PIVOTAL TIMES
Discoveries along the Goldberg trail
The intimacy challenge: falling for dance
In with the new: adventures in sound art
Choral scene: lessons from Skagit Valley

OCTOBER 2020
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Stories and interviews

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AZRIELI 2020 MUSIC PRIZES

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YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE: this concert season continues to re-invent itself, pivot and pivot again. There’s much to share, to learn and celebrate; amplified as necessary in whatever media work! Opera audiences usually frown on amplification but in Dahlia Katz’s full-size photo (pg 22) tenor Asitha Tennekoon, using the microphone pictured on our cover, sings from a mobile stage that bears no resemblance to an opera house – bringing living breathing music to shut-in retirees, health care workers, and ordinary folks on their front lawns. Not your usual art-music audience, but these are pivotal times. In music, we rely on pivot chords to get us safely into the next key: we navigate changes instead of bailing out. Let’s keep that good intention close to our collective hearts, as the beat goes on.

— Jack Buell, Team WholeNote
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WHICH WAY TO TURN

M y father would have instantly recognized this line from Flanders and Swann’s song “Misalliance” (a cautionary tale about the dangers of potential cross-breeding among vines that turn in different directions as they climb). It is on the comedy duo’s live album, At the Drop of a Hat, recorded in glorious mono on February 21 1957 at the Fortune Theatre in London’s West End. It was perhaps the one of their songs, not all of which have stood the scrutiny of time, in which my father took the greatest delight, singing along with the last stanza and watching, in the faces of anyone who happened to be listening along with him, for some mirroring of the glee the lines gave him every time: Poor little sucker, how will it learn Which way it’s climbing, which way to turn. Right? Left? What a disgrace. Or it may go straight up and fall flat on its face.

It’s a cautionary tale we would be well advised to apply to this fall’s socially distanced dance of choice – the pivot. It’s not just about changing direction, it’s about what direction you turn.

Take the transparent mask I am wearing in this photograph, for example, I got the mask a few months back from Laura Mather who runs a small company called powhearing.com, providing services and products which allow businesses to be accessible for persons who need hearing support during customer interactions, at live events, and in workplaces. It is, incidentally, the very same one that is hanging around my neck in the photograph on page E7 of the toronto star in workplaces. It is, incidentally, the very same one that is hanging on the right side of history. As much of a difference-maker as the mask itself is, is Mather’s fight now under way – not, as you might think, to stop people from stealing “her idea”, but to stop anyone from trying to patent it in order to corner the market on something so clearly in the common good.

A turning point in thinking? Yes I think so. As soprano Measha Brueggergosman says elsewhere in this issue (in the sprawling conversation I had with her and violinist/composer Edwin Huizinga from her Halifax kitchen): “If we circle our wagons together, kind of in the same direction, we might just not only come through it, but come through it on the right side of history.”

Remembering Ida Carnevali
I have written over the years in this spot, about how, at some times of the year (and in some years more than others), I find myself thinking about my dear former neighbour, Ida Carnevali, founder of the Kensington Carnival Arts Society (KCAS). Never more so than now, hearing of her recent death, in Italy, at age 82.

What I wrote back in May 2006 seems particularly resonant right now, so I offer it again: “[Her] projects over the decades were a living example in the art of throwing some transforming activity into the path of the ordinary, nowhere more dramatically and effectively than in the annual Kensington Festival of Lights which to this day takes the form, at sunset every winter solstice, of a hand-made lantern-lit Market-wide march, from scenario to scenario, re-enchancing all the world’s yearning for light.” ‘Scenario ambulante,’ she called it, organizing various scenes to be performed along the route of the march, enlisting everyone she could round up to participate and then leading the audience on a journey to discover the story. “It is that potential for accidental discovery that I yearn for in the urban context. Urban art, it seems to me, should be judged by the extent to which it can be ‘come across’ by people engaged in the ordinary. And even more so by the extent to which the artists themselves are willing to go beyond ‘business as usual’ by availing themselves of the opportunities for chance encounters and spontaneous collaboration.”

So here’s to Ida Carnevali. And here’s to accidental discovery, chance encounters and spontaneous collaboration. And to figuring out, all of us, the right directions to turn.

publisher@thewholenote.com

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thewholenote.com October 2020
Growing up Canadian, Torontonian and a pianist, the spirit of J.S. Bach’s Goldberg Variations, as transmuted by Glenn Gould, was ever within my reach. Indeed, for a time, Bach’s masterful set of variations was inextricably linked with Gould, for Canadian and international fans alike. As for me, I was born in the year that Gould died, sharing the same dozen square miles of Toronto for less than six months before his premature death at age 50, in October of 1982.

Bach and his keyboard music hovered in the air for many of my generation. At age ten, I had studied the piano for more than five years, and my teacher at the time professed her intense – and seemingly irrational – dislike for all things Gould, (even the lion’s share of his Bach recordings). She, like many immediate contemporaries who knew him personally and scorned his eccentric disposition, proclaimed that little of the late great pianist’s discography was worth listening to. “However,” she conceded, “a handful of recordings remain on the highest order of interpretive genius. His Goldberg Variations are seminal, you must discover them for yourself – but only the 1955 recording!” “What about the later, 1981 Goldberg edition?” I mused to myself. No matter. To the library I went for the 1955 Gould Goldberg Variations. Beyond the initial awe and insight at the cosmic explication Gould commands on this recording, I was struck that day by a sense of place – a rightness of order or sonic identity – that seemed to be somehow Canadian. True, this was Bach für alle: Bach for all ears that would be lent to it from all corners of the globe, but its origins were oddly local.

Yes I know Gould made that seminal 1955 record in New York City at the Columbia Records 30th Street Studio, but his art, muse and sensibility came from elsewhere, from up north. Sulfused with the voice of Bach, how could such musical utterance as Gould’s belong to just one city or country? How does a nation – a collective or an individual even – lay claim to an artist like Gould? How do we honour him and emulate his craft? How close might we get before his essence eludes us?

In the more than 25 years since that first day I heard Gould play the Goldberg Variations, I’ve sought elucidation, a solution or some clue to this state of identity. Gould’s spectral footsteps outwit us constantly. He came amongst us but never lingered long. He followed pathways from different planes, singing tunes from alternate dimensions. The Goldberg Variations were, it seems, his beginning and his end. A stabilizing force in his life, air under artistic wings spread wide, they launched his performing career. Repaying Bach handsomely, Gould often returned, almost devotionally, to the work. It is through tracing this committed relationship to such a canonic masterstroke, that the trail begins to appear. One can track the residual energy left behind. Much like the Large Hadron Collider creating new, traceable particles that dissipate in highly complex ways as they traverse space, leaving recordable streaks of light now dancing, now repelling, we can pick up the path Gould and his Goldberg Variations traced, by connecting its points of musical light.

Numerous artists, world-wide, have approached the grail that is Bach’s Goldberg Variations since Gould, lining up to scale the music’s “Everest-like” heights – a perfect musical fusion of an external challenge and an internal quest.

And for us Canadians? We adore Bach and we adore Gould – at least most of us! – along with those fans from many other corners of the world. Here in Toronto, we have the benefit of knowing those who knew him personally. That captured the world’s imagination, but the hearts of Canadians. It was Eric Friesen, in 2002, who first suggested this tune to serve as an unofficial national anthem.

No artist I know ever approaches the Goldberg Variations without extreme reverence. There are those who grow up with the work as constant companion. Some, like Simone Dinnerstein, emulate Gould in proving themselves to be up to the mighty task of expressing something wholly new in their performances. Others arrange it for non-keyboard instruments, such as string quartet or the harp (harpist Parker Ramsay’s recently released Goldberg Variations is in fact reviewed by Terry Robbins in this issue’s Strings Attached). And then there are those like my harpsichord teacher at the Glenn Gould School, the brilliant Charlotte Nediger, who steadfastly refused to perform these variations in public (despite multiple requests for her to do so), humbled, she would say, by its greatness and its formidable
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Top: Angela Hewitt, Bottom: David Jalbert
March 21: harpsichordist Charlotte Nediger played the Goldberg Aria for Tafelmusik Together. You can still listen to it online!

roster of past interpreters. Nediger reserved for herself a place so sacrosanct for this music that its appreciation was a purely private affair: a communion of sorts with Bach and Bach alone. Her steadfast refusal struck me at the time as being wholly Canadian in its reverence for this music, deferring to a performance tradition that Gould started, now inherited by pianists such as Angela Hewitt and David Jalbert, and a seemingly endless succession of others seeking to ascend its heights. (The WholeNote has, to date, reviewed 22 recordings of the Goldbergs, more than any other work.)

An extraordinary aspect of Bach’s Goldberg Variations is the way it adapts itself to the interpreter at hand – the individual experience of this music converges with the collective one: a formidable interpretive, intellectual and technical task for any musician, but also demanding personal expression, in a sense entwining the performer who is playing them. Indeed, this aspect of the journey – or the epic Everest climb – was an integral part of the Goldbergs and their legacy, even before Gould’s 1955 rendering. (Consider Landowska, Rudolf Serkin, Tureck and Kirkpatrick’s early recordings.) It is the work’s invitation to make it an individual statement that still has us lining up as musicians to ascend its heights, and perhaps plant a flag there that some collective other will claim as their own.

See Lang Lang on the Goldberg trail. page 50
Two leisurely phone calls – well an old-fashioned phone call and a Zoom chat, to be precise – bracket this story. The phone call, bright and early on the morning of Saturday, September 19, was with violinist/composer Edwin Huizinga, calling from Owen Sound, where the 16th annual Sweetwater Festival (Huizinga’s first as artistic director) was well under way. The Zoom chat, just three days later, was also bright and early – with Huizinga again, this time alongside singer Measha Brueggergosman – at a table inside Brueggergosman’s Halifax home, a kitchen behind them, and post-tropical storm Teddy, his career as a hurricane having been cancelled ahead of his Maritime tour, whipping aimlessly at the trees outside.

I’d been wanting to talk to Huizinga and Brueggergosman for a while about their current collaboration, but had been expecting to have to speak with each of them separately, so it was an unexpected bonus to find out, part way through the Saturday call with Huizinga, that he would be flying to Nova Scotia on the Monday “to finish a project with our amazing fearless Canadian soprano, Measha Brueggergosman.”

“Finish the project” sounds optimistic to me. For one thing, Huizinga and Opera Atelier (OA) have been exploring the 24-line poem at the heart of the project (Annunciation to Mary by Bohemian/Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke) for well over two years. For another thing, the piece as described for the upcoming October 28 Koerner Hall “livestreamed and fully staged” production, Something Rich and Strange, is less far along than the vision for it expressed in OA’s pre-pandemic 2020/21 season announcement, where Something Rich and Strange was to be the spring 2021 show, with Huizinga’s composition as one part of a double bill with Purcell’s Dido and Aeneas: “a commission by Opera Atelier that gathers together the baroque and the contemporary,” as Jenna Simeonov described the season as originally planned in her opera blog, Schmopera, back in January.

As things stand now, OA’s being able to pivot Something Rich and Strange into this October slot has been crucial to salvaging two seasons. This past April’s Handel’s Resurrection, an early COVID-19 casualty, has been moved into the April 2021 slot to maintain the vital Easter connection. What has been lost is the resonance of Resurrection’s original pairing this past April with OA’s Don Giovanni last fall, in a 2019/20 season teasingly titled “Saints and Sinners.” Similarly, Something Rich and Strange, in its original April 2021 slot, was slated to follow The Magic Flute, also core Opera Atelier repertoire.

It was to be two seasons balancing old and new: something time-tested paired with something new; something definitely the opera...
paired with something we wouldn’t have understood as operatic without one of the kinds of storytelling OA does best – finding moment-by-moment storylines in lyrical musical things, and unlocking them vocally, physically, dramatically and visually.

Saints and sinners has an inbuilt operatic arc to it. Saints and more saints? Maybe not so much. But these are not ordinary times.

Opera Atelier’s decision, as far back as last fall, to move this spring’s scheduled Resurrection into streaming-friendly Koerner Hall, with its re-expandable live-audience potential, looks prophetic now. In reality, they mostly have Hamilton to thank for taking over OA’s Ed Mirvish Theatre home base for an unspecificed amount of time. Just how unspecified, none of us knew.

Owen Sound

“With all the changes to the timing and the piece itself, we [Measha and I] decided the best way to finish up is to get on a plane,” Huizinga explains. “I have been working on it for months and months – so many calls and Zooms, I’m exhausted. Get on a plane, make my way there. Because I can and because I must. I’m the kind of artist who likes to dive head first right in, and I am still relatively new at writing for voice. And of course I am not done here yet!”

He’s not complaining about the change to the deadline or scope of the piece. They are matters of fact. “I know the world is completely flipped upside down and thrown in the washing machine and someone added the wrong kind of soap,” he says. “But this is the time we have to tear open the door and play wherever we can, whether it’s on our driveway or in a beautiful concert hall, or at six degrees celsius in an Owen Sound garden as the sun sets, because music is something people need to lean towards when things are harsh.”

The words tumble: “Like here, in Owen Sound. We have a really loyal audience coming out and helping us and it was so obvious last night – there was this moment following the beautiful long applause after the final piece, where everyone stood up out of their lawn chairs and realized how special it is to just hear music travelling through the air towards their ears. We need this, David. There are many of us who have literally spent our lives finding music. So we have to just go find it.”

For Sweetwater this season, that vision has taken the form of a string quartet (Huizinga himself along with close colleagues Marc Destrubé, violin, Keith Hamm, viola and Judy Hereish, cello) “bubbling” for a week together in an old house in downtown Owen Sound – sounds of music from four centuries being tried out, drifting through wide-open windows to the ears of neighbours and passers by; then four days of crisscrossing Owen Sound and Meaford for pop-up concerts at pavilions, historic homes and museums, gazebos and gardens, a bandstand, and the Owen Sound Farmer’s Market. And in the evenings between, the garden concerts with their glorious sunsets where, at the end of it all, a live audience – no streaming – stands up from their chairs to listen to quiet air, washed clean by music.

Halifax

This is the second time Huizinga and Brueggergosman have worked face to face on the project. The first time, in late February, after signing on to the project, she visited him in California where he’s spent the last year, right after taking the project on. “My cabin in the woods – that I’m renting – has luckily survived the fires. You could say I was evacuated,” he says, “but I had already put into place a master plan to get to Canada and quarantine and follow these two streams.”

For their first face-to-face collaboration, they went to Big Sur. “Kind of amusing now,” Huizinga says. “Going somewhere ‘remote’ in order to work. Back then it was called a retreat, now it has a different name.” After COVID hit, he says, the project took a back seat for a couple of months, and then Opera Atelier came back to us with a lot of changes, and ideas and thoughts, and of course the new deadline. Again there’s that matter-of-factness to it all. “I kind of see the Opera Ateliers as the stars of this pandemic,” Brueggergosman says. “They at least rallied to provide sustenance to their artists. Always saying they know it’s not enough, but if we circle our wagons together in the same direction, we might just come through this on the right side of history, on the right side of what it means to be essential as an artist, understanding that the world in crisis needs beauty.”

― Measha Brueggergosman

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that’s where Opera Atelier is making a case for itself as an essential service – in the service of beauty, and of excellence.”

“It’s really special,” Huizinga adds, “when you find yourself working with people who can’t … what to say … basically who can’t stop. It’s as simple as that. And it’s amazing. And that’s how I feel about working with Measha too. Because we just want to create now.”

“Yes,” she replies, “because people are really hurting, so we have even more imperative as artists who have the capacity to translate that pain into beauty. We have the words and music… Our challenge will be in having them trust they are not going to get sick, that the invisibility cloak of fear that coats this season is a justifiable response to the information they are getting. If people can come out of their houses to protest racism and injustice they can come out of their houses to commune with beauty without shame.”

“The bottom line for her? “The imperative is on artists,” she says. “We need to stop bitching. We are not legitimized by someone else, we’re essential by how we place ourselves. We place ourselves in the mix. We position ourselves in ways where we are not cancellable, when presenters tell us we are cancelled, what they are really saying is that they are cancelling themselves.”

And on the conversation goes, in the middle of a wannabe hurricane at the heart of a pandemic storm. Best thing of all, most of it is focused on the 24 lines in the Rilke poem that sparked the chat: the nuances of gender in German; why Grace Andreacchi’s translation works; where knowledge and consent come into it when the story tells of a sky god who, in the form of an angel or swan, sows his seed. (And where does fault lie when, as a consequence, when cities and civilizations rise and fall.)

But at the end we cycle back: “Up to this point we have been distracted by systems that are never going to be loyal to us,” Brueggergosman says. “They have to be removed in order for us to fully actualize our power, to dig deep into questions that should have been asked before. For me it’s a shifting of my loyalties, to the vision God has given me, the execution of it, the ability to make things happen, the autonomy of it – like the autonomy of sitting around talking about a poem for an hour because of the power in it. My favourite part of all this is that I get to decide what things mean for me, at a particular time. I think every year we get the opportunity to see things from a new perspective, and this is one of those times.”

“See, that’s why I needed to be here,” Huizinga replies. 📌

David Perlman can be reached at publisher@thewholenote.com

A Time to FALL FOR DANCE

JENNIFER PARR

I

n these still surreal times defined by restrictions, we are all increasingly hungry for live performance. With opera and theatre still considered too dangerous or problematic to bring back quite yet, dance has begun to return, although to unusual venues.

The Canadian Stage Company, for example, has opened their stage in the heart of High Park – which has stayed empty of its usual Shakespearean performances this summer – for three exciting weekends of dance performances. Week One: September 26 and 27, Solo in High Park featured some of the city’s top soloists in a variety of styles from tap to flamenco, house, and contemporary. Week Two: Dusk Dances, October 3 and 4, featuring the work of three Dusk Dances contemporary choreographers, and Week Three: Red Sky, October 9 to 11, showcasing the thrilling physical style of this Dora Award-winning indigenous company.

And while the National Ballet of Canada has had to cancel their usual fall season at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts – including perennial holiday favourite The Nutcracker – they too are making more experimental appearances, at both Harbourfront Centre and the Art Gallery of Ontario. Harbourfront’s Brigantine Room will welcome physically distanced audiences to live performances of Robert Binet’s Group of Seven-inspired, The Dreamers Ever Leave You, October 9 to 17; and at AGO Live on October 22 and 23, audiences will get to take an even closer look at the creative process as they are invited into Walker Court to observe open rehearsals of a newly commissioned work by Kevin A. Ormsby.

For both these companies, there will doubtless be other unusual excursions to write about in the months ahead, but right now, at Harbourfront and at several venues around the city, it’s the sixth edition of FFDN.
Father OWEN LEE
at www.opera-is.com

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

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

www.opera-is.com
in a theatre in the Netherlands and sent to FFDN as a polished, edited film. The final two, Terra, from Calgary’s Decidely Jazz Danceworks (DJW) choreographed by Kimberley Cooper, and Fool’s Gold, choreographed by Canadian tap expert Lisa LaTouche, will both be recorded at DJW’s studio probably in more of a livestream performance capture style.

Watch party solace: To make up for having to watch the show on a screen, FFDN have come up with a fun way to enhance the experience. You can buy individual $15 tickets or organize a watch party complete with personal host and gift bag. “For the past five years,” Ibrahimof told me, “we have been meeting so many people in our audience who have been making it a tradition to come to our shows with certain friends every year, saying ‘It became my thing with my grandparents,’ or ‘I always come with my bridge club,’ that we wanted to give them an opportunity to create a similar environment at home (or even at a distance), and so came up with this idea. About 50 artists associated with us have signed up to be hosts, and ticket buyers can choose from the list on the website. Your chosen host will connect with your party by Zoom both before the show and after for a post show Q&A. Watch party buyers will also receive a gift package including printed programs, a tote bag and other goodies.”

Dance through the ears: Perhaps the most radical innovation this year is that FFDN invites us to experience dance and dancers through our ears instead of our eyes, through the exploration of some ideas Ibrahimof and his team had had on the “back table” for several years, but had never had the chance to fully explore due to the demands of producing their usual live shows. One of these was to have a festival podcast. However, he didn’t want a podcast that was just dancer interviews, as was looking to create “something a little more journalistic, a little more on location.” Accordingly, back in 2018 what he did as an experiment was “invite my neighbour Eric, who is a sports guy, to go to his first-ever dance show at FFDN, and I asked him to take me to my first-ever baseball game. We recorded the whole experience then and are using the recordings this year for our first podcast episodes, including a follow up interview I recorded this year.”

The new FFDN podcast, Mambo, debuts on September 29 with another new lighthearted, if not downright goofy, episode: Lost Objects, inspired by the New York podcast Everything is Alive where every week the host chooses an object, hires an improv actor to play that object, and then interviews him or her. This episode will bring actors from Second City into the festival family to take on the roles of objects which now, thanks to so much of the festival being online, are “lost and forgotten,” such as staff festival badges, the company car, or the sharpie used by dancers to sign posters. Clearly a lot of fun to create, this expands on Ibrahimof’s wish to introduce audiences to aspects of dance that they might not know or think about. “There is something really special...
about audio storytelling that can connect with our audience in a very different way.”

**Online album:** Another new audio project dear to the artistic director’s heart is *Inverse*, a collaborative online album featuring poems chosen and read by celebrated Canadian and International dance artists, set to classical music selections arranged and performed by Canadian cellist Arlen Hlusko. Hearing Ibrahimof talk about the impact this project had on him personally made me want to listen to it right away.

“I had never heard these people that I know so well in this light before,” he said, “and it really made me know them better. From the poem that they chose, the way that they delivered it, the way I could tell it meant something important to them, it revealed something new to me about them as artists and as people. I think getting to know the people behind the art form, their stories and inspirations, their connections to the wider world is really important, and this year gave us the opportunity to dig deeply into that.”

With such a passionate and enthusiastic artistic director and such an ambitious innovative program, the Fall for Dance Festival is growing at a good pace into the role it aspires to, of being a true nexus for dance in Canada in an international context.

**FFDN runs from September 28 to October 18. All streamed content will remain available online on demand until the end of the festival only. Everything is free except the Signature Program for which single tickets are $15; watch party packages are $150. For more information and a full schedule please see the FFDN website at www.ffdn.com**

Jennifer Parr is a Toronto-based director, dramaturge, fight director and acting coach, brought up from a young age on a rich mix of musicals, Shakespeare and new Canadian plays.
It was quite a pleasant surprise this month, after months of inactivity when I received the October listings to see that there is a variety of different performances coming up in October. If you are a fan of new and experimental music, you will once again be able to indulge in listening to what’s currently going on, even though these events will be limited to livestream. One of the upcoming concerts that caught my eye was a performance by Debashis Sinha, a sound-based artist comfortable working in a variety of media. He combines his experiences as a South Asian Canadian who trains with master drummers from various world music traditions with a love of electroacoustic music and technology. His work, Adeva (version000_01), will be performed via livestream on October 24 in an event produced by New Adventures in Sound Art and Charles Street Video.

I began my conversation with Sinha by inquiring into how his South Asian Canadian identity has impacted his creative work. Growing up in Winnipeg within the context of a very small Indian community that itself was a mixture of different Indian cultures meant that they all shared a hodgepodge of cultural expressions. “For me growing up, everything was all mixed up together. This has fuelled a lot of the work and the exploration that I do with mythology and storytelling by imagining aspects of my culture, its deities and trying to fill in the blanks.”

He has created a number of works incorporating Hindu mythology in a variety of genres including fixed media, sound installations and art videos. One of his pieces, Kailash, is about Shiva. For this piece, he imagined the summit of Mount Kailash where Shiva dwells and no human is permitted to climb because of it being a holy site. Instead, people circumnavigate the base of the mountain as a kind of pilgrimage. The music he wrote for this piece is his own imaginative version of the sound world on the summit with Shiva sitting in meditation and watching people walking down below. Since one of the manifestations of Shiva is as Nataraja, the dancer who dances the creation so it may continue, he was able to weave in environmental threads as well as rhythms connected to Nataraja’s movements, human footsteps and the cyclical nature of ritual practice.

At this point in his career, he says, he is in the midst of a shift by looking to the future; his October performance will mark a step in this direction. The new work is part of a sound cycle he’s currently working on that involves research into machine learning and artificial intelligence tools for sound. He started the process last winter in Tokyo at the Mutek Japan AI Music Lab where he was fortunate to be the only Canadian present. “We looked at a number of different ways in which neural networks (a form of machine learning that attempts to resemble the human brain) can process sound and musical data, such as MIDI notes, text and visuals.”
Different planes: Sinha explained that working with machine-learning tools is a very new field in artistic practice with many unknowns, not least of which is not being able to predict what will happen when you work with them. His previous interest in story and mythology also comes into play in this new work. The more he learned about these machine-learning tools, the more he realized that the process parallels discoveries he had already made about deities such as Shiva or Ganesh. “Since they are on such a different plane from humans, how can we possibly understand how they think?” he asks. “If a consciousness operates on eight dimensions, like a deity of some kind, how can we as humans, who operate in either three or four dimensions, understand those thought processes? When we’re confronted with the way these entities think we have to collapse them in a way that makes sense to us. When you collapse something that complicated into something very simple, you lose information or information gets garbled. It lies at the periphery of our abilities.” Exploring this space or gap between human and “deity intelligence” forms the basis of Sinha’s investigation in this new work.

To understand this more fully, I asked Sinha to explain how machine learning tools actually work, particularly when applied to music. He gave an example of a particular tool that only understands music as if it were a Bach fugue. “If you give it a series of notes, it will spit out an answer to you that is mirrored in its understanding of the world, which is a Bach fugue.” The result will be different from the original melody that was put into the system and may or may not be useful. “These processes are not a magic button,” he emphasizes. The creator still needs to sift through the results and use what is interesting.

One of his key interests in using these tools is that since they give results he wouldn’t have come up with on his own, they cause him to question his musical habits. After all, if he were to reject the results he receives, why bother using them in the first place? “I can’t just dismiss them outright, aesthetically,” he said. “I have to question myself, on many levels, including dramatically and conceptually. Sometimes I have to give in, and when I do a new story emerges, a story I wouldn’t have possibly come up with.” Another aspect of his research is to explore the shortcomings of these algorithms and the built-in assumptions they have about the world. He gave the example of a recent face recognition algorithm that Twitter released that does not recognize black faces, even though it sees white faces very well. “This brings up all sorts of questions about who is building those tools and the questions they are asking as they build them.”

Rules-based: His new piece will incorporate text drawn from the Rigveda, the first of the four Vedic texts. Since the Rigveda is very rules-based, Sinha has translated this characteristic into a process whereby he is creating a lot of rules for himself in the ways he engages with the tools. The resultant texts will be semi-improvisational, as he is not interested in replicable live performances, and will be created from the large pool of materials he will have on hand.

Visually we will see a combination of him interacting with his tools along with digitally generated visuals and images from field recordings he has made in Kolkata, India. He’s also building text cards to use so we will know the words that are being used in the resultant “sea of
sound.” All these elements will be combined to tell a story about “the liminal space between our perceptions and the perceptions of these N-dimensional entities – “N because who knows how many there are. It’s more about the failure to understand, in the Western sense of understanding, deep truths that nonetheless operate in our lives but that are impossible to articulate.”

We concluded our conversation talking about the reality of livestreamed performances in these times. He said that sometimes these are successful, but feels that performances work best when they completely embrace the shortcomings of the streaming platform. Fortunately in this case, Darren Copeland, one of the producers of the event, has chosen to use the Whereby platform that has much higher audio quality than Zoom does, and this has Sinha very excited. There will also be a Q&A after the performance, either by text or video chat, for listeners to interact with questions and comments about what they experienced.

