://peripheralvisionmusic.com))**



► Peripheral Vision could be described as “cerebral grooving jazz” where any of the tunes can effortlessly change course throughout their performance. The

catchy titles (*Mutual Humiliation Society*, *Neo-Expressionism for Pacifists* or *Title Crisis*), off-kilter melodies and changing textures show this group is always thinking the big post-bop jazz thoughts. Compositions are by guitarist Don Scott and bassist Michael Herring. Drummer Nick Fraser is always highly inventive and works to actively shape the music, dynamically changing the beat and inflections from one moment to the next. Trevor Hogg’s saxophone lines are restrained and sinewy combining melodic patterns with a touch of swagger.

Some highlights include *Brooklyn’s Bearded* which was inspired by some Eastern European jazz heard at the famous Brooklyn music venue Barbès. It begins with a moody sax line over top of a lazily contrapuntal guitar, then works into an elegant sax solo, a very beautiful, circus-like whirl of major key sound in the middle and into an intense, yet precise, guitar solo. *For Kent Monkman* is breezy with an elegant melody over a fast walking bass. Michael Davidson’s vibraphone adds a kind of 50s *Mad Men* feel so the tune mixes periods just like the famous artist does with his paintings. *Irrational Revelation* is this group’s fifth album and a double one at that; it offers delightful surprises and great playing on every track.

**Ted Parkinson**

### **Supernova 4 Félix Stüssi; Jean Derome; Normand Guilbeault; Pierre Tanguay Effendi Records FND159 ([effendirecords.com](http://effendirecords.com))**



► Montreal-based musicians Jean Derome (alto/baritone saxophone, flute), Normand Guilbeault (double bass) and Pierre Tanguay (drums) were approached

by Swiss/Montreal-based pianist/composer/producer Félix Stüssi to combine musical forces to perform his works. Recorded live in 2019 at Montreal’s Chapelle historique du

Bon-Pasteur and at Oscar Peterson Concert Hall, this is out-of-this-world uplifting music.

Stüssi’s compositional style encompasses the traditional to modern jazz with tons of inherent improvisational opportunities. Highlights include the opening track, *T.R.T (Tapir Racing Team)* an upbeat, happy, tonal toe-tapping tune, with contrasting slower solo sections, showcasing formidable tight ensemble work and solo musicianship. The exuberant *Bagatelle* features an underlying humorous jazz feel contrasted by intermittent slow rubato sections and Stüssi’s flashy, fast-trilled piano solos. Guilbeault’s contrasting high and deep low resonating held and plucked bass solo opens *Urubu*, a more atonal piece highlighted by quasi-unison piano/sax lead-line playing and subsequent full-band loud section. The closing more modern-sounding *Super 8* features more solos and a full band finishing with a bang and cymbal crash. Also included is Jean Derome’s composition *La Nouvelle Africaine* which opens with an extended Tanguay drum kit solo with singing cymbal effects, leading to upbeat clear ensemble playing and a rapid, intense, clever Derome sax solo.

*Supernova 4* with its unique compositions and solo/ensemble performances are equal if not superior to April’s supermoon or a supernova star blast – memorable, breathtaking and powerful.

**Tiina Kiik**

### **Brain Drain Gorilla Mask Clean Feed CF 540 CD ([cleanfeed-records.com](http://cleanfeed-records.com))**



► With the power of an oil derrick pumping, Gorilla Mask’s Peter Van Huffel uses his baritone saxophone throughout to unearth subterranean

textures, in order to extract robust dynamics that slam against Roland Fidezius’ electric bass hammering and percussionist Rudi Fischerlehner’s comprehensive battering. All eight tracks composed for this Berlin-based band by Kingston, Ontario-native Van Huffel straddle metal force and improvisational exploration. Despite leaning towards the former, the trio never strays into excess.

Sonically defining the difference between a headbanger and a *Hoser* on a track named for the Ontario taunt, the narrative of sutured bass and saxophone outbursts are almost too thick to be partitioned. But the drummer’s oblique ruffs and rebounds retain a whiff of the unexpected. In the same way, Fidezius uses effects to suggest ringing guitar-like licks on tunes like *Barracuda*; and the saxophonist sometimes turns from baritone rumbles or altissimo squeaks to airy alto saxophone trills.