**IN WITH THE NEW QUICK PICKS**

**OCT 1 to 18:** The Music Gallery’s annual X Avant Festival, “Transmissions,” curated by Pratishtha Kohli and Olivia Shortt. All events are free and will be livestreamed. Highlights include abstract punk ensemble OK Miss with Du Yun; 2020 Griffin Poetry Prize-winner Kaie Kellough with Jason Sharp; Toronto’s own indie jazz musician Tara Kanangara; Thin Edge New Music Collective; Anishinaabe singer-songwriter Leanne Betasamosake Simpson; and avant-jazz explorer Mingjia. The festival will also include an interview with Toronto Black music historian emeritus, Norman “Otis” Richmond, a tribute to Toronto’s unique musical adventurer Ron Gaskin, and a gathering of Jamaican-Canadian artists and supporters in discussion around a community meal.

**OCT 7, 8 PM:** Arraymusic. Livestream Concert with Ryan Driver and The Titillators.

**OCT 8, 8 PM:** Freesound. The Canadian Music Centre. A concert of works for clarinet, violin and piano by Canadian composers Jason Doell and Anna Höstman. (Livestream on CMC website).


**Claire Harvie**

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**TSO, RCM, AND SINFONIA TORONTO**

**Hybrid solutions for viral times**

**Paul Ennis**

“There’s nothing like the sound of 2,000 people applauding,” said Matthew Loden, Toronto Symphony Orchestra CEO, on September 23, as he welcomed back TSO new music director, Gustavo Gimeno, and principal flutist, Kelly Zimba, during the TSO’s Virtual Opening Night event. A video of Ravel’s *Daphnis et Chloé Suite No.2*, conducted by Gimeno from October 2019, had just finished its online broadcast and Loden was in the process of re-introducing Zimba and Gimeno to viewers for a virtual conversation.
“I find it uncomfortable to watch myself,” said the conductor – from his home in Amsterdam – in answer to a question by Loden. “My analytic mind wonders ‘Could I have done something different?’ – but the music is moving and emotionally powerful... the human being can’t stop the emotion... I got goosebumps right away... It’s simply wonderful to see the faces of the musicians around me and the audience.”

That October 2019 performance of the Ravel Daphnis and Chloë was Gimeno’s third time conducting the TSO and Loden asked whether it felt different. Gimeno said that he felt a connection to the orchestra within the first half of the first rehearsal he ever had with them. “With the atmosphere, with the sound and the way of making music, I felt in the right place.” And the TSO still feels like his musical family, but now that he’s no longer a guest conductor “the analysis goes much further and deeper.”

“We were all very excited to work with Gustavo,” Zimba said. “The energy that was onstage was really strong and palpable... We really trusted Gustavo’s musical vision.”

Ever since early July when all concerts in the 2020/21 season were cancelled, we’ve been wondering how the TSO will be engaging with the public under COVID-19 protocols, and Loden was able to reveal a few things for the coming months at the September 23 event. One he spoke about was four upcoming appearances on select Fridays by TSO musicians in the Walker Court of the AGO (with accompanying pop-ups in other spots within the AGO) – September 25 (concertmaster Jonathan Crow and principal cello Joseph Johnson); October 2 (Ashley Vandiver, viola, and Alastair Eng, cello); October 9 (principal percussion Charles Settle and percussionist Joseph Kelly); and October 16 (TBD). Audiences are welcome to drop in, stand on physically distanced markers and enjoy the program. Limited accessibility seating is available. Free with admission, the performances will happen in the Gallery from 2pm to 4pm. These are not continuous performances and can only be attended by booking a timed-entry ticket for AGO admission. Space is limited.

He also talked about the fact that groups of approximately 20 TSO musicians will play at each of three outdoor concerts at CityView Drive-In, in the Toronto Port Lands. “Kings of Ragtime” kicks off the mini-series October 7 at 7pm with a selection of six Scott Joplin tunes, three by Jelly Roll Morton and two by George Gershwin, plus W.C. Handy’s iconic St. Louis Blues. Gordon Gerrard conducts. Next up, concertmaster Jonathan Crow is soloist and leader in Vivaldi’s Four Seasons, October 16 at 8pm. And then “First Ladies of Soul,” a tribute to legendary voices from Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Nina Simone to Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston and Tina Turner rounds things out October 17 at 8pm, featuring award-winning blues singer Shakura S’Aida and TSO principal education conductor and community ambassador, Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser.

Loden then surprised us with the disclosure that TSO musicians would be collaborating with the cast of Murdoch Mysteries beginning September 24. Don’t touch that dial. And finally, he offered a teaser for an upcoming HD concert series – “Gustavo’s putting these programs together” which will include masterworks – like Vivaldi’s Four Seasons, the Adagietto from Mahler’s Symphony No.5, an all-Mozart program, and two Beethoven programs including the “Pastoral” Symphony 6 and Symphony No.7 – intermixed with works by contemporary composers Gabriela Lena Frank, Dinuk Wijeratne, Jörg Widmann and Barbara Croll. Gimeno will conduct the two Beethoven programs himself.

For now, the video of Gimeno’s finely calibrated October 2019 Ravel – the TSO so-well balanced, their sound relaxed and transparent – is a reminder of what awaits us in a post-pandemic world.

Twists and turns at RCM: Meanwhile, up the road from a shuttered Roy Thomson Hall, The Royal Conservatory is gamely trying to navigate the various twists and turns and the COVID-19 river while maintaining as full a concert schedule as possible despite the current limit of 50 people in the audience – at their season launch in the spring, they planned for audiences as large as 400.

October 2, for example, was to be the first Royal Conservatory Orchestra concert of the season with British harpsichordist/conductor Trevor Pinnock leading the orchestra. With Pinnock unable to travel, Toronto Symphony Orchestra concertmaster and New Orford String Quartet violinist, Jonathan Crow, stepped in, to lead the first orchestra’s chair in a program which, in addition to Mozart’s Haffner Symphony, will feature the new recipient of the Ihnatowycz Piano Prize, Sae Yoon Chon, as the soloist in Beethoven’s “Emperor” Concerto. In-venue attendance on October 2 has now been ruled out, and the event as advertised will now be replaced with a free online concert at a date to be announced. Similarly, Folies in Concert, a performance and gala event originally scheduled for October 17, has been postponed to October 16, 2021.

On the bright side, Angela Hewitt will be performing J.S. Bach’s magnificent Art of the Fugue BWV 1080 in Koerner Hall at 3pm.
on October 18, with a second performance added that evening at 8pm to accommodate current ticket holders. This concert is now at capacity and a livestream exclusively for ticket holders is currently being offered.

**Sinfonia Toronto:** Also a positive development for the RCM, Koerner Hall’s well-developed livestream capabilities make it an ideal venue for renters hoping to expand their live audience attendance as the season progresses. Sinfonia Toronto and its celebrated music director/founder, Nurhan Arman, for example, have factored Koerner into their plans for three of their seven concerts as they nimbly pivot around the pandemic. At current attendance limits, all seven of their 2020/21 concerts have sold out. (The other four will be at the Glenn Gould Studio.)

They now offer two means of attending virtually. Tickets for watching a livestream of a concert are $18.95; for $15, a visual record of a concert will be available up to four weeks after the concert takes place. On October 25 at 3:30pm in Koerner Hall, Arman conducts his chamber orchestra in Shostakovich’s remarkable *Chamber Symphony in C Minor Op.110a*, Arman’s own orchestral version of Beethoven’s “Harp” String Quartet No.10, Op.74a and Toronto composer Saman Shahi’s (b.1987) poignant *When we fall…* in which Shahi’s fascination for the music of Radiohead is apparent.

The program, which juxtaposes two masterpieces by two towering composers, is a tribute to frontline workers and health-care providers.

“It was difficult to decide how to begin a new season after months of tragic loss of life around the world,” Arman said. “But it seemed to be a natural choice to program two great composers like Beethoven and Shostakovich, whose music expresses their humanity with unparalleled power. They were both composers of revolution. They lived in revolutionary times and in their own way they revolutionized the music of their times. I also wanted to include the future by juxtaposing them with a contemporary Toronto composer with a growing oeuvre and reputation. Saman Shahi’s *When we fall…* is also a talented composer’s reaction to adversity and anguish.”

**Across the pond:** After a standout recital program in June, London’s historic new autumn series of 100 concerts livestreamed from September 13 to December 22. Over 200 artists are participating, of whom more than two-thirds are UK born or based. Soloists, duos, trios, quartets and larger ensembles will take part, making for a variety of works. Most concerts will be in front of an audience of 56 people representing ten percent of capacity, with the ability to move to 112 seats as the season progresses.

To give you an idea of the scope and quality of this enterprize, the following artists appearing at Wigmore in the next five weeks have performed in Toronto in the recent past at Music Toronto, Koerner Hall, Walter Hall or Roy Thomson Hall: Danny Driver (October 1); Sir András Schiff (October 2); Beatrice Rana (October 8); rising star, Canadian mezzo-soprano Ema Nikolovska (October 10); Ingrid Fliter (October 12); the Schumann Quartet (October 16); Francesco Piemontesi (October 19); Jonathan Plowright (October 22); Pavel Kolesnikov (October 26); Pavel Haas Quartet (October 27); and Paul Lewis (November 2). Reconnect with any or all of them through Wigmore Hall’s free livestreaming or archived videos. The many pleasures of the entire, talent-laden lineup are yours to discover at wigmore-hall.co.uk.

**Hope@Home.** Violinist Daniel Hope spent from March 25 to May 3 performing chamber concerts online from his living room in Berlin with guests including pianist Christoph Israel, theatre director Robert Wilson, Matthias Goerne, Simon Rattle and many more. Produced by Franco-German cultural TV channel Arte, you can read more about it in my column in the May/June WholeNote. Hope took the show on the road in the summer – many Hope@Home on Tour concerts can be seen on YouTube – and now Deutsche Grammophon has released *Hope@Home* the album, a selection of 21 pieces from the series of livestream events which attracted a combined audience of 2.5M viewers. Every track is live, one take only. As Hope says, “There were no patches or editing, no second takes. Sometimes life doesn’t allow for second takes. This was my world for six magical and highly unusual weeks.” A number of the spring concerts are still available on YouTube.

Paul Ennis is the managing editor of The WholeNote.
Life as a “Classical Unicorn”

LUKE WELCH

From an early age, I was quick to realize that there were not many other young Black pianists who were learning how to play classical music – at least that I had ever met. I was around seven years old at elementary school when I was first introduced to the instrument; at that point I was already able to play some of the choir music and other popular tunes that the school’s music teacher, Mr. Gibson, had taught us. After receiving significant encouragement from Mr. Gibson and others who had heard me play for fun, my parents decided to purchase a piano and enroll me in piano lessons. At the time, none of us had any idea or preference of what style of music I would – or should – learn in these lessons...

Fast forward a couple of decades and nothing has changed, really. No growth of the sport, no catering to a wider audience. So which is the chicken and which the egg? I.e. Is there a lack of interest in classical music within the Black community because it is so underrepresented at the highest levels/“misunderstood music”/etc., or is the lack of representation yet another form of systemic discouragement towards some groups of society?

I was first introduced to classical music in my earliest piano lessons, and have always loved everything the genre has to offer – a seemingly endless expanse of amazing music spanning hundreds of years, providing those who choose to play it a parallel range of technical, musical and ideological challenges. My appreciation fully blossomed after my first classical recital at the Polish Consulate in Toronto, and has never diminished. No matter how many hours of practice, there will always be more work to do and new heights to reach. Delving into the diverse works of J.S. Bach and Domenico Scarlatti could by themselves cost a lifetime of exploration, let alone engaging into the oeuvres of Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, Brahms and beyond. As “musically gifted” as I was told I was when I was young, there were so many other pianists who seemed to be light years ahead of what I thought I could ever achieve. My goal became to improve and become the best version of my musical self that I could be.

While I was committed to my own improvements, and those of my piano teachers laid out for me, I was often met with equal confusion, resentment, discouragement, and sometimes straight-up disdain from others around me: I don’t “look” the part of a classical musician, nor do I talk as such (whatever that means). I can also “talk the talk”, as many of my colleagues tend to do seemingly at all times; however, I don’t feel it is necessary to prove my credentials in every discussion. I have also often been told – especially during my time living abroad – to perhaps switch my musical focus to something “more in my lane”, such as jazz music. I have even been stopped from entering a concert venue in which I was the performer until I was able to convince the unidentified individual (thankfully not the concert promoter!) to actually look at the advertising poster to confirm that I should even be allowed inside the building. In another instance I was questioned, while at a music store looking for recordings of pieces I was intending to prepare and perform, as to whether the music I sought was actually for me. Once I stated that I, too, am a classically trained musician, the look of shock was followed by the comment, “Wow, you definitely can’t judge a book by its cover!”

The amount of restraint it took to not lose my temper in that moment took every fibre of my being. I remember discussing the situation with my father shortly afterwards, and was even more disheartened to hear his sincere, yet candidly matter-of-fact response: “Well, son, get used to it.” Unfortunately, he was 100 percent correct.

During all of my academic years, from elementary school through university, I did not encounter a single other Black pianist; not only in my own schools, but also in competitions, professional performances, piano masterclasses, or any other musical environment. It was not something I dwelt on at the time. I was so preoccupied with building my own career and completing my education that I didn’t have the time to be as cognizant as I probably should have been. I only tended to notice the imbalance when people would bring it up to me in conversation as they were meeting me for the first time at my own performances.

Once the proverbial light bulb finally went off in my head, I realized the stakes were going to be much higher than simply accomplishing great feats at the instrument and making a name for myself. I also came to understand and appreciate that I represented a community within an already marginalized community: a Black classical musician (see: unicorn) immersed in a fraternity already pigeon-holed as being on the fringes of mainstream. Not only was it – and still is – of paramount importance to be at my best on stage, but it was imperative to remain aware that the lights, camera and attention would not necessarily stop for me just because the performance was over.

I do not care to theorize whether, or how, my ethnicity impacts my career opportunities. Not only would viewing all of my experiences through this coloured lens prove to be exhausting, but it would also be disingenuous to accuse others of racial bias in every instance. That being said, there is no doubt these systemic racial disparities continue to exist – as evidenced by the significant lack of diversity throughout academic and practical classical institutions. It is exceptionally difficult to prove such theories, and one cannot accuse others of these biases directly without being labelled as confrontational, potentially jeopardizing future opportunities. I instead use these inherent challenges as a means to overcome. I believe that quality will always matter, and those who have contributed to my career, the rest will take care of itself.

I make no secret – diving even deeper into the seemingly infinite pool of classical music, travelling the world, seeing new places,
meeting new people, performing, recording albums: these are among the many things that continue to fuel my passion for making music. If part of the job description involves being an ambassador of sorts, I fully welcome the opportunity every time, especially if it has the potential to encourage more young Black individuals to explore a world they may not otherwise know exists, or feel entirely comfortable stepping into at first. It is a wonderful feeling to do what you love, regardless of perception as the next classical unicorn – more important is to focus on being the next wonderful musician and human being.

The same sentiments hold true in between performances as well. As an independent artist, I have continued to focus the majority of my waking hours on building the practical component of my career – concerts and international travel to destinations around the world to share my music with others. Simultaneously, though, I have focused on teaching as well – working with students of all ages and abilities – first in Europe, and now in Canada. And here we come back to the question of the chicken and egg again.

It has been a longstanding dream of mine (again, no major revelation) to achieve a position within a higher-education institution such as a college or university – working with students who possess the highest level of talent, passion, and dedication to their art the way I also did. It’s incredible, though, how many positions like these continue to be filled with faces and backgrounds which look remarkably the same. How many institutions in this vast expanse of the Great White North employ any teachers/professors/music educators who look anywhere similar to me? How long will this trend continue? Even as recently as a month or so ago, I applied for an associate professorship, at a university not far from where I live, where not only did I meet the qualifications outlined in the job post, but I anticipated that my educational background on multiple continents (in addition to my performance and teaching experience) would have, at very least, warranted a cursory response. Unfortunately, there was not even so much as an acknowledgement to my follow-up, let alone an invitation for a conversation.

Gullible, perhaps, yet ever-optimistic, I await the next opportunity.

My intention in writing this is to share some of my experiences with those who are willing to read about them; maybe in some way we can relate. Side by side in melody and harmony, let us continue to learn from each other. Our shared love of music is the perfect excuse! Music as a universal language, and classical music as my chosen genre, has no inherent gender, no colour, no race. It transcends time and physical boundaries, and has sustained its international outreach for hundreds of years. It uplifts and allows our imaginations to enter a realm of possibilities we can achieve no other way, if we allow it to. In this way we are all connected. So stay healthy and safe and thank you very much for reading. 

Award-winning Canadian pianist Luke Welch has performed extensively on the international stage, and his albums have received critical acclaim. He is currently based in Toronto.
Tennekoon was equally confident with the musical theatre repertoire, following his opera selections with three well-loved show tunes. The romantic “Younger than Springtime” from *South Pacific* was especially fitting in the outdoor setting, and Tennekoon’s tender interpretation made the afternoon breeze of early fall feel slightly warmer. He next performed “Bring Him Home” from *Les Misérables*, mastering the song’s powerful dynamic shifts and finding beautiful suspension in the song’s iconic closing high note. The last selection of the afternoon was “Maria” from Leonard Bernstein’s *West Side Story*, and although Tennekoon’s delivery was solid, it was here I most noticed the Box Concert’s absence of live accompaniment. Tennekoon performed each song with a pre-recorded piano track, but the normally impassioned “Maria” felt sparse without Bernstein’s rich orchestrations.

Even with this limitation, the Box Concert I attended was a heartening success, with residents requesting an encore, and lingering after the performance to thank Tennekoon for bringing live music to their doorstep. The concert was a joyful half-hour escape into the world of musical storytelling via the human voice, an experience I’ve deeply missed over these past months. And although the pandemic inspired this series, I believe the Box Concerts will have staying power as a new style of performance beyond COVID-19. Tapestry Opera and Soulpepper have demonstrated the possibilities for live music in easily accessible, outdoor public spaces, and I hope to see them continue this innovation in future.

*Box Concerts, presented by Tapestry Opera and Soulpepper Theatre, were performed at GTA hospitals, retirement and long-term care facilities, and private homes until October 1. For more information about the series, visit tapestryopera.com/performances/box-concerts.*

Marie Trotter is a Toronto-based writer, avid theatregoer and occasional director. She studied Drama and English at the University of Toronto with a focus on directing and production, and recently completed her MA in English Language and Literature at Queen’s University. This concert report appeared first in HalfTones, *The WholeNote’s mid-cycle e-letter.*
Kingston’s Bader Centre:
Alacrity in a multiplatform world

MATTHEW WHITFIELD

L tast month I focused on the innovative approach being taken by the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra in response to public gatherings being severely restricted. With essential components of live music-making affected indefinitely, arts organizations, both in Canada and around the world, continue to grapple with the realization that almost nothing is the same as it was before. Paradoxically, it seems that these struggles are being felt most acutely by some of our greatest cultural institutions; by the time you read this month’s WholeNote, it will be public knowledge that the Metropolitan Opera is cancelling the remainder of their 2020/21 season, leaving musicians, administrators and other staff furloughed until September 2021, at the earliest.

Part of the problem with such large-scale establishments is their inability to make wide-ranging changes quickly. Think of them as the dinosaurs of the music world: impressively massive, overwhelmingly resilient, and built for long-term duration in a relatively stable environment. However, if the need for quick and pivotal adjustment occurs due to a catastrophic change in the outside environment, there is a very real danger that the factors which made these organizations so great may be the same things that lead to their extinction.

It is with interest, then, that we turn our gaze to Kingston, Ontario, where the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts has recently released its Fall Festival programming. Obviously much smaller in scale than the Metropolitan Opera, The Isabel is nonetheless a significant presenter of musical performances, ranging in style from classical to folk and everything in between. Accommodating the impositions of a global pandemic is no easy feat, and the Isabel is facing these challenges by adopting a multi-platform approach, offering concerts both virtually and in-person.

Each performance will be streamed live through the Isabel Digital Concert Hall and films of the live concerts will be available to ticket-holders for up to seven days after the performance. For those attending in person (at time of writing, a maximum of 50 people), single tickets are available in physically distanced arrangements, with a number of additional safety protocols in place to ensure the health of all concertgoers and staff. While the majority of these measures would have been unthinkable even one year ago, the realities of COVID-19 have required such adaptations from those who are able to do so.

When faced with such stark realities, there may be a temptation to bury one’s head in the sand, to wait out the external threats by becoming inert and dormant until it is safe to reemerge. For some, such as the Metropolitan Opera, there may be no choice; for others, the decision to soldier on is blended with a sense of exploration and opportunity. “We asked ourselves, ‘What can we do during this pandemic period that would be tremendously meaningful to artists, students, creators and educators?’” says Tricia Baldwin, director of The Isabel in their Fall Festival press release. “We will live in a multiplatform world far beyond COVID-19, so we will be doing live performances that will be streamed or attended in-person. We can collaborate with other fantastic groups [and] support artists during this period with artist residencies, recordings and arts education online.”

Far from being a compromised or smaller-scale event than in years past, The Isabel’s 2020 Fall Festival features extraordinary performers and music, with a central focus, within the Festival’s Baroque music strand, on the works of J.S. Bach. This column has mentioned that name more frequently than perhaps any other composer, as he is synonymous with the Baroque era for many musicians and listeners (closely followed by Handel, of course). It is fitting that Bach receives centre-stage in this year’s Isabel concerts, for there may be no better expression of the sufferings, struggles, transformations and joys of modern life than those found in these centuries-old compositions.

On September 21, James Ehnes performed two of Bach’s partitas for solo violin, combining virtuosity with the beauty, lyricism, and gravitas inherent in each of this great master’s works. On October 24, pianist Angela Hewitt continues this exploration of Bach’s genius with his monumental Art of Fugue, an in-depth exploration (and exploitation) of this singular musical structure. It is no secret that Bach was a fugal genius, inventing sublime subjects and using them in inventive and stunningly soul-stirring ways – a remarkable feat for such a rigorous and academic form – and the Art of Fugue is, without a doubt, the greatest collection of its kind in the history of Western music. This will unquestionably be a masterful evening in the hands of Hewitt, who is perhaps Canada’s leading exponent and interpreter of Bach and his keyboard works.

The Fall Festival continues November 1 with Beautiful Bach Concertos, a celebration of Bach’s greatest concerti including the ebullient Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, featuring the Toronto Bach Festival Orchestra. With a concerto for two violins and another for oboe, this event will display the vitality and range of Bach’s orchestral writing as well as his knowledge of, and ability to write for, a variety of different instruments. This concert is the final portion of The Isabel’s Baroque Series and is a fitting and joyful way to end such an unexpectedly unique and momentous season. With the introduction and incorporation of such technological advances into the classical music sphere becoming increasingly normalized, if not absolutely necessary, one would be surprised if its opportunities and potential are not embraced even more fully in upcoming years.
Choral Scene

Lessons from Skagit Valley and Beyond
Choral Music in a Time of Pandemic

BRIAN CHANG

These are challenging times to be a musician. Empathy and compassion is a crucial part of a pandemic response, but it is easily forgotten in the immediate dangers of trying to protect oneself from an unmasked person, or trying to plan out the next month’s rent without income from performing. For some, returning to work, be it the arts or offices or restaurants, isn’t a matter of choice – it’s the difference between having somewhere to live next month or being able to afford dinner that day. The arts are workplaces with livelihoods on the line and right now, we’re all struggling.

For singers and wind musicians in particular, current circumstances are particularly difficult. Crises are intersecting in our arts communities at the moment and are demanding ever more complex responses from the choral world than ever before if we are going to find a way through. There are real and serious dangers to consider as choristers return to action.

Speaking with choristers, there is already so much anxiety and lack of knowledge about how to proceed with doing what we love in a time of pandemic. So it is additionally hard to find oneself in a community of interest where, as in society as a whole, some of those voices are pandemic deniers, vehement anti-maskers, who participate in the pandemic conspiracies and spout the paranoia of “state compliance” and our loss of “bodily sovereignty.” The unfortunate truth is that these people are part of our choirs, part of our choral communities, and they present dangers.

This month, I’m presenting some of my thoughts on recent scientific data and what you can expect from digital rehearsals and upcoming digital concerts.

Early Music Quick Picks

▶ OCT 1, 8PM: Tafelmusik. “Mozart Together.” Following many months of isolation and remote music-making, the musicians of Tafelmusik gather for an emotional return to the concert stage in this program devoted to chamber music originally intended to be played in private homes and salon gatherings among friends and family. On display will be works by titans such Mozart, Beethoven and Boccherini, as well as music by contemporaries Michael Haydn, Družeckŷ, Sperger and Spohr.

▶ OCT 2, 12PM and more: Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra. SP0GreatMusic Podcast. This innovative set of podcasts features such titles as Plagues, Pandemics and Musicians and Beethoven: The Man and His Chamber Music, ideal for those who want to hear magnificent music while learning a little bit more about the people, places and circumstances that led to its creation.

▶ Orchestre Métropolitain. Livestream of Beethoven Symphonies Nos. 1-8. While not live in the traditional sense, this magnificent series of socially distanced recordings was made in the early days of reduced COVID-19 restrictions. With the superb Orchestre Métropolitain led by Yannick Nézet-Séguin, these videos are available to watch on the websites of Orchestre Métropolitain and Bourgie Hall.

Matthew Whitfield is a Toronto-based harpsichordist and organist.

“We will live in a multiplatform world far beyond COVID-19, so we will be doing live performances that will be streamed or attended in-person.”

Tricia Baldwin

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Performance listings
(live, livestreamed, hybrid, … free).
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CONTROL formally changed its guidance on transmission of COVID-19, On Friday, September 18, 2020 the American Center for Disease Consider.

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choir members breathed in the contaminated air leading to infection. 

amounts, thus supporting a sufficient viral load in the air, and that fresh air was not being introduced into the area in sufficient – small droplets produced from singing. Low ventilation likely meant the people infected in this rehearsal.

person’s mouth directly fell on the eyes, nostrils, and/or mouth of all alone. Furthermore, it is unlikely that ballistic droplets from the index behind the index case could have been infected by ballistic droplets were found with no clear pattern, with some cases up to 44 feet from the bathroom became ill. After examining in detail, the study found fomites could not be the major mode of transmission.

On ballistic droplets, the seating plan was reviewed. Positive cases were found with no clear pattern, with some cases up to 44 feet from the index case and others behind the person. The study points out the basic physics – that ballistic droplets don’t travel backwards from a mouth – so there’s no reasonable hypothesis that explains how people behind the index case could have been infected by ballistic droplets alone. Furthermore, it is unlikely that ballistic droplets from the index person’s mouth directly fell on the eyes, nostrils, and/or mouth of all the people infected in this rehearsal.

The study concludes that in the absence of data supporting ballistic droplets and fomites, the only other avenue for infection was aerosols – small droplets produced from singing. Low ventilation likely meant that fresh air was not being introduced into the area in sufficient amounts, thus supporting a sufficient viral load in the air, and that choir members breathed in the contaminated air leading to infection.

This superspreader event led to 53 of the 61 singers being infected over the course of the rehearsal with two succumbing to the virus.

At the end of August, a karaoke bar in Quebec City also ended up being the centre of an outbreak. Upwards of 70 people were infected from primary and secondary contact at Bar Kirouac in Quebec City. The spread through contact would eventually reach three schools. The implications of a single event can have major repercussions.

Keep in mind that most choirs in Toronto rehearse in very old churches that have radiators during the winter and open windows during the summer. They don’t have central, forced-air systems to replenish air. The very spaces we rehearse in are important to consider.

Airborne transmission
On Friday, September 18, 2020 the American Center for Disease Control formally changed its guidance on transmission of COVID-19, adding airborne particles. “It is possible that COVID-19 may spread through the droplets and airborne particles that are formed when a person who has COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, sings, talks or breathes.”

Since as early as April, many different public health, engineering and biological experts had raised the concern of airborne transmission of the disease. As more and more research has been conducted, there was sufficient scientific consensus for the CDC to make this change, although, at time of going to press, neither the Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Health Ontario or the World Health Organization had amended their guidance to include airborne transmission as the main mode of transmission. Similarly, Public Health Ontario studied available literature in mid-July exploring transmission risks from singing and playing wind instruments (July 9, 2020) and after a review of multiple studies concluded that transmission is predominantly through large droplet spread (July 16, 2020).

Bizarrely, three days later, on Monday September 21, the CDC pulled its revised guidance. Many journalists and commentators have inferred political interference in the decision.

There’s no shortage of news articles about choir outbreaks. Scientific, peer-reviewed literature is a very important part of ensuring that the most rigorous data reaches our decisionmakers. It can help inform you about the risks you take as a chorister and arts worker, in the audience, and as an arts employer. So the CDC flip-flop is troubling to say the least.

Making Choral rehearsals work over Zoom
“Technical problems, stay tuned, we’ll get this up and running as soon as possible” – is a common refrain in the day and age of livestreams, Facebook Live, Messenger Rooms, FaceTime, and of course, the most common – Zoom.

These aren’t exclusive to the world of choral music. Many a work meeting and conference has been filled with the recurring phrase, “Your microphone is on mute.” This doesn’t make it any less annoying. So how do you make a choral rehearsal work over Zoom? In short, lots of trial and error. Many choirs are grappling with how to move things into the digital world. Here are a few key takeaways I have for digital events (rehearsal or otherwise):

Have a designated host whose job is to monitor for trouble, respond to tech issues, and whose focus is the Zoom. This person should not be the presenter/conductor/someone with any other task;
When rehearsing pronunciations and languages while people are in masks, you won’t hear it right, they won’t hear it right, and no one can distinguish what you’re saying with three layers of fabric and 50 people across the space the size of an NBA basketball court;
Remind your ensembles that they are valued and loved and address their concerns with validation, support, compassion and empathy. Same goes for your conductors;
No digital rehearsal can replace the magic of in-person ensemble music-making, so avoid disappointment by accepting that you can’t
expect the same end result;

- Try not to be afraid to admit if something doesn’t work and to try something different or new.

**The Wonderful World of Digital Concerts**

Virtual Choirs have been common for a while now. They are fun ways to bring together singers from all over the world together into one project. Eric Whitacre’s Virtual Choir project has been the largest and most significant contribution by far to this type of choral presentation. Smaller choirs have long recorded themselves and used these videos on YouTube, livestreams and more. But there have never been choral ensembles that exist solely and purely as virtual ensembles, never singing in person.

YouTube mashups and virtual and remote recordings are a common part of the ecosystem of pop music, especially in the myriad collabs. Using common tech, it’s not hard to make excellent, top-quality videos and recordings of people singing together who are not physically together or even singing at the same time.

For choirs that are turning to electronic versions of what they do, ensemble singing stops being the focus. If 40 choristers are recording their parts separately with the same notes on sheet music, do they still count as an ensemble? Is the conductor now the leader of an ensemble, shaping the sound and musicality, or is it now the video and sound editor ensuring the cues are all lined up and adjusting the balance of the various recordings? We’ll have to see, as virtual rehearsals and digital concerts become more common.

I also have some key takeaways for virtual ensembles:

- Mark the music diligently before giving it to choristers and ensure everyone has access to the same music, with updates;
- Breath marks. Breath marks. Breath marks. There’s no sneaking allowed in digital recordings or quiet breaths. If a breath is in the wrong place on a video, it’s obvious. A sound editor has one choice: mute your recording or drastically reduce its sound over that section;
- It can take hours of work and dozens of takes for choristers to find a copy worth submitting. It’s a lot of extra work to do;
- Maintain standards of musical excellence but recognize the layers of obscurity that overlap the end product – low-quality tech, noisy apartment neighbours, uncertainty and fear, lack of rehearsal, and psychological stressors can contribute to a very difficult experience.

**Virtual Presentations**

October 10 - The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (of which I am part) is presenting one of the earliest and most significant virtual performances with *Kannamma: A Concert of Thanksgiving*. As part of its work on anti-racism, the choir has brought in guest curator Subha Sankaran to program the concert alongside new associate conductor, Simon Rivard. Guests include paid members of the Toronto Symphony and Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra.

Members of the small, elite, professional, paid core of the choir were recorded in advance in a socially distant live session at Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre. Their voices make up the core of the sound and the video. To these professional singers will be added the remainder of the amateur, volunteer, unpaid members of the choir who are recording their sections in isolation at home. The virtual choir will be mixed by video and editing professionals that will make a final cut premiering at the virtual concert.

Follow Brian on Twitter @bchang. Send info/media/tips to choralscene@thewholenote.com.
Caught Between Jazz and a Hard Place

STEVE WALLACE

It would seem the rumours about a second wave in the spread of COVID-19 this fall are not rumours at all. We’ve already seen a dramatic rise of cases in Toronto and elsewhere around the country and the world recently, and fall is just starting. There are various factors to blame: cooler weather, which the virus seems to like; the inevitable relaxation, brought on by partial reopening, of mitigation measures such as social distancing and avoiding large gatherings, with numerous instances of socially irresponsible behaviour across the land; and the Rubik’s Cube-attempt to reopen schools, which is just getting under way. Not to mention that flu season – which will give our health-care system a double whammy to contend with – is upon us.

It’s a hard lesson to learn, but this is likely to get worse before it gets better; we’re nowhere near the end but somewhere nearer the middle of the beginning, or (shudder) on the cusp of a new beginning of this pandemic. It’s easy to forget that the reason we were able to flatten the curve of infection in the first place is that we all made personal sacrifices during the lockdown period, and with the above-mentioned factors in play, now is not the time to relax those efforts, but to redouble them. We can’t do anything about cooler weather or the flu season, but we can wake up and continue to be careful and vigilant before we’re back to square one with another lockdown.

From the point of view of this column I’d like to address the delicate balancing act of reopening jazz, both in live venues such as Jazz Bistro and The Rex, and in the post-secondary schools which offer jazz programs. Both the Bistro and The Rex have partially reopened recently with social distancing measures in place, mostly having to do with a reduced capacity of both the size of audiences and bands. The Bistro is having live music Wednesday through Saturday with solo piano from 5 to 7, followed by duos and/or trios starting at 8pm with audience capacity limited to 50 people. The Rex spent the lockdown refurbishing its stage and began presenting live jazz again on September 3, also with a reduced crowd capacity. They’re going seven nights a week with trios starting at 5:30 and slightly larger bands at 9pm. I haven’t been yet, but I’m told they’ve installed a plexiglass barrier across the front of the bandstand, I suppose to protect customers from the blowing air of wind instruments. I’m not sure how this affects sound but the image conjures up chicken wire surrounding the stages of livelier country and western bars – think The Blues Brothers. Such are the realities of jazz, COVID-19 style.

Even with such strictures, I salute these attempts at reopening because what else can they do? We have to start somewhere and somehow after months of nothing. But even so, for musicians and fans alike it’s a personal decision about whether to take part in all this, and not one to be taken lightly. I received a couple of calls from pianist friends to play at the Bistro and after much gnashing of teeth, turned them both down. It wasn’t easy to do so, I badly want to get out and play, but for mostly personal reasons I feel it’s too soon yet. I’m 64 and have a couple of underlying medical conditions and so does my wife, so the risk/cost of catching the virus outweighs a night of playing for me. It has absolutely nothing to do with the money being offered, although that’s easy for me to say. I’m relatively lucky in that I don’t need the money that badly, but I understand that some do. I decided to heed the advice of a musician friend who said, “If you don’t absolutely need to do it, then don’t.” I’m biding my time till the spring, when God willing, the second wave will be over and it may be safer. But in the meantime I pray for and applaud those walking this public performance tightrope.

But weighing the risks and rewards of reopening jazz in a club pales in comparison to the complexity of reopening jazz in schools. I can’t imagine a more difficult needle to thread, nor do I want to, and those of us in the field of jazz education have spent the latter part of the summer pondering this and preparing for it. The opening of schools in general is rife with uncertainties and variables for teachers, students and parents alike. An obvious solution is to use online or remote methods of teaching mixed with the greater social benefits, and greater risks, of in-person learning. This balance is particularly complicated with teaching something like jazz, especially where ensembles are concerned, because there are technical hurdles to overcome in remote teaching having to with sound and delay – or “latency” as it’s now called – which are more crucial with musical instruments playing together in real time. As a remote video platform, Zoom works fine with the spoken word, even with larger groups such as classes. There are glitches to be sure, but they don’t really get in the way of imparting information or communication by word. However, to put it plainly, musical instruments sound like crap over Zoom unless some techno upgrades are added.

In The Blue Brothers (1980) the risk was flying beer bottles.
Small ensembles, small audiences and plexiglass.

**Big Bands Aren’t Back**

But I’m getting ahead of myself. As I mentioned in my last column, I teach jazz part-time at U of T, and the Jazz Department has elected to leave some of the choice between remote and in-person instruction up to individual teachers and students. Of course, all group classes are being taught remotely, and larger ensembles such as big bands and a 12-piece group have been scrapped as they’re neither safe nor practicable. But the program also involves private lessons and many small ensembles. After a number of Zoom faculty meetings and consultation with other teachers and my students, I’ve arrived at a compromise, at least for the time being – a blend of remote and in-person teaching based on individual needs and (I hope) a dollop of common sense.

I’m teaching my two bass students remotely because we play the same instrument and there’s a lot of back-and-forth exchange of information and mirroring going on, so it seems doable. But my other two students are a guitarist (whom I teach every other week), and a trombonist (whom I teach weekly). As these lessons mostly involve me playing with them and guiding/critiquing them, they seem better done in person. The trombonist, I should mention, has some understandable and considerable concerns about in-person lessons – something about “an ill wind that nobody blows good” as Oscar Levant once described the oboe – so we’re alternating remote and in-person lessons for now, which cuts down on the frequency of contact. I’ve also decided to teach my ensemble in person because, truth be told, I haven’t yet got my mind around the technical pitfalls of doing it online. As I wrote last time, old dog, new tricks and all that. As conditions could turn worse on a dime, I’m continuing to investigate the ins and outs of teaching an ensemble online so I’ll have a backup plan.

**Mask Me Now**

As one would expect, there are a lot of protocols and guidelines in place at U of T for in-person teaching. Private lessons are no longer taught in small studios but rather in larger classrooms which allow for physical distancing, and these are cleaned regularly and thoroughly. Everyone is required to wear masks except for wind players and singers, who are required to wear them when not playing. These measures are ramped up for the ensembles, which all take place now in a larger concert space rather than classrooms, with plexiglass baffles in front of wind players/singers and social distancing in place. Windows are to be kept open, though that will become a challenge when it gets colder. There are piano-cleaning measures and the room is to be cleared ten minutes early for cleaning, with a 30-minute interval between ensembles to allow for airing out. The room has been equipped with an AV cart with a computer, microphones, cameras and other gear, which the students must learn to operate in case everything has to go online. In the past, each U of T ensemble has done three public performances every year but these have been discontinued and replaced with videotaped performances which can be streamed online. Like everything these days, this is all somewhat up in the air, a work in progress.

My ensemble has yet to meet but I’ve taught one in-person lesson and five online ones; and so far, so good. Having acquired the necessary gear – a condenser mic with a USB audio interface and headphones, which took a while because they’re in high demand these days – and having learned how to use them with Zoom – I’ve overcome a lot of the sound problems and have been enjoying the online teaching more than I expected. It’s nice not to leave the house and there’s a scheduling flexibility that in-person teaching doesn’t have.

This is a good thing, because although I prefer the directness of in-person teaching, there’s a good possibility everything will have to go online. In a sense I’m buying time to negotiate the steep learning curve of coaching an ensemble remotely. As we’re constantly discovering, jazz involves improvising in more ways than we thought and this now includes teaching it.

**Rebooting the Jazz Audience**

Ray Koskie, director of Jazz Performance and Education Centre (JPEC), recently announced the creation of the annual Rochelle Koskie Jazz Student Scholarship, named after his wife Rochelle who passed away suddenly last spring, and who was a passionate advocate of jazz education.

This award is for the most viable solution of attracting and sustaining the interests of a broader jazz audience, with a focus on a younger demographic. There will be four awards of $2,500 each, for one student from each of the four Ontario Jazz Colleges: Mohawk, Humber, York, and U of T. This comes at a most opportune time and is a fitting legacy for a lifelong jazz fan.

Deadline to apply is November 20, and details can be found at jazzcentre.ca.

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

“I salute these attempts at reopening because what else can they do? We have to start somewhere and somehow after months of nothing.”

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October 2020 | 29
Something Resembling Fall

Colin Story

As the sticky, heady haze of summer lifts, the coming of autumn usually heralds a period of productive reorientation, a clearing of the mind, a collective refocusing of eyes on the road ahead. This year, of course, is not a usual year, and, rather than providing reassurance, many of the traditional markers of the changing season are inducing no small amount of anxiety. Teachers and students return to schools amidst a tumult of hopeful precautions, increased screen time and burgeoning case numbers; CERB, a lifeline for out-of-work gig-economy workers, including many musicians, is set to end; the prospect of seeing family and friends continues to be fraught with peril. (Alternatively: for those who wish to avoid spending time with their extended family, COVID-19 has provided an irreproachable excuse.)

Throughout it all, however, Southern Ontario seems to be settling into an abnormal normalcy, a return to something resembling pre-COVID fall. One of the most exciting musical developments has been the reopening of many jazz clubs, under strict physical-distancing guidelines. Some clubs, like The Emmet Ray, have been open throughout the summer, for takeaway food and beverages, patio service and, eventually, dine-in service, with live music; others, like The Rex, stayed closed until they could reopen all at once, music included.

This October issue marks the first month that listings have been available from individual clubs since March. If you check the Mainly Clubs, Mostly Jazz listings in this magazine (page 47), they may look a little sparse; there are a few reasons for this. The first reason: while many venues have begun to host live music again, the booking process is complicated, and, at the moment, not all venues have their schedules confirmed months (or even weeks) in advance. The Rex is one such club. Though The Rex is presenting two shows a day, their booking process – at least at the time that I wrote this column – is happening on a week-by-week basis. The second reason: some clubs, unsure of what the coming month will bring, are holding off on advertising and even announcements, lest regulations suddenly force them to cancel gigs (or cancel dine-in service altogether). The third reason: some clubs, including 120 Diner, N’Awlins and Alleycatz, have closed.

Even at its best, working in the service industry is a precarious proposition. Restaurants and bars must make constant payments to servers, landlords, repair technicians and food vendors, all of which (the payments) depend on an ever-shifting volume of customers. This column is called Mainly Clubs, Mostly Jazz, and the term “club” is used as a catch-all for a variety of different venues, but most are restaurants, and most are not large. Whether or not they’re charging cover – which typically goes entirely to the band – venues need patrons to order food and drinks in order to make money. Musicians need the same thing: without a critical mass of audience to play for, it may not feel worthwhile to play a live show, either artistically or financially. While necessary to public health and safety, the physical-distancing guidelines that are in place mean that it is difficult for venues to get enough people through the doors for this whole set-up to actually work. While the August 20 announcement by the City of Toronto that 45 live-music venues – including The Rex, Lula Lounge, and Burdock – will be receiving property tax relief, the circumstances remain difficult for musician and venue alike.

Going out to see live music – and enjoying dine-in service in bars and restaurants – remains a personal matter, and everyone’s health and safety is of paramount importance. For those who are planning to return to the clubs this month, there are a number of exciting shows that will be taking place.

At The Rex, October starts off with a bang, with two nights of the Dave Young Quartet on October 2 and 3. While I suspect that he will be a familiar name to readers of this column, to those who may not know him, Young, at 70, has taken his place among the firmament of Canadian jazz, with a storied career that includes stints with the likes of Kenny Barron, Tommy Flanagan, Oliver Jones and Oscar Peterson. A swinging, confident player, Young is joined by trumpet Kevin Turcotte, guitarist Reg Schwager and drummer Terry Clarke. Also at The Rex: catch saxophonist Alison Young in the 5:30pm slot and pianist Thompson Egbo-Egbo in the 9pm slot on October 2, and pianist Adrean Farrugia at 5:30pm on October 2.

A full month’s worth of music is already in the books for Jazz Bistro, with an emphasis on Brazilian and Afro-Cuban music. Catch Farrugia again on October 9 with his Bossa Nova project. On October 21, Venezuelan-born, Toronto-based Eliana Cuevas will perform with Jeremy Ledbetter. Cuevas is one of Toronto’s most exciting Latin jazz singers, and she has recorded and performed with a who’s who of
both North and South American musicians. Her collaboration with Ledbetter – to whom she is married – includes countless live performances and numerous studio recordings. Rounding things out on October 30, Cuban-Canadian pianist Hilario Durán appears with bassist Roberto Occhipinti and drummer Mark Kelso. Durán is a gifted, accomplished artist, able to combine technique and lyricism in deftly executed phrases.

Outside of Toronto, where COVID-19 cases tend to be lower, Waterloo’s Jazz Room has also resumed service with a full slate of shows. On October 3, Sarah Thawer and The Squad take the stage. Thawer – an explosive drummer with a penchant for hard-hitting grooves – is joined by guitarist Connor “Chino” Chan, keyboardist Todd Pentney, and saxophonist/keyboardist Rob Christian. Toward the end of the month, keyboardist Bartosz Hadala’s band plays the Jazz Room. Where Thawer’s group plays improvisatory jazz influenced by hip-hop and neo-soul, Hadala’s grooves fall more squarely into the fusion category, with influences from the likes of Joseph Zawinul and John McLaughlin. Hadala is joined by saxophonist Luis Deniz, drummer Marito Marques and electric bassist Brad Cheeseman.

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

**Fall Fare**

**JACK MACQUARRIE**

Here we are; fall has begun. Normally, by now we would have heard of all of the plans for the coming season including concerts, rehearsals and maybe some new member recruitment. This fall the focus is on closures. The most drastic one that we have heard of so far is the notice from the Toronto District School Board. Since the pandemic problems began, the board has locked the doors for all outside organizations. Now, the board has sent notices to outside organizations like bands, choirs and other renters of board facilities that they will remain locked out for the balance of the calendar year, and perhaps longer.

So how are community music groups coping? Most are actively seeking alternative rehearsal spaces; some have given up temporarily. A few are trying to maintain some form of Zoom rehearsal, or at least social gatherings. One of the more interesting activities I heard about is that Resa’s Pieces in cooperation with New Horizons Band Toronto (two ensembles I have written about frequently in the past) were in discussions with Long & McQuade Music to plan a few online Zoom sessions of advice from specialists at L & M. Stay tuned on that one!

**How are groups adapting?**

While concert bands and similar large groups are basically shut down, smaller groups are adapting and new small groups are being formed. While most are simply rehearsing to maintain their skills and their social contacts, some are exploring small ensemble work for the first time. Rather than restrict their playing to in-house rehearsals, some have expanded their horizons and are performing on porches, on lawns, in driveways and even in cul-de-sacs where available. While some are simply impromptu events for the enjoyment of the players, others have been well organized to raise funds to assist professional musicians who have few, if any, paid gigs during the pandemic. In some cases, listeners are charged an admission fee, in

**While concert bands and similar large groups are basically shut down, smaller groups are adapting and new small groups are being formed.”**

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Stay in the loop.

The beat goes on at thewholenote.com
A carefully spaced backyard audience enjoys The Encore Take Five Quintet.

others, donations are collected.

I had the privilege of attending a few such events. The first of my visits was to a back porch performance. A wind quintet was performing to assist a musical duo who also performed (Christopher Lee on flute and his partner James Brown on guitar). The photograph shows the well-spaced, backyard audience sitting under giant oak trees listening to the Encore Take Five Quintet (donating their time were quintet members Len Graf, flute; Helen Graham, oboe; Bill Krangle, clarinet; Tom Fleming, horn; and Dorothy Ward, bassoon).

In another concert, at the same location, we were treated to a performance by Kelly Zimba, principal flute of the TSO and Clare Semes, a TSO violinist. This duo, with the very clever name, the Sonority Sisters, entertained the backyard audience with a wide range of music from pop to classical. Two Mozart selections, which I enjoyed most, reminded me of silly jazz versions which I had in my record collection years ago.

In my jazz collection, the first of these, the “updated” Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, had the name Annie Kleine’s Night Music. The second was a version of Rondo Alla Turca with the title Moe Zart’s Turkey Trot. Now I feel compelled to dig these out and listen to them again.

In a departure from normal concert routine, during a break in the program, members of the audience were invited to ask questions. While there was a wide variety of questions, the one which received most attention, was addressed to Kelly Zimba. She was asked if she used circular breathing while playing the flute. Her answer was no. She said that she had tried, but not been able to accomplish that yet. As for her Sonority “sister” Clare, she is not likely to derive any benefit from circular breathing while playing her violin. Maybe Zimba hasn’t learned how to circular breathe yet, but she and her partner Clare Semes certainly convinced the audience that the Sonority Sisters could be a highlight on the Toronto music scene.

Circular Breathing

Having heard all of this between Kelly and the audience about circular breathing, I thought that the technique might be worth exploring. For those not familiar with this, circular breathing is defined as a technique used by players of some wind instruments to produce a continuous tone without interruption. It is accomplished by breathing in through the nose while simultaneously pushing air out through the mouth using air stored in the cheeks. Personally I have attempted to master circular breathing, but have never come close to success. In attempts to research how to develop this skill, I have consulted various websites, without success.

Brass players in particular, find that the ability to employ circular breathing to play long passages without taking a breath is almost essential. The tuba parts for many of Wagner’s works are notorious for this requirement. The most amazing example of a performer employing this technique was Arnold Jacobs, an American tubist who spent 44 years with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In recognition of his outstanding career, in 2001, three years after his retirement in 1998, the Chicago Symphony tuba chair was dedicated as the Arnold Jacobs Principal Tuba.

Closer to home, we have just learned of a young tuba player who has already developed such a skill. A Grade 11 student (Matt Marzano) at Twin Lakes Secondary School in Orillia, Ontario, has developed the rare ability to sustain a single note for five minutes without a break in sound.

So! Circular breathing seems to be here to stay. How does one develop the skill? So far I haven’t been able to find a source. The technique seems to have originated in the dim and distant past. Some people have suggested that circular breathing developed with the didgeridoo (the origin of which is itself the subject of much speculation). Most agree that this instrument was developed by Aboriginal peoples of Northern Australia. It is sometimes referred to as a “wooden brass instrument.” Many researchers suggest that it may be the world’s oldest musical instrument, over 40,000 years old. In other words, stay tuned.

Incidents at the Bandstand

Over the years I have observed many incidents at bandstands during concerts. In some cases the incidents were disruptive, some were of no consequence and others were humorous. Since there are a number of such incidents stored in the back of my mind, I have decided to add this section to the column, and recount one such item in each column.

The incident for this month refers to a silly event during a concert in the park. For some 15 years I acted as MC for concerts in Toronto parks sponsored by the city’s Department of Parks and Recreation. At an afternoon concert in St. James Park in downtown Toronto, there was a small jazz ensemble performing. Suddenly, in the middle of a number, the clarinet player jumped up, left the bandstand and ran off. At the end of the number I asked the leader of the group why this had happened.

He told me not to worry. The player lived near by, had run home, and would be back soon. The reason? The player wore dentures, and after his lunch he forgot to change teeth. He had arrived at the park with his “eating teeth” and had to go home for his “clarinet-playing teeth.”

Jack MacQuarrie plays several brass instruments and has performed in many community ensembles. He can be contacted at bandstand@thewholenote.com.
Welcome to Part 1 of *The WholeNote*’s 21st annual Blue Pages directory of our region’s music makers. It’s been a bumpy ride getting to this point, and we hope you’ll enjoy perusing the profiles that follow, submitted both by presenters who are forging ahead with pandemically appropriate plans for 2020–21, or whose detailed plans are still uncertain.

Thanks to all those who have once again opted in with a *WholeNote* membership and profile: for your faith in and support for what we do; and for having faith in yourselves, finding the resilience needed to move forward in these very uncertain times.

And thanks to you, our readers, in print, and online at kiosk.thewholenote.com (where you can also find our four issues since April 1. (If you missed any of those four print issues and would like copies, please contact us.

You’ll notice there are fewer profiles than would normally appear in our October Blue Pages; this is because, to allow presenters and artists whose plans are still uncertain a bit more time to figure things out, we will continue to publish them in our November and December/January issues as well. The cumulative three-part Blue Pages directory will be kept alive online at thewholenote.com under the “Who’s Who” tab (see page 36 for details). Profiles will be kept up-to-date there, as new ones arrive or more information is available for those already here.

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

The Azrieli Foundation

The Azrieli Foundation improves the lives of present and future generations by focusing its funding in education, research, healthcare and the arts. In addition to strategic philanthropic investments, the foundation operates a number of programs including the Azrieli Prize in Architecture, the Azrieli Fellows Program, the Azrieli Science Grants Program, the Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program and the Azrieli Music Prizes.

Established in 2014, the biennial Azrieli Music Prizes (AMP) offer opportunities for the discovery, creation, performance and celebration of excellence in concert music composition. Two international prizes focus on new Jewish music; a third celebrates creating new Canadian music. Submissions are accepted from composers of all faiths, ages, backgrounds and affiliations and evaluated by two expert AMP juries.

All three winning composers receive a $50,000 CAD cash prize and are invited to participate in: the rehearsals and performance of their winning works at the AMP Gala Concert; subsequent international premieres; and the recording of their work for a future commercial release.

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Canadian Children’s Opera Company

Now over 50 years old, the CCOC consists of six chorus divisions of children and youth from junior kindergarten to grade 12, and is the only permanent children’s opera company in Canada to regularly commission and produce operas for children. Opera is simply storytelling with music, and those are two things that kids and youth love! A unique experience, the CCOC offers members unparalleled performance opportunities and life skills through age-appropriate vocal and dramatic training. This year programming will be predominantly online, with the occasional gathering in person when safe and appropriate.

Auditions are held April to June and occasionally during the year. A non-auditioned in- and after-school workshop program was launched in 2008 as part of the OPERAtion KIDS outreach arm of the CCOC.

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The Azrieli Foundation

The Aga Khan Museum explores and celebrates cross-cultural dialogue through the arts. A centre for innovation and creativity, the Museum offers unique insights and new perspectives into the potential of art and culture to act as a catalyst for intercultural dialogue, engaged global citizenship, and social change. Visit our website for the most up-to-date information on programs and events at the Museum.

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Keiko Devaux, Montreal, one of 3 Azrieli Music Prize winners for 2020

Aga Khan Museum

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Amadeus Choir of Great Toronto

Enlivening Toronto’s arts community for 47 years, the award-winning Amadeus Choir is a semi-professional choir of auditioned voices from Toronto and the surrounding areas. The Choir champions the best of choral music and premieres works of Canadian and international composers through a self-produced Toronto concert series, guest performances, and special events. Known well beyond Toronto through tours, festivals, recordin...


### Canadian Sinfonietta

Founded in 1998, the Canadian Sinfonietta (CS) is a chamber orchestra led by artistic director and founder, Tak-Ng Lai, in partnership with concertmaster Joyce Lai. The orchestra is composed of 14-25 professional musicians who perform a series of concerts annually as a large ensemble, as well as a number of chamber concerts in various intimate settings throughout the GTA and Ontario. The mission of CS is to reintroduce live chamber music to the growing GTA communities, producing a new generation of concert-goers by presenting concerts that are traditional with a twist. The programs are innovative and often feature world premiere works both Canadian and international, multicultural music, non-western instruments, and highlight diverse Canadian artists. CS is a community-conscious group and plays an active role through the partnership with local community organizations in promoting the appreciation of music across various cultures; mentoring young artists, and using music as a language to engage and link people of all ages and status within the community. CS believes that “chamber music is for everyone.” In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CS now also has an online presence, with virtual projects, as well as outdoor concerts.