Additionally the group is versatile enough

to brush against bedrock funk on *Caught in a Helicopter Blade*, as reed honks, drum pops and string sluices up the excitement level. But the best demonstration of balancing insight and intensity comes on the extended *Drum Song* where intense kinetics radiate from Fischerlehner’s cymbal clashes, bell ringing and rim shots, as electronic-fattened dual reed timbres and bass twangs steamroll the theme forward.

While Canada’s musical loss may be Germany’s gain, the result is a notable and individual band identity.

**Ken Waxman**

## **POT POURRI**

### **Impressions of Debussy Lori Sims; Andrew Rathbun; Jeremy Siskind Centaur Records ([andrewrathbun.com](http://andrewrathbun.com))**



► With its evocative harmonies and imaginative rhythms, the music of Debussy particularly lends itself to jazz interpretations and the blending of the two idioms

meld perfectly on this Centaur recording featuring nine of Debussy’s *Préludes* played by pianists Lori Simms and Jeremy Siskind together with soprano saxophonist Andrew Rathburn. The disc is a delight!

Comprising 18 tracks altogether, the well-ordered sequence features Sim’s performance of a prelude as it was originally written, immediately followed by the same piece reimagined by either Siskind or Rathburn and performed by the duo. The arrangements were first presented at the Gilmore Keyboard Festival in 2016.

Sims’ performance is poised and sensitive, at all times beautifully nuanced. And what is particularly appealing is the manner in which the jazz interpretations reinvent the original in such a creative way that frequently the piece is transformed altogether. As an example, the esoteric and mysterious mood of preludes such as *Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l’air du soir* and *Feuilles mortes* is almost abandoned in the jazz version and replaced instead by the use of a brisker tempo and jazz harmonies in an amiable conversation between the two parts. Yet other re-interpretations are closer to the original, such as *Minstrels* with its quirky rhythms and slapstick good humour.

Throughout, the duo plays with a freshness and spontaneity that truly breathes new life into traditional repertoire in a very convincing way – how could Debussy not have approved?! *Impressions of Debussy* is perfect listening for a summer evening – or anytime for that matter. Recommended.

**Richard Haskell**

**Michael Daugherty – This Land Sings  
(Inspired by the life and times of Woody Guthrie)**

**Annika Socolofsky; John Daugherty; Dogs of Desire; David Alan Miller  
Naxos 8.559889 (naxosdirect.com)**



► Celebrated American composer Michael Daugherty's musical tribute *This Land Sings: Inspired by the Life and Times of Woody Guthrie* arrived just

after George Floyd's death and the protests against racism. The CD's theme of social injustice in the songs and life of Woody Guthrie (1912-1967) is timely. But how did Daugherty in 2016 compose music out of music? The answer is versatility. Travelling across America in space and time, the tribute includes many stops: Utah at the 1915 death of singer-labour activist Joe Hill; Oklahoma during the 1930s dust storms; with Guthrie as a cook on US Merchant Marine convoy ships; and at a Jewish community in New York where Guthrie lived after World War Two. The composer alludes to well-known Guthrie songs and parodies traditional American songs, mixing in his own often-satirical poetry and music. The brilliant David Alan Miller-conducted small ensemble Dogs of Desire begins with a quasi-Stravinsky-ish *Overture* that has eerie suggestions of Guthrie's *This Land Is Your Land*. Soprano Annika Socolofsky's low vibrato-less sound is especially effective in the duet *The Ghost and Will of Joe Hill*, but I wondered if baritone John Daugherty's ringing timbre was appropriate in this composition's initially rough milieu.

Nevertheless, the two singers later became the work's saving graces as Daugherty's lyrical musical voice emerged. Hearing the spare voice/single instrument combinations in *Bread and Roses* (soprano/bassoon) and *I'm Gonna Walk That Lonesome Valley* (baritone/clarinet), I had travelled a long way indeed.