Joyce Lai
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### Chorus Niagara

Worth the drive to Niagara! Chorus Niagara, The Power of 100, is Niagara’s premier 100-voice auditioned ensemble. Conducted by artistic director Robert Cooper (celebrating 31 years with Chorus Niagara), Chorus Niagara has been entertaining and enlightening audiences for 58 years. Chorus Niagara performs traditional choral masterpieces, modern and seldom-heard works, new commissions and provides a showcase for emerging Canadian talent. Attracting singers of all ages through its various programs: the Chorus Niagara Children’s Choir, Side-by-Side High School Chorale, Robert Cooper Choral Scholars program, and Conductor Apprenticeship, Chorus Niagara provides opportunities for everyone to experience the joy of live choral performance. All concerts are performed at the stunning FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in revitalized downtown St. Catharines.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Chorus Niagara will be engaging our singers and audience members with online presentations, and a few smaller sized live events if circumstances allow. Stay well everyone and we’ll see you in-person very soon!

Diana McAdorey
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cnadmin@becon.org
www.chorusniagara.org

### Chorus Niagara’s Twitter

www.facebook.com/ChorusNiagara
twitter.com/chorusniagara

### Church of St. Mary Magdalene

Steeped in musical heritage and assisted by a generous acoustic, St. Mary Magdalene’s offers a music programme strongly rooted in the tradition established by Healey Willan. Every Sunday at the 11am Solemn Mass the Gallery Choir sings a mass and motet from the west gallery, while the Ritual Choir sings the Gregorian propers from the east end. Both choirs rehearse on Thursdays. At the 9:30am Sung Mass, the SMM Singers sing a motet and lead congregational singing. Membership is informal: rehearsals are at 9am directly before the service; regular attendance is not mandatory.

One Sunday per month at 4:30pm, the meditative Solemn Evensong and Benediction is sung, preceded by an organ recital at 4pm. For information, please contact the director of music, Andrew Adair.

Andrew Adair
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### DaCapo Chamber Choir

The 24-voice DaCapo Chamber Choir was founded in 1998 in Kitchener-Waterloo under the direction of Leonard Enns. The mission of the choir is to identify, study, rehearse and present outstanding choral chamber works of the past 100 years and to champion music of Canadian and local composers.

Our 2020/21 season has been postponed, but we hope to present the concluding concert of our three-year “Road to Refuge” series (cancelled this past May) as soon as it is safe to gather in 2021. “Illimitably Earth” will be a full-on celebration of renewal - it will be a shout of joy (on so many levels!). We will include two extended works for choir and piano, with guest pianist Catherine Robertson. This will be a year to make up for lost time and for the re-launch of DaCapo Chamber Choir, making music and moving forward.

100 years and to champion music of Canadian and local composers.

DaCapo Chamber Choir operates under the umbrella of the Canadian Children’s Opera Company and is supported by the University of Waterloo (with exquisite windows, a beautiful sanctuary, and a cloister-style courtyard) sits in one of the most intensely interesting neighbourhoods in the city. At 525 Bloor St. E. (close to subway), between Sherbourne and Parliament, it has old Rosedale to the north, multi-faceted St. Jamestown to the south, and a fever of new condo developments to the east and west. It exists as an oasis in the midst of this, providing space as well for local youth choral programs and music teachers. Please join us for services, or consider our space for your next musical event.

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The Don Wright Faculty of Music at Western University

The Don Wright Faculty of Music at Western University in London, Ontario is situated in a research-intensive university on a campus that is inviting and striking. It is an environment that enables students to grow artistically and academically, with a strong focus on community. Our students are among 850 of the brightest and most talented young artist scholars, who come to study in one of our many undergraduate and graduate programs. With the faculty and staff, they are committed to excellence in creative and scholarly work.

In our 2020/21 season, we invite you to experience online the incredible diversity of musical styles and genres our students, faculty and guest artists have to offer. From student ensemble performances (from choirs and opera to orchestra, band, jazz, percussion, and early music), faculty concerts, and our signature “Fridays@12:30” concert series, we are pleased to bring this year’s performances to you at home. Our goal is to share select performances online throughout the year - a blend of livestream and pre-recorded opportunities - while closely following university and local health authority guidelines. Safety and health is critical, as is offering students a musical experience.

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The Edison Singers

We are a newly formed, non-profit organization guided by internationally-acclaimed conductor Noel Edison to present choral music at its best. Our vision is to reach out to communities large and small with the world’s finest choral music. During our 2019/20 inaugural season, The Edison Singers presented concerts in three communities: Toronto, Niagara-on-the-Lake, and Wellington County. These three centres are the hubs for our annual choral calendar, and our aim is to become an integral part of the musical life of each community.

For The Edison Singers’ 2020/21 season we will be offering seven video recordings to be released online. You will see some behind-the-scenes footage of our physically-distanced rehearsals and be treated to brief on-camera introductions/programme notes from our conductor. Please stay tuned to our website for more details.

Esther Farwell
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Ensemble Vivant

“...chamber music at its evocative best!”
- WholeNote 2020 review - (Click Here - www.thewholenote.com/index.php/booksrecords2/potpourri/29801-latin-romance-ensemble-vivant)

Pioneering piano chamber music sensation Ensemble Vivant performs innovative genre-diverse repertoire combined with passionate, deeply communicative playing that touches the hearts and souls of listeners of all ages.

Opening Day recording artists with 14 internationally-acclaimed CDs.

“...highest-level chamber music-making. No matter the genre, there is magic in Ensemble Vivant’s music-making.”
- Jazz legend Rick Wilkins, C.M.

“...beautiful, poised performances...capture the passion and verve...Wilson’s piano gives this music unerring drive and plenty of sparkle.”
- Toronto Star

Core Quintet: Catherine Wilson, piano/artistic director; Corey Gemmell, violin; Norman Hatha-way, viola; Tom Mueller, cello; George Koller, bass. Regular collaborators: Kevin Turcotte, trumpet; Mike Murley, sax; Nick Fraser, drums; and others.

EV is known for bringing evidence-based live performance programs to children (endorsed by the scientific community) and conducted through the not-for-profit registered charity Euterpe: Music For Health Canada (www.musicforhealthcanada.org). Euterpe received a three-year Ontario Trillium Foundation Grant in 2020.

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Esprit Orchestra

Founded in 1983 by music director and conductor Alex Pauk, Esprit Orchestra’s commitment to commissioning and advancing contemporary music has set it apart as one of the few organizations of its kind on a global scale. Esprit consistently collaborates with outstanding composers, and performs with first-class soloists and ensembles from Canada and abroad. Each concert season, Esprit Orchestra commissions, promotes and performs the work of Canadian composers, and features Canadian premiers of music by leading international composers. With a dynamic annual subscription concert series, this skilled orchestra presents music that is otherwise unavailable in Canada, always performed to the highest standards in the acoustically acclaimed Koerner Hall at the TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning.

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Esbjergung Centennial Choir

Esbjerg Centennial Choir (ECC) is a welcoming, inclusive SATB community choir. We strive to enrich the lives of our choristers and audience members through inspired performances of diverse choral repertoire, ranging from classical masterpieces to contemporary compositions and popular music.

ECC offers amateur singers a challenging but supportive choral music experience, facilitated by a professional music director, accompanist and section leads.

As a result of public health guidelines and restrictions related to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020/21 season will be like no other in ECC’s 54-year history. We will be offering virtual rehearsals on Tuesday evenings at 7:30pm, working on choral repertoire and vocal training. New singers are most welcome to join us in this new venture. If conditions permit, we may perform a live concert in late spring 2021. Please visit our website for further updates.

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Etobicoke Community Concert Band

The Etobicoke Community Concert Band is currently celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2020. Unfortunately, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, we have been unable to present our 25th Gala at this time. The band consists of approximately 45 to 50 members, ranging from amateur to semi-profession status. We play four formal concerts each year at Etobicoke Collegiate, 86 Montgomerie Rd., with a wide variety of musical themes such as broadway, Hollywood, international music, patriotic themes, Big Band and conventional concert band music. There are two offshoots of the concert band, the Etobicoke Jazz Ensemble, which plays music from Latin jazz to traditional Big Band tunes, and we also have a great Woodwind Quintet. The mission of the band is to enliven the spirit of the people of Etobico by providing high quality musical entertainment. The mission...
is accomplished by: providing an opportunity for musicians from the community to practice and perform in a challenging and supportive ensemble environment with a goal of developing and enhancing the musical skills of individuals. Meeting the needs of the community through public performances, which present repertoire with wide appeal that take place at a variety of locations throughout the community.

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• Exultate Chamber Singers

Exultate Chamber Singers is proud to be celebrating its 40th anniversary during its upcoming 2020/21 season. The choir is enriched not only by the excellent musicianship of its members but also by their varied academic and professional backgrounds. Together they form a passionate, committed ensemble with a wide-ranging repertoire. Founded and led for 30 years by conductor and organist John Tuttle, the choir has since been under the direction of Dr. Karen Grylls (2011 to 2012), Dr. Hilary Apfelstadt (2013 to 2018), and its newest artistic director, Dr. Mark Ramsay. Exultate is a three-time winner of the Canada Council Healey Willan Grand Prize and recently won first place in the adult mixed-voice chamber choir category of the 2019 Choral Canada National Competition for Canadian Amateur Choirs. The choir has appeared in performances with Alice Parker, Morten Lauridsen, and Ola Gjeilo, and has released five full-length albums to date.

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• Flute Street

Flute Street is Toronto’s professional flute choir, whose players employ the full range of instruments from piccolo through treble, concert, alto, bass, contralto, contrabass, and even the double contrabass flute. Audiences have been delighted to hear the ensemble’s eclectic mix of classical, folk, jazz, pop, and Canadian and world premieres with featured international guest soloists, such as Jean-Louis Beaumadier, Christine Beard, Mary Ann Archer, Louis Papachristos, Kelly Via and low flutes specialist, Peter Sheridan. In addition to the regular three-concert series presented in Toronto, Flute Street has performed as guest artists in Quebec with Les Flûtistes de Montréal, at both Canadian Flute Conventions, and at the first International Low Flutes Festival in Washington D.C. Hear our current YouTube project.

“Tutti Flutti” at our website, as we eagerly await our return to the live concert stage.

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• The Hannaford Street Silver Band

The Hannaford Street Silver Band is Canada’s award-winning professional brass band. Its mission is to honour the traditions of this art form and place it in a contemporary context with a unique, Canadian point-of-view. We actively facilitate innovative creative projects and collaborate with the best of Canada’s diverse artists. Guided by the vision of artistic director David Pell, our 2020/21 season features streamed concerts that will showcase such artists as guest conductors James Sommerville and Gillian MacKay, mezzo-soprano soloist Marion Newman and world/fusion vocalist Suba Sankaran. Add to this wonderful mix, CBC radio host Tom Allen and the acclaimed actor Derek Boyes. This season we will also unveil our 10-piece virtuoso ensemble performing music from around the world. You simply can’t keep a good band down!

The HSSB demonstrates its commitment to youth, outreach and education by running the Hannaford Youth Program. Directed by Anita McAllister, this vibrant program is a fantastic opportunity for brass and percussion players ages 7 to 24 to participate in three remarkable youth bands in both live and virtual settings.

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• Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts

The Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts (the Isabel) is a home for the creative arts at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario and a hub of vibrant artistic study, creation, and exhibition in our community. The building houses the Queen’s Department of Film and Media and the DAN School of Drama and Music, as well as the Isabel house season, which brings some of the most exciting and acclaimed musicians to its 567-seat concert hall. Situated on the shores of Lake Ontario, the Isabel brings together world-class arts spaces and programs with a captivating sense of place, creating a dynamic venue for our students and community to learn, discover, think, do, and experience together.

Opened in September 2014, the Isabel was designed by Oslo/New York-based firm Snøhetta and Ottawa’s N45, with acoustics and theatre design by ARUP and Theatre Projects Consultants. Anchored by a transformational gift to the Initiative Campaign from Drs. Alfred and Isabel Bader, the Isabel was inspired by the Baders’ love - of the arts, of Queen’s, and of each other - and is named in Isabel’s honour. For a virtual tour, visit www queensu.ca/theisabel/content/virtual-walkthrough.

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• Jubilate Singers

We are a community choir of about 40 voices, who love to sing music from around the world in the original languages. During the 2020/21 season, we are not planning any live concerts until it is announced that it is safe to do so, but we may
SECTION I: PRESENTERS & PERFORMERS

The Kindred Spirits Orchestra has been performing to great acclaim, sold-out audiences, and standing ovations at the Flato Markham Theatre and at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, as well as at the CBC Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto. Highlights of the 2020/21 concert season include Bruckner's First, Shostakovich's Fourth, Prokofiev's Fifth and Scriabin's Second symphonies as well as Tchaikovsky's Manfred Symphony and Wagner's Symphony in C Major. We are thrilled to welcome back Michael Berkovsky in Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 2, Andrew Ascenzo in Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No. 1, and Christina Petrowska-Quilico in Tan Dun's Piano Concerto "The Fire". Ludmila Angelov will make his début with the KSO in Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1, and Gregory Vandikas in Scriabin's Piano Concerto. In June 2021, the KSO and Markham Contemporary Music Festival will return to Cornell Recital Hall for a series of concerts presenting pieces by Pärt and Gorecki as well as Symphony No. M by Shostakovich, featuring soprano Stephanie de Ciantis and baritone John Holland. The concert season will conclude with a performance at the CBC Glenn Gould Theatre and a Canada Day celebration at Unionville Millennium Theatre.

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twitter.com/ksorchestra

Music Gallery, The

The Music Gallery is Toronto's Centre for Creative Music. We present and promote experimentation and innovation in all forms of music, and encourage cross-pollination between genres, disciplines and audiences. Since 1978, we have occupied a valued position within Toronto’s musical ecology, presenting both internationally-renowned contemporary music and a wide spectrum of local artists and projects.

We are now located in the beautiful 918 Bathurst St. Centre for Culture, Arts, Media and Education, though this season most of our programming will be delivered online. We present the “X Avant Festival” during October, and “Emergents” (emerging artists) and “Departures” (off-site) series as well as unique main stage concert experiences throughout our season. We also partner with artists and arts organizations to co-present their work in our space, assisted by our highly experienced technical crew. Our season runs September through June with off-season events.

David Dacks
416-204-1080
david@musicgallery.org
www.musicgallery.org
www.facebook.com/themusicgalleryTO
twitter.com/musicgalleryTO

Music Toronto

“...serious, discerning presenters like Music Toronto have everything to celebrate.” (Music-altonero.org)

A legacy organization in classical music, Music Toronto continues to represent the world’s best chamber ensembles and pianists, though we cannot present live concerts during the pandemic. We specialize in string quartets, long recognized as the highest form of Western classical music. Throughout our history we have invited to Toronto only the finest, from established masters like the Amadeus, the Tokyo and the Hagen to exciting new quartets like the vision and the Schumann. Of course we always welcome back our home-grown favourites, the St. Lawrence Quartet and the Gryphon Trio.

Our reputation for pianists is equally eclectic and compelling. From world-renowned interpreters like Stephen Hough, Marc-André Hamelin and Janina Fialkowska to brilliant rising stars like Benjamin Grosvenor, our piano is always in good hands.

Great music of five centuries, from Haydn to new works written in this 21st century, and always including Canadian music; artists new and familiar, extraordinary music-making: only the best, only at Music Toronto. Join the best audience in the city for these great concerts.

Heather Lacey
416-214-1660
heather@music-toronto.com
music-toronto.com
www.facebook.com/MusicToronto
twitter.com/Music_Toronto

Off Centre Music Salon

Off Centre Music Salon re-creates the magical, inclusive atmosphere of the Viennese and Parisian Salons of the 19th century. Music is intimately shared, with each concert telling a story and creating personal connections for the audience and performers alike. Dedicated to the discovery and development of young, professional musical talent, Off Centre concerts include voice and instrumental performances. Repertoire is rarely, if ever, repeated.

During these otherworldly times, while our live concerts are on hold, we are planning a number of online events. We look forward to sharing some short performances, personal reflections and musical insights. Please continue to check the listings section of The WholeNote or our website to stay up-to-date with our planned activities. Until we can meet again at our normal venue in Toronto, at Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, please keep safe and be well.

Inna Periks
416-466-6323
tickets@offcentremusic.com
www.offcentremusic.com

New Music Concerts

Now entering its 50th season, New Music Concerts is a vital and central part of Toronto’s new music scene and has been providing a leadership role in the community throughout its history. Founded by internationally-acclaimed Canadian musicians Robert Aitken and Norma Beecroft, NMC presented its first concert in January 1972 with guest composer/conductor Luciano Berio. Since that time NMC has commissioned hundreds of new works, and has brought countless historically important compositions to thousands of listeners through meticulous performances by Toronto’s top musicians, most often with the participation of the composers. NMC is known throughout the world as the pre-eminent new music organization of our country. Composers from around the world know that if their work is performed in Canada by NMC, then the performance will not only be outstanding, but probably definitive.

NMC is internationally renowned and unique in Toronto as the foremost champion of contemporary works for large chamber ensembles. After 50 years under the artistic direction of Robert Aitken, we are embarking on a transition to our new, innovative artistic director, composer, and conductor; Brian Current.

Adam Scime
416-961-9594
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www.newmusicconcerts.com
www.facebook.com/New-Music-Concerts-29501008355752
twitter.com/newmusicconcert

Opera Atelier

Opera Atelier is a world leader in the rediscovery and revitalization of period opera and ballet, particularly works from the Baroque era. Through their historically-informed productions, founding co-artistic directors Marshall Pynkoski and Jeannette Lajeunesse Zingg seek to provide a thrilling theatrical experience for modern audiences. Opera Atelier presents a two-opera season in Toronto, and tours internationally. The
company is dedicated to the education of youth and young artists, and offers a robust slate of education, enrichment and outreach opportunities. Opera Atelier’s reimagined 2020/21 season features a new creation called Something Rich and Strange (Oct 28, 2020) and Handel’s The Resurrection (April 1, 2021) both livestreamed from Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre. Visit our website for more information.

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Orchestra Toronto

Orchestra Toronto is an orchestra created by passionate musicians within the community, for the community. Under the direction of music director Michael Newnham, we offer the enjoyment of music, foster education and music appreciation and support emerging Canadian talent. We perform five annual concerts with repertoire from great symphonic classics to new delights, in the acoustically splendid George Weston Recital Hall, at the Meridian Arts Centre. Our organization of volunteers is committed to making symphonic music accessible to a broad and diverse public beyond the concert hall.

We are proud to be offering a full, five-concert season, in venues around the city of Toronto. Check our website for concert details.

Jennie Worden
416-467-7142
executive.director@orchestratoronto.ca
www.orchestratoronto.ca

Oriana Women’s Choir

Oriana Women’s Choir is an auditioned ensemble of 30 amateur female singers with a long history of performance at a high artistic standard. Led by artistic director Mitchell Pady since 2011, Oriana explores the possibilities in choral music for the female voice, collaborating with a diverse range of artists to push the boundaries of typical expectations for women’s choir performances. We foster the creation of Canadian choral music, regularly commissioning works from Canadian composers for women’s voices.

Oriana typically presents a three-concert series, in November, February and May. In this anything-but-typical year, we are starting the season virtually, and continuing our focus on Canadian repertoire, including our collaborative project with the composition students in the Claude Watson Senior Arts program. We continue to monitor developments to determine when we may be able to gather safely in-person again, but in the meantime we are looking forward to engaging with you online!

Orpheus Choir of Toronto

The Orpheus Choir’s vision is to celebrate the power of choral music as an agent of social change and a passionate medium of artistic expression. The 65-voice choir under artistic director Robert Cooper, champions the new and unusual in choral performance, commissioning and introducing new works and performing overlooked masterpieces. Regularly working with living composers, and singing a wide range of repertoire in concerts with high production values, Orpheus has introduced audiences to many accessible works from the current generation of leading composers. Orpheus also supports young emerging vocal talent through its highly respected Sidgwick Scholars Program and its newer Vocal Apprentice Program for high school singers. Winner of the 2018 Choral Canada Award for Outstanding Innovation, Orpheus continues to present an “expect something different” experience!

The 2020/21 season will begin virtually, with livestreamed performances in November and December, moving to live performances when circumstances permit. Planned projects include a program of favourites selected by the choir members, and an exploration of music and mental health in Allan Bevan’s Ancient of Days.

Helen Coxon
416-530-4428
info@orpheuschoirtoronto.com
orpheuschoirtoronto.com

Pax Christi Chorale

Pax Christi Chorale delivers stirring performances with great polish and total conviction. Under the leadership of artistic director David Bowser, the award-winning choir aspires to build on its strengths and accomplishments to achieve new levels of performance and audience engagement. Collaborations with outstanding guest artists and partners give audiences and performers a deep appreciation for choral masterworks and new Canadian music.

The Pax Christi Chamber Choir placed first in its category in Choral Canada’s 2017 national competition for amateur choirs. We champion great choral music among a diverse community. We have an inclusive philosophy and welcome audience members and choristers from all backgrounds and walks of life.

Pax Christi Chorale has moved its activities online for the 2020/21 season. Visit our website for more information on audition and concert information, or email interim executive director Cynthia Hawkins.

Cynthia Hawkins
executive@paxchristichorale.org
www.paxchristichorale.org

The Piano Lunaire

The Piano Lunaire is a contemporary classical music organization based in Toronto, pursuing the presentation of artistic excellence in the 21st Century. The company's portfolio is three-fold: we produce monthly full moon performances, house a record label (“Lunaire Records”), and collaborate with the Canadian musical community at large, in the capacity of both fundraising and pedagogical platform. Correspondingly, our mission comprises three mandates: 1) to present new, dynamic and piano-centric music from the last fifty years to present; 2) to give voice to emerging professionals in the vibrant scene that is
The Royal Conservatory of Music

The Royal Conservatory’s Koerner Hall is “the greatest venue in this city” and “magnificent in its acoustics, as much as in its design” (Toronto Star). This concert season, we bring you jazz, classical, world, and roots music performances by extraordinary international and Canadian artists - in a way that is safe and responsible. Join us in celebrating our Beethoven’s 250 Festival in November-December 2020 and the 21C Music Festival in January 2021, and close to 100 more concerts to choose from in the 2021/22 concert season, September 2020 to May 2021. We look forward to sharing uplifting and inspiring live music with you!

Akshay Kaushik
416-409-9208
www.rcmusic.com/performance
www.facebook.com/koernerhall
twitter.com/KoernerHall

Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra, The

In response to COVID-19, the Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra will proudly and safely present our 41st season online. The SPO has always been dedicated to enriching the musical life of the greater Scarborough area by presenting engaging, high-quality musical performances. We are proud and grateful to continue to do so.

For 2020/21, the SPO will present two online series based on interesting themes. All-new “SPOGreatMusic” podcast episodes will be available on major platforms every other Friday, beginning September 18, and new Music Performance videos will be posted every other Friday to our YouTube channel, beginning on October 9. Both series run through April 2021.

Music Performance videos will feature SPO musicians, the Odin String Quartet, guest artists, and our artist-in-residence, Dr. Lisa Tahara. We will also post animated short films created by fourth year Sheridan College students with new music by composers from our SPO family. Podcasts will feature amazing interviews with musicians, composers, historians, musicologists, special guests, sector representatives, community partners (including the Stratford Symphony Orchestra, Scarborough Arts, and FabCollab Toronto), and more. Our composer-in-residence and podcast host is Dr. Daniel Meh dizadeh.

For more information, theme details, music performance selections, and links, please visit our website and social media platforms regularly.

SINE NOMINE Ensemble for Medieval Music

SINE NOMINE was formed in Toronto in 1991 to research and perform music from before 1500, and has given concerts in Canada, the United States, and the UK. The members have varied backgrounds in vocal and instrumental performance (wind instruments, fiddles, lutes, and percussion), musicology, medieval history, language, literature, liturgy, and manuscript studies. In preparing repertoire, we draw on all of these specialties, and experiment with improvisation and ornamentation, as well as medieval pronunciation and tuning systems, hoping to create performances which are intelligible and enjoyable to modern audiences - and which would not have been wholly foreign to medieval listeners! We blend vocal and instrumental music from medieval courts and churches with readings, and occasionally drama, liturgy, or dance, to provide insight into the fascinating artistic and intellectual culture of the Middle Ages.

Our 2020/21 Toronto season is on hold, pending public health developments, but our current project is a detailed exploration of a 14th-century Italian manuscript with an unusually rich combination of vocal music and instrumental dances.

Andrew Bridge
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sinenominetoronto@gmail.com

Soundstreams

Founded in 1982, Soundstreams is one of the world’s leading contemporary music companies, and the largest global presenter of new Canadian music. Artistic director Lawrence Cherny and executive director Menon Dwarka are committed to showcasing the work of living composers with a focus on innovative thematic and experiential programming, and creating a living and lasting legacy for Canadian music.

Soundstreams also serves a broad community of music lovers through free outreach and education programs including Encounters, the RBC Bridges workshop for early career composers, BMO SoundWave and SoundMakers. Encounters is a free discovery series featuring performance, discussions, and audience participation; the RBC Bridges workshop for early career composers helps talented contemporary composers from around the world launch their careers; BMO SoundWave provides accessible-priced tickets; and SoundMakers provides interactive learning experiences online and in the classroom.

Tim Crouch
416-504-1282
info@soundstreams.ca
soundstreams.ca
www.facebook.com/Soundstreams
twitter.com/soundstreams

St. Thomas’s Anglican Church

St. Thomas’s Church, Toronto, is one of the oldest Anglo-Catholic congregations in Canada. Established in 1874, the parish has been, from its earliest days, at the forefront of the liturgical and musical life of the Anglican Church of Canada. Excellent choral and organ music are vital components of all Sunday services, Feast Days, and the liturgies of Advent and Holy Week. Starting in September, for as long as COVID-19 restrictions are in effect and choral gatherings are prohibited, we are pleased to offer weekly solo excerpts from Bach’s Church Cantatas, and hope that these provide comfort and joy in such unusual and difficult times. All of our services are live-streamed online and can be found through the St. Thomas’s website.

Looking ahead to when we can once again sing together, St. Thomas’s will present three choral services each Sunday, sung by a dedicated group of volunteers supported by section leads: “Sung Eucharist (Contemporary Rite)” at 9:30am; “Solemn Eucharist (Traditional Rite)” at 11am; and “Solemn Evensong and Devotions” at 7pm. The repertoire is diverse, from plainsong and Renaissance masterpieces to gems of the British cathedral tradition, contemporary Canadian compositions, and other choral masterworks.

Matthew Whitfield
416-878-2212
musicdirector@stthomas.on.ca
www.stthomas.on.ca
www.facebook.com/stthomastoronto
twitter.com/stthomastoronto

Tafelmusik

Led by music director Elisa Citterio and executive director Carol Kehoe, Tafelmusik is an orchestra, choir, and experience that celebrates beauty through music of the past.

Founded over 40 years ago on the pillars of passion, learning, and artistic excellence, Tafelmusik continues to bring new energy to baroque music and beyond. Historically informed performances of 17th- to 19th-century instrumental and choral music (led by chamber choir director Ivars Taurins) share the stage with vibrant, insightful multimedia programs, and bold new music written just for the group. Each piece is played on period instruments, underscored and illuminated by scholarship.

Through dynamic performances, international touring, award-winning recordings, and comprehensive education programs, Tafelmusik invites audiences to engage with beauty and experience the breadth of emotion music can inspire.
• Tallis Choir of Toronto

Under the leadership of artistic director Peter Mahon, The Tallis Choir is a mixed-voice chamber choir of 36 voices that has been performing together since 1977. The choir presents an annual subscription series of four concerts between October and May each year in the magnificent acoustic of St. Patrick’s Church in downtown Toronto. Known for innovative programming and polished performances of repertoire covering more than five centuries, the Tallis Choir is an extremely versatile ensemble. They specialize in performances of rarely-heard sacred masterpieces of the Italian, Spanish and English Renaissance that form the cornerstone of their concert series. While they frequently feature a capella polyphonic works, the Choir often works with guest artists performing on period string and wind instruments to add further authenticity to the experience. Additionally, the Choir can be heard in performances around the GTA and southern Ontario, having appeared in the Colours of Music Festival, Luminato Festival, and in multiple performances at the Sony Centre.

David Martin
416-286-8798
info@tallischoir.com
www.tallischoir.com

• Toronto Children’s Chorus

The award-winning Toronto Children’s Chorus is currently marking its 43rd season and its 14th year under the baton of artistic director Elise Bradley, MNZM. The Chorus comprises a family of choirs: KinderNotes for children within the Junior and Senior Kindergarten age range (no audition required), four Training Choir levels, Main Choir (six ensembles) and Toronto Youth Choir (aged 16 to 30). Each year, more than 400 choristers develop their skills in vocal technique, sight-singing and music theory, and perform an array of season concerts and guest performances. The Chamber Choir also performs nationally and internationally, most recently representing Canada at choral festivals in New Zealand and Australia.

Carol Stairs
416-932-8666
Carol@torontochildrenschorus.com
www.tallischoir.com

• Toronto Classical Singers

For 29 years, Toronto Classical Singers has been known for its unique musical point of view and its high-quality performances, often presenting the lesser-known and rarely performed vocal/orchestral repertoire as well as the standard works. With its exuberant approach, the group celebrates the choral tradition with its complex sonority of large choir with professional orchestra.

Over 28 seasons in Toronto, it took a full-blown pandemic for the group to cancel a performance and like all arts groups we are greatly impacted by the situation. However, we are optimistic that founding conductor Jurgen Petrenko will lead the choir, the Talisker Players and soloists for a concert on May 2, 2021 featuring an all Vaughan Williams programme. As vast as the ocean, his Sea Symphony will be performed with Five Mystical Songs, creating a concert of atmospheric awe and wonder.

We look forward to resuming our full schedule in 2021/22, as we celebrate 30 years of contributing to the fabric of musical life in Toronto. Our concerts are presented at Christ Church Deer Park, 1570 Yonge Street. Please visit our website for more information.

Kathleen Payne
437-344-1719
info@torontoclassicalsingers.ca
www.tallischoir.com
www.facebook.com/TorontoClassicalSingers
twitter.com/TCSingers

• The Toronto Consort

The Toronto Consort is Canada’s leading ensemble, specializing in the music of the Middle Ages, Renaissance and early Baroque. Led by a collective of artistic associates, ten of Canada’s leading early music specialists, the Consort presents a main stage concert series at the beautiful Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, located in the Annex. The Consort has toured extensively and has recorded music for film and television, including the hit television series The Tudors and The Borgias, and is releasing its 15th CD recording in Autumn 2019: Frescobaldi and the Glories of Rome.

Michelle Knight
416-966-1045
info@torontoconsort.org
www.tallischoir.com
www.facebook.com/TorontoConsort

• Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

Canada’s world-renowned large vocal ensemble plans to continue to bring great choral music to the community throughout the pandemic. For the
2020/21 season, the TMC will be under the artistic leadership of Simon Rivard who was appointed Associate Conductor in July. TMC is designing a 2020/21 season that will include virtual choir performances, digital programs and artistic collaborations. Programming will begin online with the hope of adding in-person elements as health and safety regulations permit.

Fall 2020 programs in development include a Thanksgiving program with guest curator Suba Sankaran, a Remembrance Day program with guest curator Andrew Balfour, and the TMC’s annual celebration of Christmas music in December, “Festival of Carols.”

Visit the TMC’s website for updates on 2020/21 programs and to access online programs and virtual choir pieces created during Spring 2020. Anne Longmore
416-598-0422
marketing@tmchoir.org
www.tmchoir.org
www.facebook.com/TMChoir
www.twitter.com/TMChoir

● Toronto Symphony Orchestra

One of Canada’s most respected arts organizations, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO) has played a vital role in the city’s dynamic cultural life for 98 years. Music director Gustavo Gimeno brings an expansive artistic vision, intellectual curiosity, and sense of adventure to programming the 92-musician Orchestra. The TSO is committed to serving local and national communities through vibrant performances, extensive educational activities, and impactful community relationships. It has a notable recording and broadcast history and has been celebrated internationally during its many tours. Toronto’s iconic Roy Thomson Hall is the TSO’s home, drawing patrons from around the world. The Toronto Symphony Orchestra’s name remains synonymous with musical versatility and growth, and artistic distinction.

Jessica Rashotte
416-593-1285
contactus@tso.ca
www.tso.ca
www.facebook.com/torontosymphonyorchestra
twitter.com/TorontoSymphony

● Trio Arkel

Trio Arkel is a chamber music ensemble presenting classical music in the heart of Toronto. Leading musicians Marie Bérard and Winona Zelenka collaborate with renowned guest artists in three eclectic programs each season, performing both favourites and lesser-known works in concerts that fascinate and delight.

Winona Zelenka
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trioarkel@gmail.com
trioarkel.com
www.facebook.com/TrioArkel
twitter.com/TrioArkel

● University of Toronto Faculty of Music

Established in 1918, U of T Music is Canada’s leading comprehensive institution for higher education in music and is a growing global presence in musical training, interdisciplinary research, and digital media content development. Home to a diverse and dynamic community of scholars, performers, composers, and educators, U of T Music offers a supportive community in one of the world’s most diverse and dynamic cities. We provide a superb learning environment, an internationally renowned teaching faculty, multiple performance halls, and an outstanding music library collection. With degrees and diplomas available in numerous areas of study, our array of courses and programs provides our 900 students an exceptional opportunity to explore various fields within music.

Don McLean, dean and professor
416-978-3750
www.music.utoronto.ca
www.facebook.com/UofTMusic
twitter.com/UofTMusic

● VOCA Chorus of Toronto

The VOCA Chorus of Toronto, a dynamic, auditioned ensemble under the leadership of artistic director Jenny Crober, performs a broad range of repertoire in collaboration with a variety of superb guest artists. VOCA’s season consists of concerts, cabaret fundraisers, community performances and workshops. Our talented, versatile accompanist is Elizabeth Acker. Several remarkable artists have joined VOCA as guest clinicians, including composer Ola Gjeilo, conductor Ivars Taurins and jazz musician Dylan Bell. Our Fall 2020 season will feature a wide array of online sessions presented by our artistic staff (including six professional leads), which will include vocal technique, yoga, vocal/body work, musicianship skills, score study, sectional interviews with composers and guest artists — and more. We are thrilled to be invited to perform as part of Roy Thomson Hall’s Annual Choir and Organ Series, where we will present a world premiere by renowned Cree composer Andrew Balfour. We hope to be able to present this event and another “Star Songs” concert, both featuring guests Shawn Grenke, organ; Colleen Allen, sax; and Jamie Drake, percussion in Spring 2021. Rehearsals are held on Monday evenings (when in-person, at Eastminster United).

Jenny Crober
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WHO’S WHO at thewholenote.com?

Visit thewholenote.com and look for “Who’s Who” at the top right-hand corner of our home page. You’ll find a drop-down menu for all our directories.

The Blue Pages Annual Directory of Music Makers | updates are ongoing
Oct - Dec 2020;
Special Focus: Summer Music Education | updating Feb & Mar 2021;
Annual Canary Pages Choral Directory | updating from Sept 2020;
Green Pages Summer Music Guide | updating in 2021

The WholeNote’s useful and interesting directories include profiles for a diverse cross-section of our music community. If you’re interested in joining one or more directories, please contact Karen at karen@thewholenote.
Concerts in Care Ontario

Since 2006, Concerts in Care Ontario has presented programming that makes a significant impact in a range of seniors’ care communities across Ontario. Anchored at the intersection of artistic excellence and research about music and the brain, we curate series of turnkey concerts in seniors’ facilities, performed by top-calibre professional musicians.

Concerts in Care Ontario knows that music can unlock the healing power to transform. Our concerts provide a focal point for building bridges between elders, caregivers and loved ones, while engaging powerful emotions which can activate memory and improve mood for seniors in care who may be isolated and withdrawn.

As soon as Ontario went into lockdown in mid-March, we immediately transformed our musical services into digital musical content in two distinct forms to connect with seniors effectively: Live 30-min concert videos that bring specially designed programming and the world’s leading major and independent record labels to thousands of isolated seniors through high quality productions framed in an informal and personal approach.

In addition to media, music and other contact lists, she maintains a list of friends, usually offering discounts for special events. Since leaving CBC Publicity (20 years in radio and three in TV), she has collaborated with numerous creative people on intriguing projects, mostly in classical music but also in theatre, TV documentaries, books and the visual arts. Longtime clients have included Show One Productions, pianist Christina Petrowska Quilico, soprano Denise Williams, and the Upper Canada Choristers. Linda ran the historic Toronto Jewish Folk Choir for several years, and chaired its Program Committee. She is also a board member of the International Resource Centre for Performing Artists.

Linda Litwack
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twitter.com/LindaLitwack

Rebecca Davis Public Relations

Rebecca Davis Public Relations provides publicity, media and communications services to musicians, arts organizations and record labels, specializing in classical, jazz and other niche genres. From offices in New York and Florida, RDPR brings a respected and enthusiastic voice, in-depth musical knowledge and broad promotional expertise to help artists achieve meaningful and impactful visibility in mainstream and specialist press.

Rebecca brings more than two decades of experience working with musicians, arts organizations and the world’s leading major and independent record labels. She has implemented successful media campaigns for A-list pianists, violinists, singers, composers and vocal and instrumental ensembles. Clients have included Renée Fleming, Jonas Kaufmann, Giancarlo Guerrero and the Nashville Symphony, Saratoga Performing Arts Center, the Calidore String Quartet, Yuja Wang, Eric Whitacre and Cantus. Rebecca was led to a career in classical music publicity through her experience as a classically trained soprano and currently performs with the St. Petersburg Opera in Florida.

Rebecca Davis
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rebbeccadavispr.com/
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twitter.com/rebeccadavis

SPEAK Music PR

SPEAK Music is a Canadian publicity and promotions company based in Toronto, Ontario. Our mission is to help discover new musical talent and connect established artists with the ever-changing Canadian media landscape. We specialize in genres from folk to indie, world music to jazz, country and blues to pop, and everything in between. SPEAK Music has been providing encouragement and professional support to performing musicians, independent record labels, distributors, festivals, not-for-profit organizations, and music charities since March 2003.

SPEAK Music provides press releases, album servicing, consulting, media training, reviews, features, interviews, premieres, non-commercial radio, and tour press. We want your music to be heard by as many media and music tastemakers as possible.

Director Beverly Kreller has extensive media and artist relations, publicity, special event, and production experience, with strong communications and writing skills, and is highly motivated, enthusiastic, and results-oriented. She was the publicist and artistic director of the Winterfolk Festival for the past 12 years and began her own successful SPEAK Music Be Kind Festival in January, 2020. She also performs with her duo, HOTCHA!

Beverly Kreller
416-922-3620
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These event listings are free to all eligible artists and presenters.

Under previous circumstances, listings were 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). These remain our priority areas of coverage. But these are not the same circumstances.

Listings in this issue of the magazine are grouped as follows:

**PERFORMANCES BY DATE (live/hybrid)**

**OTHER EVENTS BY DATE (livestream/workshops/etcetera)**

**CONTINUING EVENTS**

**MAINLY CLUBS (live and local)**

Visit thewholenote.com/justask for performances. Visit thewholenote.com/etcetera for other events.

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

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**HOW TO LIST:**

Send event information

a) by using the convenient online form at thewholenote.com/applylistings

b) by email to our listings editor, John Sharpe at listings@thewholenote.com

**DEADLINES:**

Print (9 times per year): Listings deadlines for each upcoming issue are noted in Dates and Deadlines at the foot of page 7 of each preceding issue. For the coming issue (covering November 1 to December 7) the deadline is Thursday October 15.

Listings received after deadline do not need to be resubmitted for online-only posting.

Online (updated every Friday): Deadline for Friday posting: 6pm the previous Tuesday.
Performances by Date (Live/Hybrid)

**Friday October 2**

- **7:30: Stockey Centre & Festival of the Sound.** Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue Live. Spirit 20, Jamie Parker; Guy Few; and James Campbell. Stockey Centre for the Performing Arts, 2 Bay St.,erry Sound. 705-746-4270 or info@festivalofthesound.ca. $42.95. Tickets are limited. Concert will also be live-streamed.
- **2:00: Art Gallery of Ontario.** AGO Live: Hello from the Other Side - Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Recognizing the powerful impact that music has in enriching and inspiring lives, especially during challenging times, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra has been resolving in finding ways to perform despite the circumstances. As an alternative to its previously scheduled performances at Roy Thomson Hall, TSO musicians will spend the coming year performing in smaller ensembles and connecting with audiences throughout the GTA. Art Gallery of Ontario, Walker Court, 317 Dundas St. W. Free with gallery admission. Also at 4pm. Please book a timed-entry ticket at tickets.ago.ca/events. Also at 4pm.

**Saturday October 3**

- **8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music.** Jazz From Around the World Series: Miles From India - A Celebration of the Music of Miles Davis. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performance. $45. $110.

**Sunday October 4**

- **1:00: Royal Conservatory of Music.** Sun- day Interlude Series; Fern Lindzon. Mazzoleni Concert Hall, Royal Conservatory, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performance. Free.

**Wednesday October 7**


**Friday October 9**

- **2:00: Art Gallery of Ontario.** AGO Live: Hello from the Other Side - Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Recognizing the powerful impact that music has in enriching and inspiring lives, especially during challenging times, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra has been resolving in finding ways to perform despite the circumstances. As an alternative to its previously scheduled performances at Roy Thomson Hall, TSO musicians will spend the coming year performing in smaller ensembles and connecting with audiences throughout the GTA. Art Gallery of Ontario, Walker Court, 317 Dundas St. W. Free with gallery admission. Also at 4pm. Please book a timed-entry ticket at tickets.ago.ca/events. Also at 4pm.

**Saturday October 10**

- **2:00: Sonority Sisters.** Bach to the Beatles: Crossing Genres with the Sonority Sisters. Join us in the Campbell House garden as the Sonority Sisters perform new and old compositions ranging from Bach to the Beatles! Your ticket also includes a complimentary tour of Campbell House Museum, which can be redeemed at a later date. Sonority Sisters are an exciting new duo composed of Kelly Zimba, Principal Flute of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and Clare Semes, TSO violinist. Campbell House Museum, 160 Queen St. W. 416-597-0227. $20 ticket + Eventbrite processing fee. LIVE OUTDOOR CONCERT.

**Sunday October 11**

- **3:00: Royal Conservatory of Music.** Recovered Concerts: Angela Hewitt. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performance. SOLD OUT.

**Sunday October 18**

- **8:00: Burlington Performing Arts Centre.** Legacy: A Tribute to Gord Downie. A fundraising concert in support of the Downie Wenjack Fund, featuring Tom Wilson, Twin Flames, Phil Davis’ Drum Circle and Dancer, Kevin Fox and others. Burlington Performing Arts Centre, Community Studio Theatre, 440 Locust St., Burlington. 905-681-6000. $45; $40(member). Also Oct 16.

**Friday October 16**

- **2:00: Art Gallery of Ontario.** AGO Live: Hello from the Other Side - Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Recognizing the powerful impact that music has in enriching and inspiring lives, especially during challenging times, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra has been resolving in finding ways to perform despite the circumstances. As an alternative to its previously scheduled performances at Roy Thomson Hall, TSO musicians will spend the coming year performing in smaller ensembles and connecting with audiences throughout the GTA. Art Gallery of Ontario, Walker Court, 317 Dundas St. W. Free with gallery admission. Also at 4pm. Please book a timed-entry ticket at tickets.ago.ca/events. Also at 4pm.

**Saturday October 17**

- **8:00: Kindred Spirits Orchestra.** Recovered Concerts: Angela Hewitt. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performance. $39; $34(member). Also Nov 7.

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**the whole note**

Ladies of Soul. Strange Fruit. I Will Always Love You; and others. Shakura S’Aida, vocalist; Daniel Barathomew-Poyer, conductor. CityView Drive-In, 20 Polson St. 416-598-3375 or ticketmaster.ca. $80-$200 per car. Concert one hour in length. Live on-stage and displayed on massive LED screens and piped into patrons’ cars.

**Saturday October 24**

- **8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music.** Music from The Cuban, Featuring Hifario Duran. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performance. $55. Live and online.

**Sunday October 25**

- **3:00: Orchestra Toronto.** Sublime Delights. Brahms: Academic Festival Overture; Mozart: Piano Concerto No.20 in d; Beethoven: Choral Fantasy for Piano, Orchestra & Chorus. David, Jalbert, piano; Amadeus Choir; Michael Newnham, conductor. Hope United Church, 2550 Danforth Ave. 416-733-0545. $25-$45; $39(sr); $19(OTOpus); $15(child). Pre-concert chat at 2:15 pm.

**Monday October 26**

- **8:00: Hejaaz Entertainment.** Pavlo in Concert, Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. From $40.

**Friday November 6**

- **8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music.** Quiet Please, There’s a Lady on Stage Series: Nella & Daymé Arocena. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or

OrcOnline Tickets/Seats/172401
Performances by Date (Live/Hybrid)
rcmusic.com/performance. $40-$95.

Saturday November 7


Laura Fernandez. Interested but can’t attend? All our livestreamed performances are available at facebook.com/jazzniagara and youtube.com/jazzniagara. Enjoy this performance with our compliments. Donations in support of our Festival and our artists are gratefully accepted at NiagaraJazzFestival.com/donations and the full lineup can be found at niagarajazzfestival.com

• 7:00: Canzona Chamber Players. Jona-than Crow & Joe Johnson, Violin / Cello Duet. See the concert at YouTube.com/Canzona-ChamberPlayers. In lieu of a concert ticket, donations to the St. Michael’s Hospital Foun-dation COVID-19 Courage Fund, in Memory of Elizabeth Krehm, can be made at smh.con-vio.net/couragefund.

Wednesday October 7

• 8:00: Arrasymphony. Livestream Con-cert with Ryan Driver and The Titillators. Find the livestream at livestream.com/arrasymphony. More information visit burlington.ca/events/chancelivestream-kvai.

Thursday October 8

• 8:00: Freesound/The Canadian Music Centre. Freesound 03. Kicking off our 2020-21 season online! We’re very excited to be partnering with the Canadian Music Cen-tre to present a concert of fantastic works for clarinet, violin, and piano by Canadian composers. Jason Doell and Anna Höstman. Available on the CMC Website Stream at cmc-canada.org.

Friday October 9

• 12:00 noon: Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra. SPOGreatMusic Performance 34/01. New music performances by mem-bers and friends of the SPO. Full performance details are available at spo.ca. ONLINE.

• 7:00: TD Niagara Jazz Festival. Livestream.LOVE. JAZZ SERIES #41 with Bill Myers. Interested but can’t attend? All our livestreamed performances are available at facebook.com/jazzniagara and youtube.com/jazzniagara. Enjoy this performance with our compliments. Donations in support of our Festival and our artists are gratefully accepted at NiagaraJazzFestival.com/donations and the full lineup can be found at niagarajazzfestival.com. ONLINE.

• 8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. KWS Goes Online: Fly Me to the Moon - Sinatra and Beyond. Daniel Bartholomew-Payo, conductor; Michael Vanhevel, vocalist. In a tribute to the world’s greatest crooners, singer Michael Vanhevel and the KWS take you on a sentimental journey of crooner clas-sics including songs like Fly Me to the Moon, Unforgetable, The Way You Look Tonight and so many more. Purchase tickets at tickets at kwsymphony.ca/reimagined/2808. ONLINE.

Saturday October 10

• 8:00: Toronto Mendelssohn Choir. Kan-namana: A Concert of Thanksgiving. From Bach to the Beatles, from visual arts to dance to drumming to singing this concert of thanksgiving brings together an amazing group of artists in a program of choral music and more that evocatively expresses gratitude. TMC Associate Conductor Simon Rvard and Guest Curator Suba Sankaran have put together a diverse program that brings together songs of thanks, gratitude and love, spanning several centuries, mul-tiple genres and disciplines that cross cul-tures. Works range from classical to jazz to pop to South Indian Karnataka music, to refreshing original compositions, com-plemented by visual arts and dance perform ance. Program is free to view but please consider a donation in support of our online programming during the pandemic. Enjoy the concert at livestream.com/tmcchor/kan-namana. ONLINE.

Sunday October 11

• 3:00: Danny Michel. Live From Lockdown: Thanksgiving Weekend Show. Tickets are $15. Danny has set aside 25 tickets for those who are not in a position to purchase a ticket but would like to be a part of this event. If that’s you, then email danny@mdnmichel.com with the subject “Guestlist Oct 11”. No explanations necessary and no questions asked. Visit danny-michel.com to buy tickets. ONLINE.

Other Events by Date: Livestream/ETCetera

Thursday October 1

LUNAIRE LIVE III: The Harvest Moon


Friday October 2

• 12:00 noon: Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra. SPOGreatMusic Podcast: Episode 2 - Plagues, Pandemics, and Musics. Featuring interviews with special guests. Host: Dr. Daniel Mehdizadeh. For links, visit tafelmusik.org. ONLINE.

• 8:00: Stockey Centre/Festival of the Sound. Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue Live. Featuring George Gershwin’s phenom-enal Rhapsody in Blue among many other incredible pieces, all performed by a num-ber of our most beloved Festival Artists such as Jamie Parker, Guy Few, Mark Fewer, and James Campbell. This concert is avail-able both in person and virtually. LIVE Con-cert Tickets: $42.95 - HST. Available only at the Stockey Centre Box Office. Limited ticket-lets available for purchase in person (2 Bay Street) or by phone at 1-877-746-4466. VIRTU-AL/LIVESTREAM Concert Tickets: $22.95. Available only at the Festival Box Office. Unlimited ticket options available for purchase are available at festivalofthesound.ca, in person (1 Avenue Road), or by phone at 1-866-866-3401. Online virtual ticket purchases will be acknowledged within 24 hours via con-firmation email. LIVE AND ONLINE.

• 7:30: The Upper Canada Choristers, Inti Ukania: A Latin American Tapestry. A live-streamed performance with Conductor Laurie Evan Fraser, pianist Hye Won Ceci- lia Lee, Cantome Latin ensemble, M.C. Laura Fernandez; guest artists including Bernardo Padron. Visit uppercanadachoristers.org or call 418-256-0510 or email info@uppercan- adachoristers.org

Sunday October 4

• 1:30: Toronto Early Music Players OR-chestra. 2020 Season: J.S. Bach Plus. Featuring interviews with special guests. Host: Dr. Daniel Mehdizadeh. For links, visit tafelmusik.org. ONLINE.

• 8:00: Tafelmusik. Mozart Together. Follow-ing many months of isolation and remote music making, the musicians of Tafelmusik gather for an emotional return to the concert stage. Filmed at Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, this opening program of the reimagined 2020/21 season is devoted to cham-ber music originally intended to be played in private homes and salon gatherings among friends and family. Scored for two to eight instruments, these intimate works — almost all of them new to our musicians — capture the immediacy and connection we’ve all been craving. On display will be a more playful side of titans like Mozart, Beethoven, and Boccherini, including a movement from Mozart’s famous Sinfonia concertante in E-flat Major in an unusual arrangement for six string instruments, along with music by Michael Haydn, Družiçek, Spohr, and Schroer — clas-sical composers eclipsed by these giants. An unforgettable homecoming. For more infor-mation, visit tafelmusik.org. ONLINE.

• 2:00: TD Niagara Jazz Festival. Livestream.LOVE.WORLD Series #07 with Juneyt. Interested but can’t attend? ALL our livestreamed performances are available at niagarajazzfestival.com. ONLINE.

Sunday October 11

• 12:00 noon: Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra. SPOGreatMusic Performance 34/01. New music performances by mem-bers and friends of the SPO. Full performance details are available at spo.ca. ONLINE.

• 7:00: TD Niagara Jazz Festival. Livestream.LOVE. JAZZ SERIES #41 with Bill Myers. Interested but can’t attend? All our livestreamed performances are available at facebook.com/jazzniagara and youtube.com/jazzniagara. Enjoy this performance with our compliments. Donations in support of our Festival and our artists are gratefully accepted at NiagaraJazzFestival.com/donations and the full lineup can be found at niagarajazzfestival.com. ONLINE.

• 8:00: Burlington Performing Arts Cenitre. Chantal Kreviazuk: Live Simulcast. Main Theatre. $25; $20(members). Further information visit burlington.ca/events/chanelivestream-kvai.

Friday October 16


• 12:00 noon: Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra. SPOGreatMusic Podcast: Episode 3 - Spatially Distanced: Music for a Solo Instrument. J.S. Bach Plus. Featuring interviews with special guests. Host: Dr. Daniel Mehdizadeh. Find links and further information at spo.ca. ONLINE.

Saturday October 17

• 7:00: Guitar Society of Toronto. Austin Wahl. Registration is required in advance at eventbrite.ca/e/austin-wahl-usa-classical-guitar-tickets-119332483671. A suggested donation of $20 can be made during registra-tion. ONLINE.RECITAL.

• 10.17.70: New Adventures in Sound Art/Charles Street Video. Endosymbiosis: Live Electronic Music Performance with Liquid Light Imagery by Robert Fantinatto. A video and improvised electronic music perfor-mance which utilizes a variation on the technique of Liquid Light by replacing the overhead projector with a 4K video camera. The improvised music performed by Fantinatto uses a customized modular synthesizer along with slowed-down water sounds. The performance will be live-streamed over YouTube with Q&A discussion taking place after-wards on the Whereby platform. Online Location issued after Advance Registration at nauis.ca/purchase-tickets. ONLINE.

• 2:00: TD Niagara Jazz Festival. Livestream.LOVE.WORLD Series #09 with Juneyt. Interested but can’t attend? ALL our livestreamed performances are available at
Saturday October 24

● 7:00: New Adventures in Sound Art and Charles Street Video. Adeva (version000_01): Electronic Music and Video Performance by Debashis Sinha. Debashis Sinha’s explorations of how his Bengali heritage can manifest through the toolset of contemporary electronic music continues with this livestream performance. This is a project started in 2019 at the MUTEK JP AI Music Lab, where Sinha began exploring machine learning and AI and their applications in sound, and where he realized their use as a dramatic tool in the story-based explorations and re-imaginings of Hindu myth he has been creating for nearly two decades. The text and sound world of the Vedas (Hindu scriptures) is subjected to machine learning algorithms and processes to create content that lies just beyond the reach of human comprehension—a piecing together of half-understood and half-perceived bits of wisdom that is reconstructed by Sinha, and in the listener in the moment of performance. The performance will be live-streamed over YouTube with Q&A discussion taking place afterwards on the Whereby platform. It is a co-presentation of New Adventures in Sound Art (NAISA) and Charles Street Video. Online location issued after Advance Registration at naisa.ca/purchase-tickets/.


Sunday October 25

● 2:00: TD Markham Jazz Festival. Ready Set CONNECT. Concert #2. Spy Jazz with June Garber + Irene Torres, hosted by Jaymz Bee and featuring an exceptional band—Eric St. Laurent (guitars) George Koller (basses), Great Bob Scott (drums and percussion), Atilla Fias (keyboards) and Allison Young (saxes). Tune in at facebook.com/markhamjazmafeastival prior to each concert.


Monday October 26

● 12:15: Music Mondays. Folk & Song. Works by Brahms, Rachmaninoff, Dvorak, Gershwin and others. Beth Silver; cello; Jenna Richards, pianist. Enjoy the concert at at440.live/artists/S17454s4e717a5c0dcbc. ONLINE.