**Roger Knox**

**Strings for Peace**

**Amjad Ali Khan; Sharon Isbin; Amaan Ali Bangash; Ayaan Ali Bangash  
Zoho ZM 202004 (zohomusic.com)**



► Innovative Grammy-winning guitarist Sharon Isbin has just released a new recording that not only pushes cultural musical barriers and stereotypes,

but breaks them down entirely. Isbin is joined here by iconic sarod master, Amjad Ali Khan and his talented sons, Amaan and Ayaan Ali Bangash. Noted drummer/tabla player Amit Kavthekar, adds his considerable talents

to both the intensity and the beauty of the repertoire. The project itself is comprised of stirring ragas and talas, composed in the traditions of region-specific North Indian classical music. The CD was recorded in New York City following the ensemble's successful and aptly titled "Strings for Peace" 2019 tour of India, and features four original compositions by Khan that are based on popular ragas, and were written and arranged specifically for Isbin's transcendent musicianship, as well as for her deep, intuitive understanding of this thrilling music, steeped in antiquity.

With over 30 diverse albums to her credit, Isbin's sibilant and precise guitar work is the perfect complement for Khan's ancient sarod – both in timbre and tone. Of special note are

*By the Moon*, in which languid, dreamy drone tones conjure up the magic and mystery of the moon's esoteric power; in contrast, *Love Avalanche* is a rousing, rhythmic celebration, involving an intricate and melodic musical conversation between Isbin and Khan. The irresistible *Sacred Evening* is an experience of gentle, fragile beauty as well as a dip into the eternal sea of oneness that we are all a part of.

This inspired ensemble will spread their much-needed message of peace, beauty, unity and understanding through music in an upcoming United States cross-country tour next year, beginning with appearances at the world-famous Tanglewood and Caramoor Festivals.

**Lesley Mitchell-Clarke**

## Something in the Air

Novel Large Ensemble Strategies are expressed  
by Bands All over the World

KEN WAXMAN

**D**espite the difficulty of organizing large ensembles, determined musicians strive to realize the unique mixture of expanded colours and rhythm only available from this format. Although finances mean that the groups here are either occasional or organized for specific projects, what they lack in permanence they make up for in quality presentations.



The most topical program, sadly related to the March 29 death at 86 of Polish composer **Krzysztof Penderecki**, is **Actions (Rune Grammofon RCD 2212 [rune Grammofon.com](http://rune Grammofon.com))**. Conceived of before his death and eagerly encouraged by the composer, it's the first performance of Penderecki's mixture of improvisation and composition since its premiere in 1971. With the same number and almost exact instrumentation of the initial band, the 14-piece Scandinavian **Fire! Orchestra**, conducted by baritone saxophonist Mats Gustafsson, devises a personal interpretation. Negotiating the peaks and valleys

of the creation, the group works its way from an introduction heavily weighted towards growling brass from tubist Per-Åke Holmlander and trombonist Maria Bertel to a protracted silence broached by muted tones from one of three trumpeters and propelled into a steady groove from bassists Elsa Bergman and Torbjörn Zetterberg. From then on, until a semi-climax at the midpoint, fruitful dialogues emerge involving distorted runs from guitarist Reine Fiske and Gustafsson's low-pitched baritone slurs. A middle section driven by kettle-drum thumps and gong resonations from Andreas Werliin plus Christer Bothén's bass clarinet continuum is further propelled by Alexander Zethson's ecclesiastical organ pumps that judder just below the polyphonic surface. Overblowing snorts from Gustafsson coupled with surging glossolalia from the other reeds lead to a final section of pumping guitar distortion and a capillary explosion. With the massed instruments' layered top, middle and bottom textures equally audible as a crescendo, brief guitar frills and organ washes signal the finale.

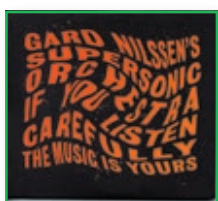
Moving from the music of an older Polish composer to that of two young Canadians is **Both Are True (Greenleaf Music GRE CD 1075 [greenleafmusic.com](http://greenleafmusic.com))** by the **Webber/Morris Big Band**. The 19-piece ensemble is named for its co-leaders, now Brooklyn-based. Anna Webber and Angela Morris both compose, play tenor saxophone and flute, and split conducting chores. The other players are some of New York's top young veterans. Lighter in tone and movement than the Fire! Orchestra's interpretation, tracks range from the chipper to the atmospheric. The brief Webber-composed *Rebonds* for instance, has a slinky cartoon villain-like theme