● 7:30: Art of Time Ensemble/Toronto International Festival of Authors. The Poem/The Song. Available online until Thursday, October 29th, 7:30pm. The Poem/The Song presents music inspired by poetry in a variety of contrasting musical settings. Highlights include two-time Booker Prize-winning author Margaret Atwood reading her poem Thriller Suite accompanied by an original musical composition from Canadian composer Dan Parr, Franz Liszt’s musical impression of Petrarch’s Sonnets, music from the worldwide smash-hit Andrew Lloyd Webber musical Cats, which was inspired by the poetry of T.S. Eliot, a fantastical setting of Walt Whitman by composer George Crumb and songs by Leonard Cohen. Performers include singers Thom Allison, Gregory Hoskins and Carla Huhtanen. RSVP at addevent.com/event/Mos1542975. ONLINE.

Thursday October 22

● 8:00: Tafelmusik. Passions of the Soul. A livestreamed event curated and directed by Elisa Citterio. Bliss, grief, delight: experience a kaleidoscope of emotions with 18th-century music that will open your heart and mind. This concert is a microcosm of our season theme, “Passions of the Soul.” In their quest to awe and inspire, 18th-century composers strove to describe the desires of the soul and touch the hearts of listeners with poignant and captivating music. Works featured include Laland’s Charoncino (inspired by the magnificent fountains of Versailles); Locatelli’s Sinfonia Funebre, and Telemann’s suite La Bourse, an irreverent depiction of the roller-coaster of emotions experienced by investors in the stock market. Single ticket purchasers will be able to re-access the concert for a full 24 hours after the original broadcast time. You can revisit your ticket link, contained in your confirmation email, to watch until October 23, 2020 at 7:50pm + service fees. Box Office: 1-833-884-6387. Visit tafelmusik.org. ONLINE.

Friday October 23

● 12:00 noon: Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra. SPO Music Performance #4E02. New music performances by members and friends of the SPO. Full performance details and links can be found at spo.ca. Today’s theme: Socially Distanced: Music for a Solo Instrument. J.S. Bach Plus. ONLINE.

● 7:00: TD Niagara Jazz Festival. LiveStream.LOVE.JAZZ Series #43 with Jay Farris. Bliss, grief, delight: experience a kaleidoscope of emotions with 18th-century music that will open your heart and mind. This concert is a microcosm of our season theme, “Passions of the Soul.” In their quest to awe and inspire, 18th-century composers strove to describe the desires of the soul and touch the hearts of listeners with poignant and captivating music. Works featured include Laland’s Charoncino (inspired by the magnificent fountains of Versailles); Locatelli’s Sinfonia Funebre, and Telemann’s suite La Bourse, an irreverent depiction of the roller-coaster of emotions experienced by investors in the stock market. Single ticket purchasers will be able to re-access the concert for a full 24 hours after the original broadcast time. You can revisit your ticket link, contained in your confirmation email, to watch until October 23, 2020 at 7:50pm + service fees. Box Office: 1-833-884-6387. Visit tafelmusik.org. ONLINE.

Wednesday October 28

OPERAATELIER


Sunday November 1

● 7:00: Canzona Chamber Players. Carina Canonica, David Gazille & Jonathan Krehm, Clarinet Duo / Trio. See the concert at youtube.com/CanzonaChamberPlayers. In lieu of a concert ticket, donations to the St. Michael’s Hospital COVID-19 Courage Fund, in Memory of Elizabeth Krehm, can be made at smh.convio.net/couragefund. ONLINE.

Friday November 6

● 12:00 noon: Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra. SPO Music Performance #4E03 - Beethoven: The Man and His Chamber Music - Part 1. New music performances by members and friends of the SPO. Full performance details and links can be found at spo.ca. ONLINE.

● 8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. KWS Goes Online: Royal Wood with the KWS. Evan Mitchell, conductor; Royal Wood, vocals/ piano/guitar; Steve Zuiris, electric bass; Mark Mariash, drum set; Royal Wood, one of Canada’s best contemporary singer/songwriters, joins the KWS performing some of his greatest hits from across many of his albums. Renowned for his intimate and compelling performances, Royal Wood’s music is effortlessly melodic with lyrically astute perspectives on life and love, making for a seamless pairing with the orchestra. Purchase tickets at tickets.kwsymphony.ca/reimagined/2810. ONLINE.

LUNAIRE LIVE IV: BLUE MOON GALA

Rachmaninoff: Symphonic Dances. $20 suggested donation. For more information, visit universe.com/events/lunaire-live-iv-the-blue-moon-gala-tickets-toronto-JV38L4. ONLINE.

Send us your events for your local events online, event stream, etc. at thewholenote.com/etcetera

thewholenote.com
Continuing Events

- Arts@Home. A vibrant hub connecting Torontonians to arts and culture. Designed to strengthen personal and societal resilience through the arts. Visit artsathome.ca to learn more about this exciting collaborative initiative. LINK TO CULTURAL WEBSITES.
- Arrangement. Living Room Talk: Ryan Driver. This week is a little bit different as we are talking with singer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist all-around-brilliant dude Ryan Driver. We speak a bit about his history with Arrangement and long-time collaboration with Martin Arnold, the Street Sweeper Bristle Bass, and more. You can find the talk at vimeo.com/457758677.
- Kevin Barrett. Live from Lockdown. Kevin Barnett is a live streamed set of solo guitar tunes, coming directly from lockdown in his studio in Kensington Market, Toronto. Tune in to Kevin’s Facebook page on Friday at facebook.com/kevin.barrett.165470. If you can’t join live, the video will be available afterward on Kevin’s page. Each week’s episode is archived on his YouTube channel at youtube.com/playlist?list=PLP5X9pxEf_zPcmAMKMTnpHgPINATLYrrk3O.
- Canadian Brass. Brass welcomes friends around the world to our virtual fireplace for learning and laughs. All events take place at facebook.com/canadianbrass. VIRTUAL MEETING PLACE.
- Classical Jukebox. Founded as a response to the days of COVID-19 social separation, this site is designed to provide you the ability to sing and perform your favorite classical pieces from the comfort of your own home, with accompaniments by organ and piano accompanist, Matthew Larkin. In addition, Classical Jukebox offers another service—assisting with the creation of Virtual Choir and virtual choir videos for those missing that collaborative and artistic outlet in their lives. Further information can be found at classicalkjukebox.ca. ONLINE ASSISTANCE SITE.
- Esprit Orchestra. Flashlights. The first series of Esprit’s Flashlights are from Larry Weinstein’s 1989 film For the Whales, in which writers, musicians, and artists celebrate the majestic whale. The film explores the theme of preserving our environment through artistic expression. Watch this short introductory video with composer Alexina Louie at youtube.be/i/0JZx2VvngM.
- Esprit Orchestra. Soundbites. The latest Soundbites is an excerpt from the world premiere performance of Quinn Jacobs’ Music About Music. This concert is conducted by Eugene Astapov and was performed by Esprit Orchestra in Trinity St. Paul’s Centre on April 5, 2019. Visit espiritorchestra.ca/musicalsoundbites/ for further information. ONLINE.
- 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, visit youtube.com/watch?v=F2pVau6q6qY. Find more information on the Kingston Symphony at kingston-symphony.ca. ONLINE CONCERT.
- National Music Concerts. Sonic Grace: An NMC Audio Diary. Listen to David Hetherington perform Carter’s Figment recorded live with New Music Concerts at the Music Gallery on Dec. 18, 2007, at youtube.be/Mkj3oFxlxL.
- Ottawa Chamberfest. Chamber Chats: At Home / Chez vous. Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2pm. Hosted by celebrated broadcaster/ writer Eric Friesen. Interactive episodes combine chat with pre-recorded and live performances and feature guest artists and lecturers from all over the world. For information: 613-234-8008. Visit the website at chamberfest.org. ONLINE.
- Recollector. 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 positively intergenerational experience for all. Participation is free with pre-registration. Contact info@recollector.ca for meeting times, information and registration.
- TD Toronto Jazz Festival. Online Premiere. Maisha Brueggergosman, soprano; Lennie Gallant, guitar. The internationally acclaimed opera singer and concert artist co-wrote “Champions” with Lennie Gallant. The concert is available at youtube.be/ATSKATYWUSW. ONLINE.
- Toronto Consort. Explorer: Discovering the World of Early Music. Explorer is a blog for a curious audience, eager to learn, share, and community. This all-new offering will present an assortment of curated content in a range of formats, like original short- or long-form articles, original video and audio recordings, and educational content on relevant topics related to Early Music, history, and world music, as they relate our beloved repertoire.
- Toronto Operaette. An archival video of Toronto Operaette Theater’s production of Gilbert and Sullivan’s H.M.S. Pinafore (The Sparrow Hawks) performed in April 2016 at the Jane Mallett Theater, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, Toronto. This zarzuela tells the story of Juan, who returns to his native village in Spain from Peru as a wealthy man, the story of Juan, who returns to his native village in Spain from Peru as a wealthy man, the story of Juan, who returns to his native village in Spain from Peru as a wealthy man, the story of Juan, who returns to his native village in Spain from Peru as a wealthy man, the story of Juan, who returns to his native village in Spain from Peru as a wealthy man, the story of Juan, who returns to his native village in Spain from Peru as a wealthy man, the story of Juan, who returns to his native village in Spain from Peru as a wealthy man, the story of Juan, who returns to his native village in Spain from Peru as a wealthy man, the story of Juan, who returns to his native village in Spain from Peru as a wealthy man.
- Toronto Operaetta Theatre. Located in the Huether Hotel, 59 King St. N., Waterloo. 226-471-1565. kwjazzroom.com
- Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Live stream of Mahler and the Aradis Ensemble. It is a rare opera at its highest degree of excellence in performance. In the midst of wars between the Frankish Christians and Spanish Moors of the late 700s, conflicts are brought to an end with the intercession of a younger generation, where love conquers all. For information visit operainconcert.com. PREVIOUSLY RECORDED.

In the Clubs (Mostly Jazz)

Burdock
1184 Bloor St. W. 416-546-4033
borduckto.com
Cameron House
408 Queen St. W. 416-703-0811
thecameron.com
Castro’s Lounge
2116 Queen St. E. 416-699-8272
castrolounge.com
C’est What
67 Front St. E. 416-667-8499
cestwhat.com
Emmet Ray, The
924 College St. 416-792-4497
themetray.com
Grossman’s Tavern
379 Spadina Ave. 416-977-0000
grossmantavern.com
Hirut Cafe and Restaurant
2050 Danforth Ave. 416-551-7560
hirut.ca
Home Smith Bar – See Old Mill, The
Hugh’s Room
2261 Dundas St. W. 416-533-5483
hughsrroom.com
Jazz Bistro, The
251 Victoria St. 416-363-5299
jazzbistrot.ca
All shows at 8:00pm, unless otherwise noted.
- Jazz Room, The
Located in the Huether Hotel, 59 King St. N., Waterloo. 226-471-1565
torontooperetta.ca

Mallon and the Aradis Ensemble. It is a rare opera at its highest degree of excellence in performance. In the midst of wars between the Frankish Christians and Spanish Moors of the late 700s, conflicts are brought to an

end with the intercession of a younger generation, where love conquers all. For information visit operainconcert.com. PREVIOUSLY RECORDED.


Lula Lounge
1585 Dundas St. W. 416-588-0307
lulac.a
Manhattans Pizza Bistro & Music Club
951 Gordon St., Guelph 519-767-2440
manhattans.ca
Mezzetta Restaurant
681 St. Clair Ave. W. 416-658-5687
mezzettarestaurant.com
Monarch Tavern
12 Clinton St. 416-531-5833
thenomonarchtavern.com

Nice Bistro, The
17 Brook St. N., Whitby. 905-668-8839
nicebistro.com
Oct 21 Larry Bond Duo.

Old Mill, The
21 Old Mill Rd. 416-236-2641
oldmilltoronto.com
The Home Smith Bar:
22 Cumberland Ave. 416-923-5716
thepilot.ca

Poetry Jazz Café
224 Augusta Ave. 416-599-5299
poetryjazzcafe.com

Reposado Bar & Lounge
136 Ossington Ave. 416-532-6474
reposadobar.com

Reservoir Lounge, The
52 Wellington St. E. 416-955-0887
reservoirlounge.com

Rex Hotel Jazz & Blues Bar, The
104 Queen St. W. 416-598-2475
thereca.
Oct 15 5:30pm Alison Young, 9pm Egbo Trio.
Oct 2 5:30pm Adrean Farruga, 9pm Dave Young Quartet. Oct 3 9pm Dave Young Quartet.

Sauce on Danforth
1376 Danforth Ave. 467-748-1376
saucondanforth.com

The Senator Winiebar
249 Victoria St 416 364-7517
thesenator.com

Tranzac
292 Brunswick Ave. 416-923-8137
tranzac.org
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The wholenote.com

October 2020 | 49
Recently, piano icon Lang Lang “realized a lifelong dream” and recorded not one but two versions of the Goldbergs. The first is a one-take, live performance from a recital at Thomaskirche in Leipzig. The second, recorded soon after in studio, was made in seclusion.

I was full of curiosity to hear Lang’s Goldbergs and was certain he must have brooded on the project for a while and approached it with careful consideration, aware of the extent to which it would be a departure for him in many ways, and would be scrutinized by the numerous discerning ears that know – almost by heart – the interpretations that have come before his.

At once, we notice Lang’s personal brand in this recording. He is singing from his beating heart and occupies a seemingly new space in this music. An individual kind of phrasing unspools, buoyed by unusual contrapuntal directionality and dynamic scope. His awareness of previous performance practice is sometimes notable and sometimes not. Nevertheless, he won’t let us perceive it as a hindrance in either direction: the listener is offered new glimpses of what J.S. Bach in the 21st century might be. Even at times where he pushes the historically accurate performance envelope, he remains convincing – his customary demeanour of endless elan and visceral expressiveness a reassurance.

Underlying Lang’s individual approach to the Goldbergs, there is a bedrock of reference to those greats that came before him. For example: he has Peter Serkin’s delicacies in his ears, Gould’s formalism on his mind and Perahia’s precision in his heart. Some of his variations build upon preconceptions in performance practices, likely accumulated from those who came before. And then there are other moments, free and searching, springing forth with freshness and elation. He swims his way through this familiar music, taking it all in as a snorkeller does the first time he dips beneath the water’s surface: all is bright and beautiful, strange and luminous, experienced and expressed only by the swimmer and not, by, or for, anyone else.

Lang’s aquatic ecosystem is not without murk nor weed however, and at times he seems entrapped by microcosms of harmony or crossing of musical line. Occasionally, some thorny bit of coral gets tossed out of place but we are still along for the ride, convinced nonetheless. There is voyeuristic delight in the pianist cherishing his special designs; one can be charmed by the novelty on display. It’s as if Lang were discovering some of this music for the first time. He knows just how to turn in the water for us, just which treasures to reveal. As he shapes and cajoles the magnificent Goldbergs, a confidence and focus emerge that is by turns curious and admirable, and eventually, beguiling.

From our vantage point in 2020, we have as many ways to access this music as there are notes in Bach’s score and, increasingly, as there are artists who record the work. One must find their own catalogue of access points, as listener and as artist. Lang has clearly found his. Born of an international sense of Bach and the world’s collective appreciation for this music, Lang leads us on a journey to a highly individual state of being – but one with which we can identify.

In the before time, when I was travelling or living abroad and began to miss my own home, it was Gould’s 1955 recording of the Goldbergs that I turned to, not to O Canada as an anthem it was Gould and Bach that offered me a sense of place as few other pieces could. I used to think such sentiments were germane to a large northern American country with a small, friendly population who claimed an artist, Glenn Gould, to be their own. I don’t think that now. Lang Lang’s new Goldberg recording is a case in point for finding your way home musically and understanding better the many access points that can get you there, wherever there may be.

Adam Sherkin

Concert Note: At time of going to press, American superstar organist, Cameron Carpenter, was scheduled to perform The Goldbergs at Koerner Hall on November 7 on his Marshall & Ogletree mobile, digitized, International Touring Organ, the culmination of a decade-long project for the organist, and now the exclusive organ on which he performs. According to Carpenter’s website, the instrument follows the musical and design influences of American municipal pipe organs from about 1895 to 1950 – organs built to support a vast range of classical and popular playing styles in concert halls, theatres and other public venues. It can be installed at a concert venue in three to five hours by its crew. The November 7 concert marks Carpenter’s return to Koerner Hall after his first appearance in 2016, the same year his Sony CD, All You Need Is Bach, was released.
t’s been a couple of months since I last mentioned New Music Concerts, my day job until retiring last year, and I thought perhaps I had gotten it out of my system. I guess it’s not surprising that it is hard to put two decades of history behind me. While general manager at NMC I had the opportunity to work with the JACK Quartet on two occasions. The first was early in my tenure, and very early in their career, back in 2003 when I organized a masterclass with Helmut Lachenmann for the members of the quartet who were then studying at the Eastman School in Rochester. The quartet returned to Toronto in January 2016 for a concert co-presented by NMC and Music Toronto. In the pre-concert talk with Robert Aitken, they spoke about just how influential that afternoon spent with the German avant-garde composer a dozen years ago (and later attending NMC rehearsals for the Lachenmann portrait concert) was to their development as an ensemble, solidifying their commitment to contemporary music and their understanding of the importance of working directly with composers.

That program at the Jane Mallett Theatre included works by Xenakis, John Zorn, Rodericus (a 14th-century work adapted by violinist Christopher Otto) and John Luther Adams (b.1953). It is the latter which gives occasion to today’s reminiscence. On that concert they performed the American composer’s first string quartet The Wind in High Places, about which Adams says, “I imagined the quartet as a single sixteen-string Aeolian harp, with the music’s rising and falling lines and gusting arpeggios coming entirely from natural harmonics and open strings. Over the course of almost 20 minutes, the fingers of the musicians never touch the fingerboards of the instruments. If I could’ve found a way to make this music without them touching the instruments at all, I would have.”

JACK’s latest CD Lines Made by Walking (Cold Blue Music CBoo58 coldbluemusic.com/new-releases-2) features two subsequent quartets by John Luther Adams. His string quartet, untouched (2016), is a further exploration of the delicate and ethereal sound world of harmonic overtones, with the fingers of the musicians still not touching their fingerboards.

Compared with the two quartets described above, Lines Made by Walking (2019) is a veritable torrent of sound. But in reality, when taken on its own, it is a dreamy, contemplative work which proceeds at a gentle walking pace. Adams says “I’ve always been a walker. For much of my life I walked the mountains and tundra of Alaska. More recently it’s been the Mexican desert, mountain ridges of Chile, and the hills and canyons of Montana. Making my way across these landscapes at three miles an hour, I began to imagine music coming directly out of the contours of the land. I began work on my fifth string quartet [...] by composing three expansive harmonic fields made up of tempo canons with five, six, and seven independent layers. (This is a technique I’ve used for years, in which a single melodic line is superimposed on itself at different speeds.) Once I’d composed these fields, I traced pathways across them. As I did this, each instrument of the quartet acquired a unique profile, transforming the strict imitative counterpoint of the tempo canons into intricately varied textures.” The work is in three movements and their titles – Up the Mountain; Along the Ridges; Down the Mountain – are aptly depicted by the music’s endlessly rising, and later falling, canons.

Although there have been personnel changes in the quartet since its first collaboration with Adams – only two original members remain – their understanding of and devotion to his music remains intact and undaunted. I can only imagine the patience it takes to master this gradually unfolding music in which seemingly nothing happens, but in which a marvellous stasis is achieved.

As Terry Robbins says a little further on in these pages, “It’s been a simply terrific month for cello discs.” There are three that I scooped up for myself, beginning with De l’espace trouver la fin et le milieu: Dan Barrett plays Dominique Lemaître – solos and duos for/ with cello (New Focus Recordings fc1276 newfocusrecordings.com/catalogue). French composer Dominique Lemaître, born the same year as John Luther Adams (1953), studied humanities and musicology at the University of Rouen and later electroacoustics and composition at the Paris Conservatoire. Infused with the music of Bach, Debussy, Varèse, Ligeti and Scelsi, but also with extra-European influences, Lemaître’s works blend superimposed metres, polytextures, looped repetitions and an underlying modality. American cellist Dan Barrett, creator and director of the music ensemble International Street Cannibals (ISC), has been hailed as “a brilliant and driven cellist, composer, and conductor” (Huffington Post), whose instrumental playing is described as “fire and ice” (The New York Times).

The disc begins with the cello duo Orange and Yellow II, performed with Stanislav Orlovsky. It pays homage to Morton Feldman and is a transcription of a piece originally written for two violas in 2009. The title makes reference to the eponymous painting created by Mark Rothko, to whom Feldman himself paid homage in Rothko Chapel, composed for the meditation room of the building of the same name. Although purely acoustic in nature, the layering and looping of the two instruments, and the reverberant space in which it was recorded, give the impression of electronic enhancement. Thot, referring to the Egyptian god Thoth, is an earlier work dating from 1994. It is a duet with clarinetist Michiyo Suzuki that begins from silence with a gradually building clarinet tone reminiscent of the Abîme des oiseaux movement in Messiaen’s famous Quatuor pour le fin du temps. The contemplative mood continues throughout the six-minute work, intermittently interrupted by bird-like chirps. The next piece, Mnaïdra for solo cello, opens abruptly and almost abrasively, although it, too, gradually subsides into warmer tones. Mnaïdra is a Bronze Age temple situated to the south of the island of Malta, the isle of bees or the isle of honey, as it was called in ancient times.

Pianist Jed Distler joins the cellist in Stances, hommage à Henri Dutilleux, the famous French composer from whom Lemaître received both encouragement and compliments. It was written in 2015 and is dedicated to Barrett. The disc ends with another solo cello composition, Plus haut (Higher), which, although still in a quiet way, is the most virtuosic piece of the collection. Barrett shows himself astute across the spectrum from the softest nuance to the soaring heights.

Renowned Canadian cellist Ofra Harnoy and husband/collaborator Mike Herriott have just released On the Rock, celebrating the music of Newfoundland (Analekta AN28909 analekta.com/en/albums). With 43 previous recordings, five JUNO awards and the Order of Canada to her name, Harnoy needs no introduction to the discerning readers of this magazine. The same can be said of multi-instrumentalist Herriott whose accomplishments in both the
classical and jazz worlds run the gamut from lead trumpeter, jazz improviser, orchestral soloist, bassist, arranger and composer. In the summer of 2018 Harnoy and Herriott took a vacation in St. John’s, where Herriott had spent his formative years. Evidently she fell in love with the place and people of Newfoundland, one of the few locations in the world her career had not previously taken her, and they decided to buy a house and settle there. After their first collaboration for Analekta, Back to Bach, was released in 2019 they embarked on a journey to explore the island and research its music. The result is this charming disc, a mixture of traditional and popular songs in instrumental and vocal renditions, all arranged by Herriott, with the participation of singers Alan Doyle, Amanda Cash, Kelly-Ann Evans, Heather Bambrick and Fergus O’Byrne. O’Byrne also adds guitar and banjo to the instrumental contingent of guests Maureen Ennis (guitar), Bob Hallett (accordion, mandolin and Irish flute) and Kendel Carson (fiddle). All of the other instruments, and there are many, are played by Herriott except the solo and ensemble cellos of Harnoy.

The album begins with a haunting rendition of the traditional She’s Like the Swallow performed by Harnoy and Herriott, who are then joined by Amanda Cash in Wayne Chaulk’s story/ballad Saltwater Joys. In a nod to Harnoy’s classical background, and perhaps to their previous disc, Herriott’s arrangement of Ron Hynes’ St. John’s Waltz begins with a solo cello line cleverly modelled on the Prelude from Bach’s Suite for Solo Cello No.1 in G Major which later develops into an ensemble of cellos accompanying Great Big Sea founder Doyle on vocals. There’s an instrumental interlude where Ennis joins Harnoy to perform Cara’s Waltz which she penned with Doyle. Although much of the album is mellow and balladic, especially in the tunes that feature Herriott’s flugelhorn stylings, things really get cooking in Harbour Buffett Double, a quartet with cello, fiddle, accordion and bass (with Herriott doubling on spoons) and the following Mussels in the Corner. This mainstay of local dance music sees Hallett playing all three of his instruments along with Harnoy and Herriott, all to the accompaniment of a rowdy pub crowd.

One interesting artistic choice is the mournful arrangement for 11 cellos of Stan Rogers’ rousing a cappella anthem Barrett’s Privateers, bringing an entirely new slant to the broken sailor’s lament. A further contribution to the sombre mood of the disc is Evans’ beautiful interpretation of Hynes’ Sonny’s Dream, another iconic tune by the unofficial poet laureate of Newfoundland. In his introductory notes Herriott suggests that this is just the beginning of their exploration of the music of his home province. As beautiful as this maiden voyage is, I suggest this is just the beginning of their exploration of the classical and jazz worlds run the gamut from lead trumpeter, jazz improviser, orchestral soloist, bassist, arranger and composer. In the summer of 2018 Harnoy and Herriott took a vacation in St. John’s, where Herriott had spent his formative years. Evidently she fell in love with the place and people of Newfoundland, one of the few locations in the world her career had not previously taken her, and they decided to buy a house and settle there. After their first collaboration for Analekta, Back to Bach, was released in 2019 they embarked on a journey to explore the island and research its music. The result is this charming disc, a mixture of traditional and popular songs in instrumental and vocal renditions, all arranged by Herriott, with the participation of singers Alan Doyle, Amanda Cash, Kelly-Ann Evans, Heather Bambrick and Fergus O’Byrne. O’Byrne also adds guitar and banjo to the instrumental contingent of guests Maureen Ennis (guitar), Bob Hallett (accordion, mandolin and Irish flute) and Kendel Carson (fiddle). All of the other instruments, and there are many, are played by Herriott except the solo and ensemble cellos of Harnoy.

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David Olds, DISCoveries Editor discoveries@thewholenote.com

It’s been a simply terrific month for cello discs. Cellist Jonah Kim and pianist Sean Kennard were together as teenagers at the Curtis Institute and again at Juilliard. For Rachmaninoff and Barber Cello Sonatas, their first album on the Delos label, they have chosen Rachmaninoff’s Cello Sonata Op.19 and Samuel Barber’s Cello Sonata Op.6 (Delos DE 3574 naxosdirect.com/search/de+3574).

The composers were both in their 20s when writing the works, and heart-on-sleeve romanticism and expansive melodies are common to both sonatas. Despite the balanced writing in the Rachmaninoff, there’s a notoriously difficult piano part which Kennard handles superbly.

There’s a deeply personal link to the Barber sonata here. Barber himself studied at the Curtis Institute and wrote his sonata there in 1932 with help from cellist and fellow student Orlando Cole, who premiered the work with Barber in 1933. Cole, who died in 2010 at 101, taught at Curtis for 75 years and counted Johan Kim among his students; Kim and Kennard received priceless coaching from Cole in their performance of the work.

There’s an abundance of lovely playing here, with a beautiful cello tone and a rich and sonorous piano sound perfectly suited to the flowing melodic lines that are central to these strongly Romantic works.

Kian Soltani is the soloist in the Dvořák Cello Concerto with Daniel Barenboim conducting the Staatskapelle Berlin in a performance recorded live in concert at the Berlin Philharmonic in October 2018 (Deutsche Grammophon 00028948360901 kiansoltani.com/discography). Barenboim has been general music director of the orchestra since 1992, and the lengthy but lovely orchestral start to the concerto is a reminder of just how much of a master he is on the podium. He also has a personal

De l’espace trouver la fin et le milieu Lemaître’s music is characterized by sensuality, melodic contour, and mosaic textures, and reflects the influence of the French lineage of modern composition, from Debussy and Ravel up through Murail and Grisey. We invite submissions. CDs, DVDs and comments should be sent to: DISCoveries, WholeNote Media Inc., The Centre for Social Innovation, 503 – 720 Bathurst St. Toronto ON M5S 2R4.

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connection with Soltani, having worked on the concerto with the cellist in 2014 prior to Soltani’s first concert performance of the work. Soltani plays the London ex-Boccherini Stradivarius cello on loan, and what a tone he produces! It’s a simply superb performance in all respects.

Five short Dvořák pieces arranged for solo cello and cello ensemble of six players – three of the arrangements by Soltani – complete the disc: Lass dich allein (the song that has such emotional significance in the concerto); Goin’ Home (after the Largo from the New World Symphony); Songs My Mother Taught Me (from Gypsy Melodies Op.53): Allegro moderato (from Four Romantic Pieces Op.75); and Silent Woods (from From the Bohemian Forest Op.68).

The live performance of the concerto has richness, immediacy, depth, emotional commitment and tension and a great sound. Stay for the ensemble arrangements, but buy this CD for the concerto.

The outstanding cellist Alban Gerhardt is back with more stellar performances on Shostakovich Cello Concertos, with the WDR Sinfonieorchester under Jukka-Pekka Saraste (Hyperion CD968340 hyperion-records.co.uk).

Both works were written for the Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, and despite Gerhardt’s admitted “utter adoration” for Rostropovich and an awareness of his relationship with the composer, he admits that he has ignored his interpretations, essentially because Shostakovich’s markings in both concertos were largely ignored by the Russian cellist.

The Concerto No.1 in E-flat Major Op.107 from 1959 has four movements, the third being a towering solo cello cadenza almost six minutes in length that perfectly frames Gerhardt’s technical and interpretational abilities.

The Concerto No.2 in G Major Op.126 from 1966 began as a memorial piece for the poetess Anna Akhmatova, who had died earlier in the year. An essentially reflective work, Rostropovich considered it the greatest of the numerous concertos written for him.

Terrific performances of two of the great 20th-century cello concertos make for an outstanding CD.

There’s a very clear message in the programming of Voice of Hope, the new CD from the Franco-Belgian cellist Camille Thomas with the Brussels Philharmonic (Deutsche Grammophon 000289.48385645 camilletomas.com/VoiceOfHope.php). Building a selection of songs, prayers and laments around the world premiere recording of the Cello Concerto “Never Give Up” Op.73 by the Turkish composer Fazıl Say, it pays tribute “to people’s ability to triumph over adversity, create harmony in place of chaos, and overcome hatred with love.”

Say’s three-movement concerto, a vivid, emotional and quite unsettling but extremely effective response to terrorist attacks in Istanbul and Paris, was written for and premiered by Thomas. It is performed here on the 1730 Stradivarius cello once owned by Emanuel Feuermann, with the orchestra’s music director Stéphane Denève as conductor. The remaining tracks are conducted by Mathieu Herzog, who also made several of the numerous arrangements, only Bruch’s Kol Nidrei appearing in its original form.

Also included are Ravel’s Kaddisch, Dvořák’s Songs My Mother Taught Me, John Williams’ Theme from Schindler’s List, Wagner’s Traume from the Wesendonck-Lieder, Gluck’s Dance of the Blessed Spirits and well-known arias from the operas Dido and Aeneas, L’elisir d’amore, Norma, Werther, Don Giovanni and Nabucco.

Thomas says that she “wanted to choose works that represented this idea that beauty will save the world, quite simply.” Quite simply, there’s certainly beauty in her playing.

The American harpist and organist Parker Ramsay has a master’s degree in harp performance from Juilliard, and is equally at home on modern and period instruments. Bach Goldberg Variations is his first solo harp recording, and it’s a remarkable accomplishment (King’s College Recordings parkerramsay.com).

Apparently the Goldberg Variations can only be played on the harp in G major, which luckily happens to be Bach’s key. A keyboard/harp comparison reveals interesting differences: difficult keyboard flourishes are often easier on the harp, while simple keyboard linear melodies are more difficult or even impossible, especially if rapid pedal changes are needed for chromatic passages. The modern pedal harp, though, offered Ramsay what he terms “the best of both worlds: it’s a plumbed instrument like the harpsichord, but is sensitive to pressure, like the piano.”

Listening to this CD the first thing that strikes you is the astonishing articulation – the accuracy, fluency and agility; especially in the ornamentation and in the faster, more florid variations. With the harp’s added resonance Ramsay stresses the opportunity to present the harmonic structures as well as the contrapuntal in what is a gentle and atmospheric sound world.

In a recent New York Times article Ramsay says that he realized that “the way to hear this work – and most of Bach, for that matter – as I wanted would be to use my first instrument, the modern pedal harp.”

On this remarkable and immensely intriguing and satisfying showing, it’s hard to disagree with him.

What we’re listening to this month: thewholenote.com/listening
There’s more Bach music in transcription on Volume One of Johann Sebastian Bach Cello Suites arranged for guitar (Naxos 8.573625 naxosdirect.com/search/747313562578) by Jeffrey McFadden, the outstanding Canadian guitarist who is Chair of Guitar Studies at the University of Toronto, and whose debut recording in the early 1990s was the first CD in the prestigious Naxos Guitar Laureate Series.

It’s not unusual for recorded works to take a year or two to reach CD release, but both the McFadden arrangements (which remain unpublished) and the recording here were made in 2009. Still, there’s no doubting the quality and effectiveness of both the arrangements and the performance of the three Suites No.1 in G Major BWV1007, No.2 in D Minor BWV1008 and No.3 in C Major BWV1009. Recorded at St. John Chrysostom Church in Newmarket by the always-reliable Norbert Kraft (with whom McFadden studied) the sound quality on a charming disc is, as usual, exemplary.

Volume Two is apparently scheduled for release this month.

There certainly seems to be no shortage of outstanding young guitarists these days. Classical Guitar is the debut release from guitarist Alex Park, and offers exemplary performances of a range of short pieces both familiar and unfamiliar (alexparkguitar.com).

The Tigue from Ponce’s Suite in A Minor provides a bright and brilliant opening to a recital that ranges from Conde Claros by the 16th-century Spanish composer Luis de Narváez and John Dowland’s Allemanda (My Lady Hunsdon’s Puffe) through Handel’s Sarabande Variations and Debussy’s The Girl with the Flaxen Hair to the traditional Irish tune Spatter the Dew.

Four standard classical guitar pieces – three of which display Park’s dazzling tremolo technique – complete the disc: Tarrega’s Recuerdos de la Alhambra; Albéniz’s Leyenda; Villa-Lobos’ Prelude No.2 (given a performance more fluid than many); and Agustín Barrios’ Una Limosna por el Amor de Dios.

The publicity blur for the CD release noted that Park has “a superb sense of dynamics, tempo and phrasing, performing with deep expression.” Add terrific technical assurance and you have a pretty good description of the playing here.

The Russian duo of violinist Anna Ovsyannikova and pianist Julia Sinani is in top form on Les Saisons Françaises, a quite delightful recital disc of late 18th- and early 19th-century French music by Debussy, Lili Boulanger, Ravel and Poulenc (Stone Records 50601927780963 stonerecords.co.uk).

There’s warmth and a lustrous violin tone in the 1917 Debussy Violin Sonata in G Minor and a beautifully clear and bright performance of Boulanger’s Deux Morceaux – Nocturne and Cortège. Two works that are less often heard are the real gems here though: Ravel’s single-movement Sonate for Violin and Piano No.1 “Posthume” and Poulenc’s three-movement Sonate for Violin and Piano.

The Ravel work was written in 1897 while the composer was still a student but wasn’t published until 1975, almost 40 years after his death. It’s a really lovely piece that combines Romantic and Impressionistic styles and moods.

Poulenc apparently destroyed several earlier attempts at a violin sonata, his only surviving work in the genre being the sonata composed in 1942-43 at the request of, and with the help of, Ginette Neveu. Following Neveu’s tragic death at the age of 30 in a 1949 plane crash, Poulenc revised the finale, reducing the length and reworking the violin part. Both versions of the movement are included here.

The composer himself was disparaging about the work – it is “alas not the best Poulenc,” he said, and “Poulenc is no longer quite Poulenc when he writes for the violin” – but at this remove it seems a gorgeous and quite idiomatic work. Given performances like this it makes you wonder why it isn’t firmly established in the standard repertoire.

The CD Joshua Bell: At Home With Music (LIVE) presents eight performances from the PBS-TV special Joshua Bell: Live At Home With Music broadcast on August 16. Described as “A musical soirée of intimate performances from home, while sharing a behind-the-scenes look at family, Bell’s own musical inspirations, and more,” the CD features the soprano Larisa Martínez (Bell’s wife) and pianists Peter Dugan, Kamal Kahn and Jeremy Denk (Sony Classical 886.48695332 joshuabell.com/#recordings).

The first movement of Beethoven’s Spring Sonata provides a lovely opening to a program that includes Kreisler’s arrangement of Dvořák’s Slavonic Fantasy in B Minor, Wieniawski’s Polonaise de Concert in D Major Op.4, Chopin’s Nocturne in E-flat Major Op.9 No.2 and Heifetz’s arrangement of Summertime from Gershwin’s Porgy and Bess.

Martínez is the vocalist in Ah, ritorna, età dell’oro from Mendelssohn’s Infinice, Quando m’en vo from Puccini’s La Bohème and a Medley from Bernstein and Sondheim’s West Side Story.

Playing the 1713 Huberman Stradivarius with an 18th-century bow by François Tourte, Bell exhibits a full-blooded, all-in approach that doesn’t for a moment imply any lack of subtlety or nuance. It’s simply captivating playing.

VOCAL

Monteverdi – Complete Madrigals
Delitiae Musicæ; Marco Longhini
Naxos 8.501505 (naxosdirect.com/search/730099150545)

Monteverdi is such an important figure in the history of Western music that it is easy to over-look the majority of his prolific oeuvre in favour of those few works that are frequently heard and even more frequently mentioned in musical history texts as the thin line that separates the Renaissance from the Baroque. Of course, such neat-and-tidy divisions are largely artificial and can only be made with significant hindsight and generalization; amid this oversimplification of the musical-historical spectrum, we sometimes need to be reminded to look beyond the Vespers and Orfeo, and turn our gaze to such smaller-scale material as the religious motets and secular madrigals.

Whether expertly familiar with Monteverdi’s madrigals or a total neophyte, one cannot find a better starting point than Delitiae Musicæ’s latest release – a 15-disc survey of the complete madrigals – which summarizes and concentrates the composer’s essential characteristics into countless pieces ranging anywhere between two and five minutes in duration, and provides a musical biography tracing the career of this great Italian composer. This immense five-year project (all 15 discs were recorded between 2001 and 2006) was undertaken by conductor Marco Longhini and the Delitiae Musicæ ensemble, established by Longhini to perform unpublished masterpieces of early Italian music.

This focus on musicology-based performance serves the listener well, as the chronological order of presented material, combined with thorough and enlightening program notes, allows one to track and contextualize the subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) changes that take place over time. For example, the unaccompanied
Renaissance-style polyphony on the first disc undergoes dramatic transformations by the seventh, to the extent that Monteverdi himself developed a new term to define the form: “Concerto.” By the ninth disc, we hear viol consorts and instrumental ritornelli that begin pointing forward to the developments of Baroque composers and, by the 15th disc, we have arrived at the starting point for the next generation of musical minds, with arisone passages, early recitative, and a basic cantata structure.

These connections between contextual understanding and listening are enormously important, especially when immersing oneself in as vast a body of work as we find here. But these are audio discs and the most important component in deeming this collection successful is how it sounds and, in short, it sounds very good. One of Delitiae Musicae’s great stylistic attributes is their ability to convey affects and expressions without being overly musically dramatic; the great swells and sweeps that are utilized in some Renaissance recordings are avoided here, taking the notes on the page as they come and avoiding any imposition of interpretation over composition. This approach makes even greater sense when we reach the “invention” of the concerto, as instrumental forces are added and augmented, and rhythmic complexity increases exponentially.

Although some may be apprehensive at the prospect of tackling over 15 hours of Monteverdi, this is a collection that is meant to be savoured over time, rather than devoured in a binge-listening marathon. With plenty of textual information and excellent musical performances, these discs will fascinate all who listen, whether already steeped in this master’s music or simply interested in learning more about one of Italy’s great cultural figures.

Matthew Whitfield

Thomas Tallis – Spem in Alium; James MacMillan – Vidi Aquam
ORA Singers, Harmonia Mundi HMM902669.70 (orasingers.co.uk/tallis2020)

Among my favourite music albums are those that reach to bridge historical eras and cultural landscapes, yet using similar musical forces. This impressive ORA Singers release is an example. The album presents a substantial banquet of Tudor choral music, chief among them Thomas Tallis’ magnificent 40-part Spem in Alium, 450 years old this year. It is complemented by Vidi Aquam (2019) by Sir James MacMillan – also for 40 voices – an impressive 21st-century painterly commentary on the Tallis.

Spem in Alium (Hope in Any Other) was composed for eight choirs of five voices each. They interweave in many-layered, structurally complex ways on paper, and in performance in physical space. A high-water mark of the musical aspirations of the English Renaissance ruling class. As a composition it has long been acknowledged by its students as an apothecary of European vocal polyphony.

Listening to Spem in Alium can be an emotional experience. Beginning with a single voice, other voices join in imitation as the music passes around the eight choirs, a study in constant change and metamorphosis, like a great river in motion. After brief tutti sections, the choirs sing in antiphonal pairs, throwing their voices across the space between them, all flowing together in the work’s powerful sonic tsunami finale.

English writer and actor Stephen Fry observed in a video message, “There was a plague around in Britain when Tallis wrote his music and there is a plague around now…’Spem’ translates as ‘Hope’; and this is about Hope for our future, and the future of the arts.” Amen.

Andrew Timar

Handel/Mozart – Der Messias Solos; Philharmonia Chor Wien; Les Musiciens du Louvre; Marc Minkowski
Unitel Edition 803408 (naxosdirect.com/search/814337017583)

In 1789, Mozart’s loyal patron, Gottfried van Swieten, asked the composer to write a German arrangement of Handel’s Messiah. Van Swieten had in his possession the original Messiah score as well as the Ebeling/Handel/Manfredi concertante performance practice used by it. In 2019, this presentation is fascinating, with Roald Dahl-esque sets and costumes accompanied by the magnificent Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.

Sophie Bisson

Mozart – Die Zauberflöte
Portillo; Fonnia; Sherratt; Burger; Wettgren; Glyndebourne Chorus; Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment;
Ryan Wigglesworth
Opus Arte OA1304D (naxosdirect.com/search/809478013044)

Reviewing a new production of any opera in 250 words is a challenge, but even more so when the material is as genre-defining as Mozart’s The Magic Flute, here recorded at Glyndebourne in 2019. This presentation is fascinating, with Roald Dahl-esque sets and costumes accompanied by the magnificent Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.

From the outset, the music is stunning in its energy and crispness, rhythmically vital yet expressive and constantly transparent. The orchestra is in fine form, accompanying with a sensitivity and artfulness which allows...
The listener to perceive the multiple layers of sound taking place: the soloist or ensemble in the foreground; the woodwinds and upper strings in the middle ground; and the lower strings below, underpinning the higher parts with immovable precision.

One of the more beautiful components of this performance is the way in which the orchestra’s use of period instruments determines the dynamic levels of all involved. To use a well-known example, Der Hölle Rache – the famous Queen of the Night aria – can be so driven by the aggressive rage contained in the text that the interpretation becomes a caricature of its inherently lyrical nature, pitting pyrotechnical technique against musical sensibility. Not so in this instance, though: the control exercised in tandem by soprano Caroline Wettergreen and the OAE ensures that there is beauty amidst the chaos, producing an unusually moving result.

While the music is treated with historically informed sensitivity, the sets and staging for this production are decidedly and wonderfully nontraditional, a surreal and perspective-bending design, the visual effects. With each background made to look hand-sketch, colourful costumes and perspective-bending design, the visual impression made by this presentation is as impactful, if not more so, than the musical. Those acquainted with Mozart’s operatic masterwork will surely appreciate such a novel and engaging reimagining of this attic masterwork.

The rather lengthy opera is musically very rich, extremely enjoyable with catchy tunes, beautiful arias, duets, ensembles and exciting strettas finales. The second act is a work of genius with show-stopping hits coming one after the other. The heavenly vocal quartet O toil dont la clémence is followed by an animated duet between Pharaoh and son (Moment fatal! que faire?) and a tremendous scene and aria by Queen Sinaide (Italian soprano Silvia dalla Benetta). The opera ends unforgettably with the Prayer Scene when the Israelites are praying for the Red Sea to part with a marvellous, iconic melody so beautiful that even Liszt wrote a paraphrase on it. Flawless cast, superb soloists and expertly conducted with true Rossinian flair by Fabrizio Maria Carminati.

Matthew Whitfield

Rossini – Moïse
Soloists; Gorécki Chamber Choir, Krakow; Virtuosi Brunensis; Fabrizio Maria Carminati
Naxos 8.660473-75 (naxosdirect.com/search/730099047371)

Well, the ancient Hebrews certainly didn’t know that they would be marching out of Egypt to a Rossini tune! Rossini composed Moses in Egitto for Naples in 1818 when he was 26 years old. Then, like many other Italian composers he went to Paris for fame and fortune, and as a wealthy and successful composer turned Moses into a French grand opera (Moïse et Pharaon) with new, spectacular stage effects, adding additional music and even a ballet. The opera became tremendously successful.

The biblical story is the struggle of Moses (Russian basso Alexey Birkus) to convince the Pharaoh (Italian basso Luca Dall’Amico) to let his people go by producing miracles punishing the Egyptians with calamities until the hesitant Pharaoh gives in and the rest is history. Interwoven in the plot is a love story between the Egyptian crown prince (virtuoso American tenor Randall Bills) and a Hebrew girl (Italian soprano Elisa Balbo) in conflict between love versus loyalty to family and country. Somewhat like the Aida/Radames love story later in Verdi.

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Janos Gardonyi

Verdi – Il Trovatore
Netrebko; Eyvazov; Sasi; Zajick; Orchestra, Chorus and Ballet of the Arena di Verona; Pier Giorgio Morandi
Cmajor 754608 (naxosdirect.com/search/81437015466)

Il Trovatore is an immensely popular opera in which an implausible plot is transformed by a dizzying succession of glorious melodies. Along with Rigoletto and La Traviata, it forms the great trilogy of Verdi’s middle period, but it is the most traditional of the three. A melodrama about chivalry, honour, valour and tragic love powered by unremittingly high-voltage music. Leonora, Manrico and the count are all given passionate arias, but Verdi appeared most inspired by the eloquent outpourings of the tenor Armen Badalyan set amid pliant sopranos and contraltos. The mixed Latvian Radio Choir, conducted by Janos Gardonyi, expertly conducted with true Rossinian flair by Fabrizio Maria Carminati.

Raul da Gama

Komitas – Divine Liturgy
Latvian Radio Choir; Sigvards Klava
Delos DE 3590 (naxosdirect.com/search/013491359021)

The profound music of Divine Liturgy is a historic recording, performed to commemorate the 150th birthday of its composer, Komitas Vardapet (1869-1935). Komitas is considered the founder of the Armenian national school of music and an important pioneer in the field of ethnomusicology. He completed this monumental work in April 1915 as the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman government intensified. Komitas himself was arrested shortly thereafter. Although his life was spared, he was driven out of Armenia, soul destroyed, and spent the last 20 years of his life in an asylum in Paris.

Divine Liturgy reflects Komitas’ deeply spiritual life but the backdrop evokes the socio-political events of the times. Thus, praise and worship are set in sombre tones and colours reflecting spiritual darkness. To capture this, Komitas “heard” male voices expressing praise for God as well as reflecting the mood of the times. However, arranger Vache Sharafyan has made a boldly presumptuous leap of faith and illuminates Komitas’ deeply meditative sound-mass textures, choosing to mix the shadowy darkness of male voices with the dappled light of soaring female ones.

Thus we have a brilliantly daring new Divine Liturgy expressed as much in the eerie tones of Hovhannes Nersesyan’s dark and sonorous bass voice on Chosen of God and the eloquent outpourings of the tenor Armen Badalyan set amid pliant sopranos and contraltos. The mixed Latvian Radio Choir is superbly directed by Sigvards Klava, whose efforts – together with the bold ones of Sharafyan – give wings to the structural logic and deep spirituality of a work that many see as Komitas’ crowning achievement.

Raul da Gama

Komitas – Chosen of God
Latvian Radio Choir; Sigvards Klava
Delos DE 3590 (naxosdirect.com/search/013491359021)

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Raul da Gama
Songs by Sir Hamilton Harty
Kathryn Rudge; Christopher Glynn
Somm Recordings SOMMCD 0616
(naxodirect.com/search/748871061620)

I’m a long-time admirer of Hamilton Harty’s distinctively Irish-sounding orchestral works, especially his unfairly neglected Piano Concerto, so I welcomed the opportunity to hear and review this CD containing 23 songs, nearly half his total output, 16 recorded for the first time.

Set to words by 17 poets, including W.B. Yeats, Padraic Colum, Walt Whitman and Harty himself, the songs range across Ireland’s natural landscapes, love, lullabies, work, worship, war and death. Many are infused with the traditional melodic turns, lilts and sentiment we immediately identify as so uniquely and ingratiatingly Irish.

English mezzo-soprano Kathryn Rudge’s shiny, finely focused voice surges thrillingly in the more dramatic songs, while she’s sensitively subdued in the tender or reflective selections, varying her vocal colours, always acting the texts.

The piano accompaniments are elaborate and fully fleshed, not surprising because Harty, in addition to his distinguished career as a conductor, performed as piano accompanist (he preferred the term “collaborator”) for violinist Fritz Kreisler, tenor John McCormack, soprano Agnes Nicholls (his wife) and mezzo Elsie Swinton (his purported mistress), the latter two for whom he composed many of his songs. Pianist Christopher Glynn “collaborates” admirably, adding, on his own, two charming salon-like solo piano pieces by Harty, one in its first recording.

Harty’s lustrous, warm-hearted songs surely deserve to be included in the repertoire of today’s vocal recitalists and the CD collections of lovers of beautiful music, like you! Detailed notes and texts are provided.

Michael Schulman

Alexander Kastalsky – Requiem
Soloists; Choirs; Orchestra of St. Luke’s;
Leonard Slatkin
Naxos 8.574245
(naxodirect.com/search/747313424573)

Alexander Kastalsky’s vision for his grand Requiem for Fallen Brothers – which included all those who died in WWI on both sides – was summarily snuffed out because by the time he was ready to unveil it on stage, in 1917, political power in Russia was in the hands of the Bolsheviks.

More tragically his cross-cultural, 17-movement requiem – a work of immense proportion in which he weaves not only Latin and Orthodox rites in multiple languages, but even manages to use Eastern music, seanlessly and with dark grandiosity – remains virtually unknown within the canon of Western classical choral-orchestral works.

 Appropriately, this definitive recording, featuring the Orchestra of St. Luke’s conducted by Leonard Slatkin, brings together a spectrum of players including the Cathedral Choral Society, the Clarion Choir, the Saint Tikhon Academy of Music and the Kansas City Chorale, who illuminate the work’s breathtaking array of meditative, sparse and nimble sonorities.

This is a highly reverential recording, distinguished by exquisite solo contributions from soprano Anna Dennis and bass-baritone Joseph Charles Beutel, supported with fine choral work by all of the vocal ensembles. Together they turn this awe-inspiring requiem into something truly memorable from the darkness of the Confutatis and the following Lacrymosa, the undulant Interludium: Hymn to Indra and the magnificent Dominus Jesu. The orchestration by Leonard Slatkin reveals the inner logic and structural grandeur of this complex work with exemplary clarity and inner detail.

Raul da Gama

Dame Ethel Smyth – The Prison
Dashon Burton; Sarah Brailey; Experiential Chorus; Experiential Orchestra; James Blachly
Chandos CHSA 5279
(naxodirect.com/search/0S5115527924)

Dame Ethel Smyth (1858-1944) was an English composer with a large and varied compositional output that includes several operas, sonatas, works for strings, choral works and a mass. The Prison is a vocal symphony for soprano, bass-baritone, chorus and orchestra that was premiered and conducted by Smyth in 1931.

Based on the libretto The Prison: A Dialogue by philosopher Henry Bennet Brevster, Smyth’s lifelong friend and mentor, the symphony tells the story of a prisoner in solitary confinement who dialogues poignantly with his soul about his innocence and imminent death. Dashon Burton (The Prisoner), Sarah Brailey (His Soul) and the Experiential Orchestra and Chorus offer a raw performance that is both stirring and compelling.

Overall, Smyth’s writing is rich and complex and very much reminiscent of an important influence in her life, the Brahms symphonies. In the first part, the prisoner’s feelings of dread are powerfully captured in the brass section with dark-timbrred percussive bursts. This is in contrast to the second part, where the prisoner seems to find liberation in the acceptance of his faith in the more ethereal sonorities of his soul. Smyth composed The Prison while grieving the loss of Brewster and progressively becoming deaf, thus prematurely ending her career as a composer. There are several parallels made between this work and her personal life.

(Re)discovering forgotten composers can be frustrating when primary resources are scarce or when the composer’s output turns out to be less than exciting. In Smyth, we find not only a compelling individual, but a woman who left behind thousands of letters ready to be studied. Hers is a legacy still waiting to be revealed.

Sophie Bisson

Ēriks Ešenvalds – Translations
Portland State Chamber Choir; Ethan Sperry
Naxos 8.574124
(naxodirect.com/search/747313412471)

Award-winning Latvian composer Ēriks Ešenvalds is a superb younger generation choral composer who writes with feeling, lyricism, layered complexity and the skill to also create sad sounds that are soothing and comforting at the same time. It is thrilling to hear him expand the very strong and thriving choral tradition of the three Baltic nations.

This is the second recording of his music by the Portland State Chamber Choir, under the direction of Ethan Sperry. Sperry and his university ensemble perform with intellect, texture and passion. The seven works here are not easy to interpret due to language, diverse texts, wide-ranging tonality and multiplicity.

Highlights include The Heavens’ Flock (2014) with its almost folk-song singalong quality, full tonal harmonies, occasional high soprano pitches and calming repeated ending. Translation (2016) has a darker, reflective mood. Slow but never boring, the harmonies keep the listener’s attention until the closing singing handbells’ final ring. Vineta (2009) opens with a choral pedal on E, as the volume builds with attention-grabbing contemporary tonalities and the use of mesmerizing ringing vibes and glockenspiel, and solo bass drum for unexpected rewarding effects. In paradisum (2012), Ešenvalds adds viola and cello. A devastating solo cello line with full choral backdrop adds to the grief sentiment. An unforgettable minimalist aonal string duet closes the work above a spectacular solo, pianissimo choral drone.

The moving compositions, clear production and youthful singing make Translations a memorable choral release.

Tiina Kilk
Missy Mazzoli; Royce Vavrek – Proving Up Opera Omaha; International Contemporary Ensemble; Christopher Rountree PentaTone PTC 5186 754
(naxosdirect.com/search/827949075469)

Pamela Margles

CLASSICAL AND BEYOND

Telemann – Concertos & Ouverture Arion Orchestre Baroque; Alexander Weimann ATMA ACD2 2789
(naxosdirect.com/search/acd2 • 2789)

Beethoven – Complete Symphonies transcribed by piano by Franz Liszt Michel Dalberto, Jean-Claude Pennetier, Alain Plané; Paul Badura-Skoda Harmonia Mundi HMX2931192.98 (harmoniamundi.com/#1/albums/2643)

Ahmed Arab

For over 25 years, Franz Liszt undertook the task of transcribing Beethoven’s symphonies for the piano, not merely transferring the notes from one instrument to another but reworking and recomposing these great works entirely. The material is unchanged – Beethoven’s melodic and harmonic content remain intact – but the approach is different, as necessitated by the reduction of 20- or so instrumental parts down to two hands.