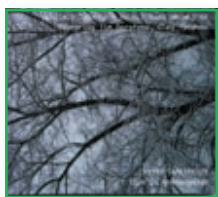
personified by the slow acceleration of guitarist Dustin Carlson's distorted pedal frails among low-pitched snorts by four trombonists. In contrast Webber's extended *Reverses* is a pensive mid-range creation of reed gurgles complemented by a rococo-like brass arrangement that slides via Marc Hannaford's piano comping into a modulated smorgasbord of swing effects, further

opened up midway through. Trumpeter Kenny Warren emphasizes flutter tonguing and grace notes upfront as textures from the other sections couple and separate in the background. A complete change of pace, Morris' *And it Rolled Right Down* suggests what would happen if a C&W ditty was interpreted by crack improvisers. Interpolating a marching band motif, the piece lopes along as clarinetist Adam Schneit and bass trombonist Reginald Chapman face off earnestly before a funky plunger-muted snarl from trumpeter Jake Henry confirms the piece's links to jazz. Elsewhere brief unaccompanied sax duets confirm the co-leaders' improvisational skills. Overall, slick arrangements make the band's program audacious as well as animated.



Another large group dedicated to the interpretation of a single composer's work is Norwegian percussionist **Gard Nilssen's Supersonic Orchestra** (ODIN CD 9572 [odinrecords.com](http://odinrecords.com)). With *If You Listen Carefully the Music Is Yours*, the 16-piece group blasts through six Nilssen tunes with the speed, exuberance and ferment that would have been apparent if Maynard Ferguson's flashy

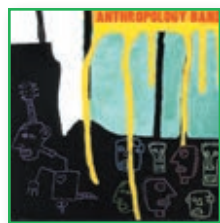
big bands had included more sophisticated improvisers. The band's cumulative textures are also idiosyncratic since the Supersonic features only two trumpets and one trombone along with seven saxophonists, some of whom double on clarinets, plus three double bassists and three drummers. Despite refined string patterning from some of Scandinavia's most accomplished bassists, the band's lack of chordal instruments means that melodic twists and turns are most often marked by short contemplative sequences that stand out from the lusty arrangement. At the same time a constant glaze of group stimulation permeates the live disc, from the introductory *Premium Processing Fee* to the concluding *Bytta Bort Kua Fikk Fela Igjen*. The first is notable as skyscraper-high trumpet tones and riffing reeds answer bass drum and cymbal patterns before settling into descriptive tongue slaps and slurs from baritone saxophonist André Roligheten and his section mates. Meanwhile the concluding Norwegian-language-titled track finds everyone slapping, scraping, bouncing and ratcheting additional percussion instruments alongside the drummers for a dancing Scandinavian variant on Afro-Cuban beats. Low-pitched brass stutters later push the narrative into an explosive, multi-vibrated finale. Along the way, players pilot a path that draws equally on John Coltrane's large group work, Norwegian folk melodies, unforced Count Basie-like swing and African-oriented percussion. Almost all of the soloists distinguish themselves, but with so many playing similar instruments, it's impossible to praise the unaccompanied bassist or bassists who bridge the rhythmic gap in the middle of a couple of numbers or to whom to ascribe the standout mellow tenor sax musings or the twists and tongue-slapping turns of higher-pitched alto saxophone excitement.



That isn't the problem with **Sound Tapestries** (SoLyd Records SLR 0440 [vladimirtarasov.com](http://vladimirtarasov.com)), since all soloists in the **Krugly Band Orchestra** (sic) are named as the 17-piece ensemble plays a multi-hued, multi-sectional composition by percussionist **Vladimir Tarasov**. A former member of the USSR's legendary Ganelin Trio, the drummer now splits his time between

Lithuania and California. However this complex and cadenced

performance features all Russian musicians and was recorded in Tarasov's birth place of Arkhangelsk. Although like the Supersonic Orchestra three drummers are featured, the swish of cymbal, hand patting and cross rumbles are used throughout as piquant accents rather than the whole sonic meal, and integrated within the band's well-modulated execution of the material. Especially prominent is the funky bass line of Denis Shushkov, whose heavy gauge strokes cement the rhythmic base. While he holds the bottom, the most frequent arrangement involves contrapuntal challenges as soloists alternate with full-band responses. Another standout is pianist Grigory Sandomirsky. He's equally adept at dense swirling dynamics, as on *Tapestry #7*, which mates a Latin-like groove with Eastern Bloc dance rhythms, the crushing rock-like thrums of guitarist Tim Dorofeev and the yearning tones of Anton Kotikov's Armenian double reed, the duduk. Later, Sandomirsky's pensive and reflective chording is accompanied with taste and sensitivity by drummer Tarasov, Oleg Yudanov and Peter Ivshin in a moderated fashion on *Tapestry #3* (for S.J.F), a showpiece that opens up into a sympathetic duet between the breathy expression of tenor saxophonist Alexey Kruglov and the buttery triple-tongued affiliations of trombonist Maxim Piganov. The climactic *Tapestry #6* brings the polyphonic program to a masterful close as trumpet squeals and reed spurts relax from shrill scattershot explosions to casually swinging motion alongside flexible percussion claps.



The most unusual use of a large ensemble however is a two-CD set by the **Anthropology Band** ([Discus 90 CD discus-music.co.uk](http://Discus90.com)). On the first disc a septet of mostly rhythm instruments interprets British saxophonist **Martin Archer's** 15-part suite. On the second CD, ten brass and woodwind players, with Archer and trumpeter/flugelhornist Charlotte Keeffe the only holdovers, add carefully arranged tonal

extensions to the same pieces. The upshot is two vastly dissimilar variations. Awash with Pat Thomas' shaking keyboard inflections, Corey Mwamba's crafty vibraphone accents, plus interconnecting rhythm stabilization from drummer Peter Fairclough and bass guitarist Dave Sturt, the effervescent first program vamps along with space made for slurry half-valve effects from Keeffe and waves of corkscrew multiphonics from Archer. Even as the theme is shattered with brief solos, a repetitive ostinato is maintained with shuffle drumbeats and chunky guitar twangs from Chris Sharkey. While forceful beats also keep the sequences spiralling with blues-jazz-rock affiliations, a snowflake sprinkle of vibe resonance and moderated flugelhorn fluttering maintain a lyrical centre. The swinging finale emphasizes both currents with aggressive drumbeats and distorted guitar runs as prominent as melodic Gabriel-styled trumpet blasts. Adding nine additional players transforms the suite. Evolving at a swifter pace, intertwined horn textures and solos fill in the spaces left by echoing bass lines and guitar splatters. With the subsequent sonic fullness taking on more obvious pastoral effects via orchestral instruments like Mick Somerset's bubbly flutes. Later though, before altissimo reed screams and brassy emphasis make interpretations overly cacophonous, tracks are rhythmically grounded with logical forward motion. This strategy is most obvious on *People Talking Blues* as shaking keyboard riffs and pointed guitar patternings are subordinated by Nathan Bettany's nasal oboe tones and Keeffe's mellow flugelhorn until the rhythm unveils a cymbal-clashing climax. From that point on, the narratives rebound between sympathetic horn input including the trumpets' bugle-like pitches and five-part reed section harmonies on one hand and a hypnotic bass guitar beat and chugging percussion on the other. With whistling horn slurs and stutters, frailling guitar licks and intensified tremolos from the rhythm section, the orchestral version of the concluding *The Wrong Stuff 4 U* is infused with the same equilibrium between rhythm and refinement as the septet variation.

A mature demonstration of how expanded instrumental groups can illuminate and intensify a musical program is illustrated not only on this disc but on the others as well. **●**

# Old Wine, New Bottles | Fine Old Recordings Re-Released

**Ignaz Friedman Complete Recordings (1923-1941)**  
**Ignaz Friedman**  
**Danacord DACOCD861-864 (naxosdirect.com)**



► Ignaz Friedman was born in Podgórze, near Kraków in 1882. His prodigious abilities were apparent and he studied with Hugo Riemann in Leipzig. He entered the class of the renowned pedagogue, Theodore Leschetizky in Vienna. "Under Leschetizky he developed a technique surpassing all others and in 1904 made his concert debut that became the stuff of legends." In 1914 he settled in Berlin where

there is a plaque in Pariser Strasse that commemorates his stay in the city. He toured in Europe and America until 1914 when the outbreak of war found him touring in Australia where he remained, enjoying a successful career, there and in New Zealand, as a teacher and performer. He was married to a Russian Countess, Manya Schidlowsky, a relative of Tolstoy. Friedman was deservedly acknowledged by critics including Harold C. Schonberg and colleagues, Sergei Rachmaninoff and others, as pianist-among-pianists. He died on Australia Day, January 28, 1948. Friedman was an editor and a composer with several of his compositions heard here meticulously restored, as are all entries in the set *Ignaz Friedman Complete Recordings from the LP years, 1923-1941* (six cds for the price of three).

When I was quite young, the usual, most-expressed evaluation of a neighbours' child playing our piano was he or she "has a nice touch." Those two words seemed to cover the situation quite nicely and pleased the proud parent. Back to the present. In these recordings, in gentle passages, there is often the illusion that Friedman is able play the notes without striking the keys. Now, that is a "nice touch." This is not to say that this quality is omnipresent but it is there often enough across the 87 tracks on the six discs. Included are works by Scarlatti, Mozart, Widor, Beethoven (*Moonlight Sonata*) Schubert, and lots of Chopin (Mazurkas, Waltzes, Polonaises, etc.), for which he was renowned. Also Mendelssohn (*Songs without Words*), Gluck, Brahms, Hummel, Paganini, Liszt, Dvořák, Grieg, Rubinstein, Moszkowski, Paderewski, Suk, Mittler, and, of course, Ignaz Friedman. Bronislaw Huberman is heard in the *Kreutzer Sonata*.

I put disc one in the player with but a cursory look at the contents and was so enamored that I soon had no inclination to do anything else but sit back and enjoy disc two...

**Bruce Surtees**

**Mozart – Serenade in B-Flat K361**  
**Toronto Chamber Winds; Winston Webber**  
**Crystal Records CD646 (crystalrecords.com)**



► In his novel *Steppenwolf*, Herman Hesse depicted Wolfgang Mozart as a smiling Buddha-like immortal. Peter Shaffer, in his play *Amadeus*, depicts him as human, a vulgar young goofball with uncanny abilities, who had a sense of his music's importance beyond that assigned by his patrons. In the play, upon hearing the slow movement of the *Serenade No.10* in B-flat Major

K361 "Gran Partita," the character Antonio Salieri describes with awe the beautiful simplicity of its construction; he believes he is hearing the voice of God. His disillusion with the human form supplying that voice provides the drama for the entire play.

The theme of immortality rises before me as I listen to this release: these are all voices from the past, a recording made in Massey Hall in 1982, featuring some of the finest Toronto wind players from the time. Many of them were my heroes as I grew into the profession, and some remain active today. It is also an artifact of the time when the elite musical world was a men's club.

The performance is very fine, and if it tends more toward a representation of Hesse's Mozart than Shaffer's, it does so with warmth and style, and with a commitment to proper performance practice. This feature makes the CD well worth owning: the research into proper articulation and ornamentation was carried out by Daniel Leeson, one of the performers and a Mozart scholar. The results are quite pleasant, and instructive as well. It's good to hear the freedom from the page that James Campbell's ornaments demonstrate. The virtuosic *Finale: Rondo Allegro molto* is packed with flurries of 16th notes articulated at blinding speed.

Among the voices singing out from the recent past, I am most affected by that of Harry Sargous, at one time the principal oboe of the Toronto Symphony. If the account of the piece here has a flaw it would be that it is careful, rather than joyous. Sargous, however, seems to call out to his colleagues with his tone, and beseech them to revel in both the sacred and profane aspects of the music of this immortal fool.

**Max Christie**

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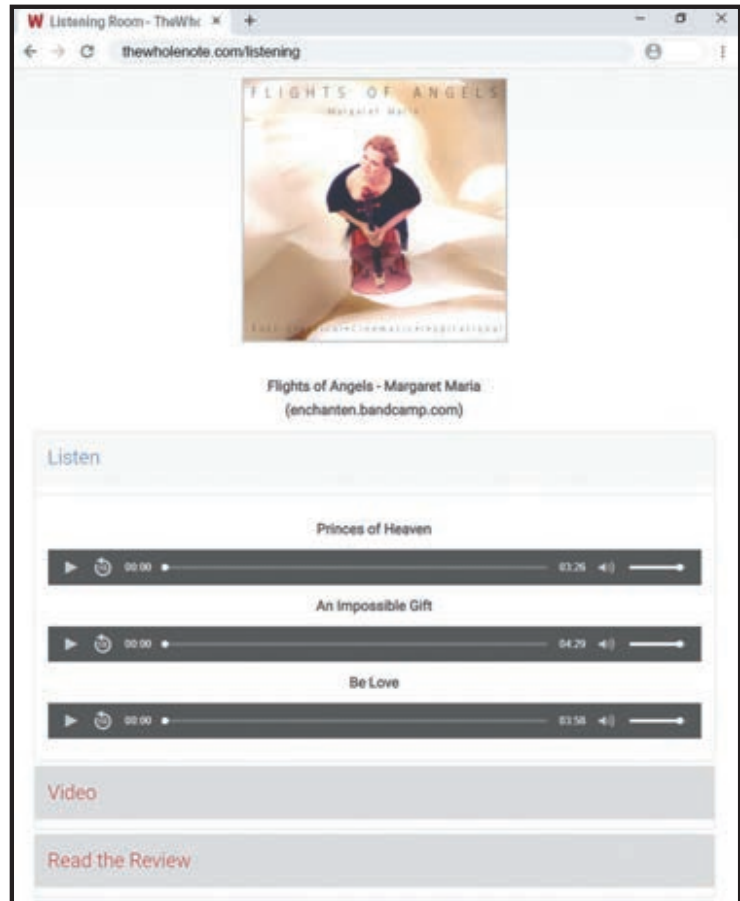
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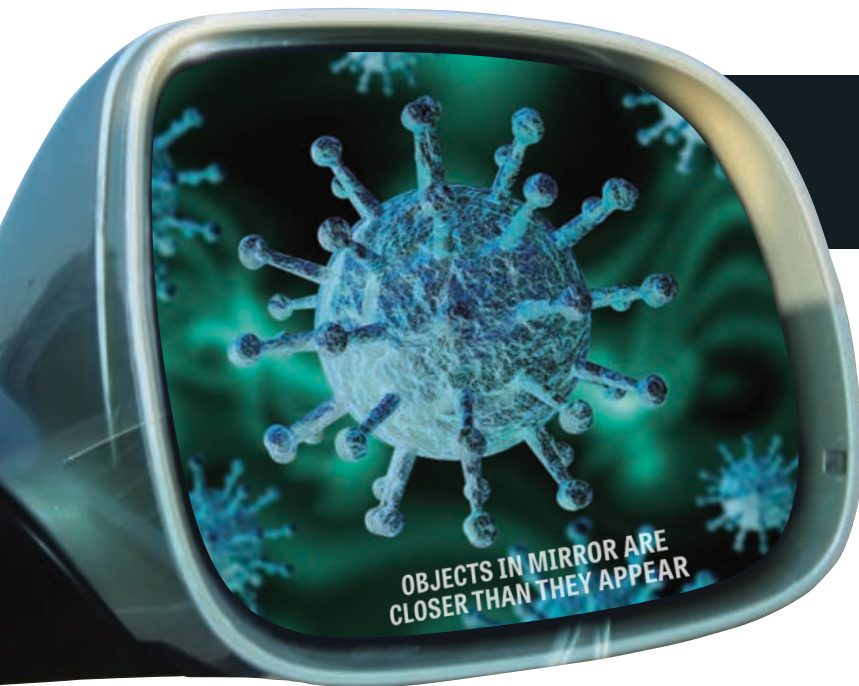
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# REAR VIEW MIRROR

## COVID Behind, a Reckoning Ahead

**Can we render into sound the new realities that are struggling to be born?**

ROBERT HARRIS

**A**s we end this first phase of our new reality, there is much about the coronavirus that stalks us that we still do not know. But given what we do know today – that you're more likely to catch the virus indoors, seated for long periods of time in relatively close proximity to your neighbours – I feel pretty confident in saying that normal concert life isn't going to be returning until we are convinced that the COVID-19 threat is gone. When that might be isn't clear, but it's not going to be soon.

The NY Philharmonic isn't waiting. They've already cancelled their fall season; surely it's just a matter of time before other organizations follow suit. To add certainty to the speculation, let's remember that the average age for classical concertgoing in North America is at or over the 70-year-old threshold where COVID is especially fatal. We seniors may have ignored the severity of the virus when it first appeared, but months of horrifyingly grim statistics have changed our minds. Few of us are trooping to the concert hall or opera theatre, I'm guessing, until we're completely and absolutely sure we're safe. Or our kids are sure we're safe.

And do we really think that things are just going to return to normal when we do go back? I'll bet few arts administrators do. Here's my two cents worth. Before the pandemic, I visited my local Starbucks up the street every day – sometimes twice a day. I was addicted to my grande light foam Latte. Couldn't do without it. Then I had to go cold turkey, like everybody else. My local Starbucks has been open for a couple of weeks now. I haven't returned once.

Oh, but this wouldn't happen with our beloved classical music, we say. Are we sure? The pandemic has affected us in many ways, big and small, most of them unexpected. The strength of our desire for concertgoing may be one of them. Who knows? And what about those newer audiences to opera and the classics, who don't have a decades-long history of attendance? Are we sure they're coming back? I wouldn't assume so. I think 2021, or whenever we return, is going to be a relatively new ballgame, where nothing should be taken for granted.

If there are any institutions left to serve us at all. The actual details of the situation today have not been made especially public, but I can't imagine that any arts institutions, big and small, aren't facing some very dire financial futures these days. Yes, performances have been cancelled, and that saves money on production costs. But so many arts institutions, especially the bigger ones, have a large number of fixed responsibilities that still must be met – from paying contracted, unionized artists no longer performing, to continuing with administrative staffs, to retaining large buildings which still need to be heated, cooled and maintained, although almost no revenue is being earned in them these days. (Ironically, it used to be the arts institutions with their own facilities that had a financial leg up on those that didn't, because of the stream of parking and concession revenue they earned – I'm guessing exactly the opposite is the case these days.)

It's hard to say exactly how seriously the pandemic is affecting the financial health of musical institutions, partly because financial information is generally only shared when annual reports are released, and every institution is handling the effects of the pandemic differently. (Some have laid off their creative complement; some have maintained them under reduced contracts; some have continued business as usual.) We do know that the box office hasn't accounted for more than about 25 percent of the revenue of major institutions for years, which, under current circumstances, is actually an odd benefit. It means the bulk of the money for most musical institutions comes from governments and fund-raising efforts, neither of which need have diminished during the pandemic – although I'm sure fund-raising for an activity that doesn't currently take place can't be easy. And I'm also sure that smaller institutions and groups are hurting in a way that puts their very survival at risk.

Either way, the only short-term solution to the pandemic-related financial woes in the arts is government support – and lots of it. The Government of Canada has announced a generous \$500 million emergency fund for culture, arts and sports, but whether it will be enough remains to be seen. I desperately fear that a decade or so of stagnant funding for the arts in Canada may have dulled our understanding of the importance of government support at exactly the moment when hefty, healthy, unqualified support is needed – and needed in spades.

But my greatest fear for the future of classical music coming out of the pandemic revolves neither around audience engagement or financial health. It has to do with the powerful and long-overdue reckoning with the failures and cultural limitations of our societies



that has exploded under our feet just as the pandemic challenged us in so many other ways. The unmasking of racial intolerance and racial injustice, and the demands for the repairing of those injustices, may be the greatest challenge classical music faces in a post-pandemic world.

Because, let's be honest. No other mainstream art form is so tied to the values of the past as is classical music – not literature, nor the visual arts, not theatre, or dance, or anything else. No other art form still nests the locus of its activity in the 18th and 19th centuries. And not just its repertoire, but its techniques, its goals, its methods of sound production, its seating arrangements, its power relationships – everything about the music reflects a certain set of values.

I'm not suggesting that classical music is *inherently* racist or colonial. I don't believe in those kinds of arguments – all things work on many different levels at the same time, especially artistic realities. But there's no doubt that classical music, as it's usually been imagined and presented, has many barriers to overcome before it can come to terms with the racist and colonial realities that we need to erase in our society. Yes, there can be powerful operas on Indigenous or Black themes; and greater diversity is certainly possible on our concert stages and programs. But it's not enough, in my opinion. The key to success is in aggressively supporting and funding the new and young and offbeat and out-of-the-way in musical creation, artists and groups that can render into sound the new realities that are struggling to be born in our society, relationships, quite frankly, that are far beyond those imagined by traditional symphony orchestras or conventional opera houses.

If that happens, it may be that this enormous pause in the world, this giant prolonged forced intake of breath, may have proven to be immensely valuable, despite all its grim tragedy. Events like this in the world, unexpected and radical, can be and have been forces for immense good, sweeping into being greater justice, greater equity, greater truth. We'll have to see whether this current combination of medical, economic and cultural shattering will stand among them. And how, and whether, serious music joins in this resurgence. **●**

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





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