It is important to consider that when Liszt made these transcriptions the concept of the symphony orchestra was not nearly as ubiquitous as it is today, and there was no recording technology available to capture these incredible works for posterity; a performance was a one-time event, in the truest sense of the idea. If people wanted to listen to Beethoven in their living rooms, they had to do the work themselves, playing the notes live on their own pianos. By making these transcriptions, Liszt was enabling pianists everywhere to hear this great composer’s symphonies as often as they were willing to play them, while hopefully garnering himself a reasonable sum in royalties.

To those of us in the 21st century for whom accessing any one of the 10,000 recordings of Beethoven’s symphonies is as easy as pushing play, can these pianistic oddities have any relevance? Strangely, yes – but not in the straightforward way we might think.

Liszt’s transcriptions have the effect of taking the immensity of the orchestra and distilling it into a chamber-sized sound, akin to a piano sonata rather than a symphony. Listening to pianist Paul Badura-Skoda tackle the legendary Fifth Symphony, for example, one is struck by how much his interpretation resembles a long-lost cousin to the Pathétique.

While this recording may be more of a novelty item than a standard must-have collectible, those who are familiar with Beethoven’s symphonic essays will appreciate hearing them in a different way, from the inside out, perhaps, rather than the outside in.

Matthew Whitfield

Webber – Symphonies; Clarinet Concertos Joan Enric Lluna; Berliner Camerata IBS Classical IBS222019
(naxosdirect.com/search/8436589069961)

> Right from the opening of this grim, gripping opera, reality mingles with fantasy. In a hearty invocation to the great American Dream, Pa Zegner (the alluring baritone John Moore) sings, “Uncle Sam is rich enough to give us all a farm.” Meanwhile, eerie sounds creep in from the orchestra. It’s clear Pa is deluded.

It’s the 1860s. Pa and his family have been lured to the Nebraska prairies by the promise of free land offered by the recent Homestead Act. But two young daughters have already died. The land is dry and barren. The weather is nasty. And Uncle Sam’s requirements – including a glass window – are proving mighty difficult to fulfill.

American composer Missy Mazzoli and Canadian librettist Royce Vavrek have transformed a disturbing short story by Karen Russell into a powerful theatrical experience. In Russell’s story the Zegners’ brave young son Miles, “a thirteen-year-old runt,” was the narrator. But the opera unfolds without a narrator. As a result, Miles’ tragic confrontation with the ghastly, diabolical Sodbuster (the riveting bass Andrew Harris) has even greater dramatic impact. Michael Slattery’s lovely tenor moves us at every turn in the plot, the only distraction being the drawn-out, overwrought baroque-style ornaments Mazzoli gives Miles.

But Mazzoli’s writing is fresh, original and enticingly contemporary. With six impassioned soloists and the dynamic International Contemporary Ensemble conducted by Christopher Rountree, this recording from Opera Omaha, a co-commissioner of the work, commands attention. Fortunately, the booklet contains the full libretto.

Pamela Margles
of this approach. You’ll hear everything as if you were sitting not just near, but within the band. The very first sound from the clarinetist is an inhale, and such a hungry, histrionic breath Lluna takes. Weber orchestrated with verve and wit. The Camerata players are given license to kill it, and we hear all the voicings as characters in an opera. Listen to the horns! Listen to the gutsy strings!

The liner notes written by Josep Dolcet are instructive; Lluna’s own brief addition pays respect to Weber the dramatist, and labels the soloist as the diva! There is a companion CD included of the rarely heard symphonies from the younger Weber.

Max Christie

The Leipzig Circle Vol. II – Chamber Music
by Felix, Clara & Robert

London Bridge Trio
Somm Recordings SOMMCD 0619
(naxosdirect.com/search/74871061927)

> Leipzig – like Vienna, a city of music! Not only did Bach reside there as cantor at the Thomaskirche for 27 years, but the city also witnessed the birth of Clara Schumann, the arrival of her husband from Zwickau to study law (but later, piano), and the arrival of Mendelssohn to conduct the renowned Gewandhaus Orchestra. Such is the basis for this splendid recording on the Somm label, the second one to feature the London Bridge Trio, this time performing piano trios by Mendelssohn and Robert and Clara Schumann.

Mendelssohn’s Piano Trio Op. 49 – his first of two – was composed in Leipzig in 1839, and has long been regarded as a supreme example of the genre. The impassioned first movement is all freshness and spontaneity, the intricate interplay deftly handled by the three performers. The second movement is a true song without words, while the scherzo and allegro finale contain the graceful brilliance that so typifies Mendelssohn’s chamber style.

Clara Schumann enjoyed a long career as an outstanding concert pianist, but her own compositions remain unjustifiably neglected. Nevertheless, her Trio Op. 17 – considered by many to be her greatest work – demonstrates great originality and not surprisingly, a formidable piano part, adroitly handled by Daniel Tong.

From the buoyant exuberance of the first movement, the heartfelt lyricism of the second and the cheerful optimism of the finale, Robert Schumann’s Trio Op. 80 from 1847 truly embodies the Romantic spirit – little wonder the piece has earned such high praise over the years. Throughout, the London Bridge Trio performs with great panache, demonstrating a sensitive but confident approach in this most intimate repertoire. This disc is a delight!

Richard Haskell

Sil Sonatas
Leticia Gómez-Tagle
ARS Produktion ARS38270
(leticiagomeztagle.no.te.com)

> Sonatas by Chopin, Liszt and Domenico Scarlatti are featured on this ARS Produktion recording titled Sil! Sonatas with Mexican-born pianist Leticia Gómez-Tagle. While most of us realize the word “Sil” is Spanish for “yes” it also refers to B minor, the key in which all three pieces were written. The title was chosen by the artist herself, but even without the play on words and tenuously connected, the program is an attractive one.

Chopin’s Sonata No.3 Op.58 was completed in 1844, a time when the composer was at the height of his creative powers. The piece has long been regarded as one of his most difficult, not only with respect to the technical demands, but also to nuance. To say the least, Gómez-Tagle rises to the challenges in a very big way. She delivers an elegant and polished performance, her formidable technique further enhanced by a beautiful tone and fine use of phrasing.

The Sonata In B Minor by Franz Liszt is acknowledged as one of the powerhouse of 19th-century piano repertoire; fiendishly difficult, the piece presents technical challenges even greater than those of the Chopin sonata. Again – and not surprisingly – Gómez-Tagle meets the demands with apparent ease, creating a mood of thrilling dramatic intensity throughout.

In total contrast to the two Romantic giants is an encore – the Scarlatti Sonata K87, a gentle miniature written a century earlier. Here, Gómez-Tagle’s delicate and precise approach is clear evidence that she is as comfortable with Baroque repertoire as she is with that from later periods. Superb sound quality throughout further enhances an exemplary recording. Highly recommended.

Richard Haskell

Piano Works by Heitor Villa-Lobos
Flavio Varani
Azur Classical AZC 175
(clar.e-monsite.com)

> Even today, the piano music of Villa-Lobos remains an untapped trove that suggests something of the exotic. Despite the popularity of a handful of his works such as the Bachianas Brasileiras series, Villa-Lobos’ prodigious output for his own instrument boasts much unfamiliar music, thereby requiring a devotional sort of elucidation.

Apparently up to such a task is veteran pianist (and native Brazilian), Flavio Varani. He brings an unusual commingling of old-school romanticism and ardent, fiery command to his new disc where accompaniments leap and melodies spring about the keyboard. Varani’s training as a student at the Juilliard School with the great Rosina Lhevinne – and subsequently Arthur Balsam – reveals an integral approach to his art and a careful conception of pianistic lineage in general. The listener is aware that Varani has lived long and purposefully with the music of his homeland; the relationship of composer and interpreter here recalls the great association John Browning, (also a Lhevinne student), had with Samuel Barber.

Villa-Lobos’ strange and exotic piano calls to us from unexpected pieces throughout this record: Chôros No.1 W161 “Chôro típico brasileiro” (a transcription from guitar) and the Danzas características affricanas Wo58 are examples. Conversely, Varani chooses the oft-loved eighth piece from Circundas W220, “Vamos atrás da serra, Calunga,” as epilogue.

Regrettably, the recording quality here is not of the highest calibre. Levels are noticeably out of balance and extraneous studio noises disturb the overall flow of an otherwise convincing disc.

Adam Sherkin

A Character of Quiet – Schubert; Glass
Simone Dinnerstein
Orange Mountain Music
(orangemountainmusic.com)

> Admittedly feeling “anxious and enervated” during the early days of lockdown in March and April, pianist Simone Dinnerstein has confessed that she felt neither “creative” nor “productive.” In time however, with the help of poets Wordsworth and Melville and walks through her local cemetery – the hallowed Green-Wood of Brooklyn – she found her way back to the piano. In June, she sat down to record the music of two composers she has held a close connection with: Philip Glass and Franz Schubert. (And we are so very glad that she did!)

From the first note of this “quiet” and remarkable album (recorded in her New York home with longtime producer and friend Adam Abeshouse), the listener feels as if ferried to a private audience with Dinnerstein. Therein we are greeted with soloistic utterances on a wholly intimate order, sincere and sublime. With this
unassuming recording, Dinnertsein seems to have evolved a new kind of homemade listening; she has managed to capture the immediacy and depth of experience—of character—that a one-on-one house recital can deliver. Here we glimpse the personal, as procured by the pandemic.

Even the three Glass Etudes, (music and a composer that this particular reviewer is often bemused by), speak in an honest and poignant mode, somehow changed by our planet’s new energy, reshaped by a hushed and isolated atmosphere surrounding Glass’ simple patterns and motifs.

Dinnerstein’s Schubert is always formidable and especially unique. Her performance here of the mighty last Sonate in B-flat Major D960 bears no exception, possessing an inescapable message of radiance and poetry, humanity and continuance.

Ultimately, Dinnerstein’s musicianship is one born of integrity. Through forced pause and quietude she has, indubitably, discovered new aspects to her art. Let us hope for more such recordings, as we marvel at her courage and savour the nourishment it brings us in these weary, unwanted times.

Note: The recording’s title was inspired by William Wordsworth’s The Prelude, a poem Dinnerstein became familiar with during lockdown. It refers to “A character of quiet more profound than pathless wastes.”

Adam Sherkin

Shostakovich – Piano Quintet; Seven Romances on Poems by Alexander Blok
Trio Wanderer; Ekaterina Semenchuk
Harmonia Mundi HMM902289
(triowanderer.fr/discography)

The public, generally, does not leave a performance (or a deep listening session to a recording) of the work of the late Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich whistling tuneful melodies. But who made tuneful whistling the barometer for success in classical music anyway? Certainly not the legions of Shostakovich admirers, for whom this 2020 release—of his Piano Quintet in G Minor Op.57 (1940) and Seven Romances on Poems by Aleksander Blok Op.127 (1969)—by Trio Wanderer (Jean-Marc Phillips-Varjadian, violin; Raphaël Pidoux, cello; and Vincent Coq, piano)—will be most welcome. For the quintet, the trio is joined by violinist Catherine Montier and violist Christophe Gaugue and the Romances are sung by the commanding mezzo-soprano Ekaterina Semenchuk.

With the piano quintet, Shostakovich presents a test of technical prowess and historical understanding to the musicians, as they deftly negotiate the multiple lexicons that comprise the composer’s influences and, ultimately, his style. For example, contained within the quintet’s five-part structure (Prélude; Lento: Fugue; Adagio; Scherzo: Allegretto; Intermezzo: Lento; Finale: Allegretto) are motifs, broad musical themes and harmonic junctures revelatory of Shostakovich’s unabashed modernism (this so-called “ambivalent tonality” and deep admiration of Stravinsky), placed in compelling historical flux with Baroque gestures (counterpoint abounds, and there is even a G-major Tierce de Picardie that concludes the opening Prelude), along with the general, and lifelong, influence of Russian folk songs. This is the much-discussed polystylism of Shostakovich; the quintet handles such musical shapeshifting between genre and historical junctures with musicality, precision and seeming ease.

Equally compelling is the Seven Romances song cycle, where the great and sought-after Semenchuk, singing in the composer’s (and poet Blok’s) native Russian, shines. A recommended recording.

Andrew Scott

Shostakovich – Symphony No.11, Op.103
“The Year 1905”
BBC Philharmonic, John Storgards
Chandos CHSA 5278 CD/SACD
(naxosdirect.com/search/09515527825)

Shostakovich wrote this symphony during 1956–1957 to commemorate a horrific event from the year before his birth. On January 9, 1905 between 10,000 and 20,000 workers and their families, suffering the miseries inflicted upon them by Russia’s rush to industrialize, converged upon Tsar Nicholas II’s Winter Palace in St. Petersburg with a petition. The Tsar was not there and had left no one in the palace to receive any petition. On Bloody Sunday, the Tsar’s cavalry dutifully cut down 200 of their undefended countrymen.

If you are not familiar with this symphony, it has a program. The first movement depicts the serenity and mood of the spacious palace square. The second movement, titled The Ninth of January, begins quietly and devolves to the determined brutality and slaughter of the workers. The Tsar wins the day. The third movement contains an adagio that depicts the growing resolve within the survivors. The fourth is enigmatic. There are unmistakable overtones of an impending final confrontation, then the triumphant jubilation of the closing pages of the finale moves the listener 13 years ahead to the day that Tsar Nicholas II, the last Tsar, and his family (minus one) were themselves slaughtered.

This movement is titled The Tocsin, a warning bell. Was the composer intending the finale with its statement of victory really as a reference to a historical event, or a warning of another, yet-to-be victory?

Finnish maestro John Storgards is the principal guest conductor of the BBC Philharmonic and one of the busiest around. As the saying goes, he was born to conduct this symphony. He totally embraces the entire work from the tranquility and the real sense of open space in the opening adagio to the jubilant fourth movement. Not one note is wasted. The second movement is all the more powerful due to Storgards’ appropriate, un hurried tempi and balances between strings, brass and percussion. He leans on the brass to powerful effect. The third movement, In Memoriam, allows Storgards to broaden the tempo to meaningful declarations. The final movement concludes with a jubilant celebration reinforced with four sonorous church bells in the orchestra, an organ and high spirits.

The sound from Chandos is extraordinary. I was listening to the SACD layer in stereo and there were the musicians and the orchestra. I could “see” the flute, the basses, the timpani, the cellos, in truth every instrument exactly where they were in real three dimensions. But they remain in the fabric of the ensemble. No fatigue. Perfect dynamics.

Get a copy. See for yourself.

Bruce Surtees

Fin du Temps
Estellés; Iturriagagoitia; Apellániz; Rosado
IBS Classical IBS72020
(naxosdirect.com/search/8436589069404)

Clarinetist José Luis Estellés is joined by violinist Altzol Iturriagagoitia, cellist David Apellániz and pianist Alberto Rosado on this recording of the two best-known, thematically linked quartets for these instruments: Quatuor pour la fin du Temps by Olivier Messiaen, and Toru Takemitsu’s compositional response, Quatuor II.

Recently, Messiaen, a Catholic mystic, has come under posthumous criticism for at least passively upholding a stance of anti-Semitism. These days it might be too controversial to even discuss the religiosity that fills his music. It’s safe to say both he and Takemitsu attempted the impossible: to demonstrate timeless with the essentially time-bound art of musical performance.

The more recent piece almost succeeds in
simulating the “Fin du Temps” proposed by the earlier. With veiled and obvious references to Messiaen, Takemitsu’s piece seems to sit still and reflect. For contrast, turn to the sixth movement of the Messiaen, and listen to the Danse de la fureur pour les sept trompettes; it’s so rhythmically exacting to perform, and so exciting. The listener is bound by time, not released. But it’s fantastic, and fantastically presented here. Overall the recording rides on the high partials generated by the four different voices, by which I mean it is bright, but never strident. Well, except as the movement closes, where apocalyptic trumpets signal the end.

One is bound to assess the performance of the solo clarinet movement: A hime des Oiseaux. No vanity mars this performance; if there are warts in the presentation of the crescendi and diminuendii over extreme sustains, the minute wavers that mark us as human, they do nothing to diminish the clarity of intent and finely wrought performance.

Max Christie

Christopher Rouse – Symphony No.5
Nashville Symphony; Giancarlo Guerrero
Naxos 8.559852
(naxosdirect.com/search/636943985229)

Few works carry such weighty baggage as Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony. If a composer chooses to tackle the symphonic form in their output, and further manages to compose so many as five, one can choose to ignore this baggage or attempt to meet it head on.

In his Fifth Symphony, American composer Christopher Rouse, who died in September 2019, decidedly chose the latter. With a Grammy and a Pulitzer to his name, the celebrated composer shows that he was not intimidated by large forms as the work balances tradition and modernity with impressive prowess. The listener is clearly provided with classical reminiscences while also being transported through a contemporary sensibility of vast turbulence and serene calm.

Also on the disc are two restless pieces titled Supplica and Concerto for Orchestra. The former is lyrical and tender while the latter is a true orchestral showpiece where all players of the orchestra have their chance to shine. Already being one of the most performed composers of his generation, this disc shows that Rouse’s legacy will no doubt continue on well into the future.

Adam Scime

Smoke, Airs
Wet Ink Ensemble
Huddersfield Contemporary Records
HCR24CD (nmcrec.co.uk/hcr)

In the latest release by the renowned Wet Ink Ensemble – titled Smoke, Airs – the ensemble’s adventurousness and dedication to the music of our time is on brilliant display in four new works by three Americans and Canadian Pierre Alexandre Tremblay.

In the title track, experimentalist vocalist Charmaine Lee creates a haunting landscape of whips and sonic shadow worlds. Interesting vocal utterances paint both uneasy and beautiful atmospheres. Bryn Harrison’s Dead Time contextualizes change within a static field in a context where the composer is clearly concerned with how our ears perceive the unfolding of variation through sameness. Kristina Wolfe’s A Mere Echo of Arioxenos is inspired by the ancient concept of aural architecture – a piece in two movements that evokes vast Greek spaces lost in time, creating a truly unique listening environment. Lastly, Tremblay’s (un)weave is a study of our contemporary soundscape: the stop and go of the urban frantic reality and how one may find solace in such an environment.

The Wet Ink Ensemble has received much critical praise in their successful history as a collective. This release will continue to heighten the group’s deserved reputation.

Adam Scime

Thomas Adès – In Seven Days
Kirill Gerstein; Thomas Adès; Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra
Myrios Classics MYR027
(naxosdirect.com/search/4260183510277)

Composer, pianist and conductor Thomas Adès is, in truth, a child of the late 20th century. The acumen of his creativity and myriad of musical aptitude already scaled impressive heights back in the 1990s. Today, he continues to traverse the confused streams and nebulous annals of our 21st-century musical world. Neither far nor trend nor fickleness of style can deter him; he is a teller of truths and a composer of our time.

Now, inimitable pianist Kirill Gerstein has teamed up with Adès on a new record featuring keyboard works by the composer. So rarely will a collaborator embrace a composer’s catalogue with just as much dedication and enthusiasm as the composer himself.

A notable consequence from such commitment is the swift advancement of performance practice, often a slow-moving process that takes decades, if not centuries, to appear. With this album, one immediately detects exquisitely formed conceptions of music, determined from various angles and experimentation of interpretation. (Adès is actively involved in two works on the album as pianist and as conductor.)

Why? Why are these complex, avant-garde, texturally challenging sound worlds so irresistible? Perhaps when the genius and fortitude of a composer like Adès meets the integrity and artistic prowess of an interpreter like Gerstein, our ears are lent and lent freely, with bedazzled curiosity. Urgent and honest, we quest after the supernatural.

Adam Sherkin

Epicycle II
Gyda Valltysdottir
Sono Luminus SLE-70012/SLE-70013
(sonoluminus.com/store/epicycleeii)

Referring to the geometric model of the solar system by the ancient Greek mathematician and astronomer Ptolemy, in which a smaller circle travels around the circumference of a larger circle, cellist Gyda Valltysdottir releases a sequel to her highly acclaimed first solo album from 2017, Epicycle.

Haunting, melodic and yet dissonant at the same time, the album features eight of Valltysdottir’s closest co-conspirators and inspirers from her life: “This group of people is really a musical galaxy, where the connections are endless…”

Orbiting themes of Water, Air (breath) and Love, harmonies are often thick, layered and textured rather than melodic, a trademark of Icelandic composers, and offer travel without destinations, as in the gorgeously heavy Unfold. Each track takes the listener on what feels like motion through stopped time; moving, yet not moving; micro-journeys to sea, to the sky, love and to outer space. I was delighted to find Anna Thorvaldsdottir’s Mikros on the journey, having had the fortune to attend her composition lecture last December at Banff. Equally enjoyable is the super dark and cool mix of voices and electronics on Evol Lamiru, closing our orbital loop and returning our feet back to the dirt by the final, perhaps prophetically unsettling track, Octo.

A deeply cinematic score at times, this album is often transporting with great lift, giving the listener long opportunities to soar, bird-like, over the Icelandic landscape and beyond, for the most part leaving us safely and gently deposited on the earthly shore.

Cheryl Ockrant
Contemporary Voices
Pacifica Quartet; Otis Murphy
Cedille CDR 90000 196
(naxosdirect.com/search/735131919623)

Markedly different works by three laureates of the Pulitzer Prize for Music – Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, the first-ever woman recipient (1983), Shulamit Ran (1991) and Jennifer Higdon (2010) – are performed by the Grammy-winning Pacifica Quartet, Indiana University artists-in-residence.

In Zwilich’s 17-minute, three-movement Quintet for alto saxophone and string quartet (2007), Indiana University professor Otis Murphy adds what Zwilich calls “a certain sassy attitude to the mix.” Murphy’s bluesy saxophone saunters and riffs above pulsating, animated strings, yet moody lyricism prevails over the “sasses.”

Ran’s 22-minute Glitter, Doom, Shards, Memory – String Quartet No. 3 (2013) honours artists who, facing death in the Holocaust, continued working. The opening movement shifts from serenity to disquiet, followed by Menace, a Shostakovich-like sardonic scherzo. The third movement is titled “If I perish – do not let my paintings die,” words of Felix Nussbaum, who painted until dying in Auschwitz. The unsettled, fragmented music reflects, says Ran, “the conflicting states of mind that would have made it possible, and essential, to continue to live and practice one’s art.” Of the elegiac epilogue, she says, “As we remember, we restore dignity to those who are gone.”

Higdon describes her 18-minute Voices (1993) as transitioning “from manic and frenzied to calm and quiet.” In movements titled Blitz, Soft Enlacing and Grace, the Pacifica Quartet gorgeously illuminates the densely scored music, a textbook of string sonorities.

Three very stylistically diverse compositions, but not a single dull moment on this entire CD!

Of Being
Ning Yu
New Focus Recordings fcr242
(newfocusrerecordings.com/catalogue/ning-ya-yu-of-being/)

For pianist Ning Yu, clearly tradition is a wonderful reality; but not understanding that the inner dynamic of tradition is always to innovate would be a prison. It’s certainly what the lively works by Wang Lu, Misato Mochizuki and Emily Praetorius in Of Being seem to tell us. This is chiselled music; uniquely beautiful, but also defiantly provocative. It is a body of music carved from the bedrock of the Western music tradition and yet it forces the listener to reconsider what that tradition is.

In doing so, Yu actively throws overboard melodioic, structural and harmonic hooks that have become expressively bluntioned through overuse. Then she rebuilds the architecture of the music from what might – or mightn’t – be left. Sound and silence are treated with equal respect, and innovation is always paramount. This means that Yu might also reach outside the keyboard and inside the instrument to create the purest melodies and harmonies as she manipulates the strings – stretched taut across the cast-iron plate, which she often strums delicately or strikes percussively.

Her pedaling adds sudden moments of drama to the music as if opening a window and letting filtered light into the room full of sound, by unexpected use of the sostenuto followed by the unacorda; all of which may be abruptly shut down expressly with the damper. In the end the music seems to unfurl as if in streaming ribbons suspended interminably in time.

Raul da Gama
Malcolm Lipkin – Recollections
Various Artists
Divine Art dds 25202
(naxosdirect.com/search/809730520228)

I first listened to chamber works by British composer Malcolm Lipkin (1932–2017) while studying music in Europe in 1982. I was strongly moved by his combination of traditional compositional sounds with touches of the modern. I do not remember what the works were, but this collection of seven compositions spanning 50 years of creation is fabulous and respectful.

Three remastered recordings from a 1986 Hyperion Nash Ensemble vinyl release are included. String Trio (1964) is well written with compelling fourth movement rhythms. Repeated tonal chord rhythms and strings above distant horn lines resound in Pastorale (1964), a work evoking its title’s traditional form. Clifford’s Tower (1977), commemorating a 12th-century York Jewish massacre, features scary jagged notes and rhythm patterns, harsh loud winds and contrasting calmed holding notes.

The four recent recordings contribute to Lipkin’s legacy. Prelude and Dance (1987) is his tribute to Jacqueline du Pré. Its tonal Prelude has interesting piano choral pitch jumps and ascending cello runs. Dance is fun with subtle major/minor tonality shifts and high tinkling piano with repeated cello notes. The Journey (2016), a tribute to John McCabe, is delightfully played by John Turner on recorder, with memorable ornamental turns breaking up the colourful held notes. Naboth’s Vineyard (1982) and Interplay (1976) complete this over 80-minute long release.

Repeated listening adds to my appreciation, as the musicians all perform with thoughtful, precise musical detail. Lipkin’s works may be slightly old-fashioned but they are memorable.

Tiina Kilk

JAZZ AND IMPROVISED

Ides of March
Dave Young Quartet
Modica Music (modicamusic.com)

Cedille CDR 90000 196

Toronto bassist Dave Young has a rich history as a partner to pianists, most notably Oscar Peterson, Kenny Barron and Oliver Jones. He also has a distinguished career as a bandleader, putting together groups devoted to specific modern jazz repertoire, including the compositions of Horace Silver and Charles Mingus. Ides of March continues that neo-classical approach, with half the repertoire composed by Herbie Hancock.

There’s also a certain special resonance in the instrumental makeup. The quartet includes trumpeter Kevin Turcotte, guitarist Reg Schwager and drummer Terry Clarke, each a first-call musician with a refined execution. The band’s conception resembles trumpeter Art Farmer’s 1960s quartet with guitarist Jim Hall, an island of artful elegance in a clamberous decade.

Turcotte’s role as the offscreen trumpet voice in Born to Be Blue, the dramatized biography of Chet Baker, testifies to his warmth and economy, while Schwager possesses liquid lyricism and harmonic depth. Together they emphasize the melodic grace of Hancock’s Speak like a Child or Gershwin’s My Man’s Gone Now (a favourite of Miles Davis and Bill Evans, here distinguished by a limpidly melancholic introduction by Young and Schwager), but they also find nuance in more aggressive material, like Lee Morgan’s Speedball or Hancock’s One Finger Snap, both consistently motivated by Clarke’s crisp articulation and subtle inflections.

It’s a thoughtful, often reflective program, further enhanced by a developed account of Niels Lan Doky’s angular, slightly dissonant The Target and Young’s own, slightly pensive, title track.

Stuart Broomer
Unearth
New Hermitage
Independent
(newhermitage.bandcamp.com)

New Hermitage is a quartet from Halifax specializing in free improvisation and ambient music. It is comprised of Andrew MacKelvie (alto/tenor saxophone, bass clarinet), India Gailey (cello), Ellen Gibley (harp) and Ross Burns (guitar and effects). They have been playing together since 2017 and this is their fifth album.

The premise behind Unearth is a dystopian world where “pollution has decimated the population of the Earth” and the “surviving humans ... live in nomadic clans.” The titles (Boiling Off, Collecting Vapours, Light Through the Rubble, Pine Bottle Skyflight, Stalkers) evoke a quiet world of limited resources, and a civilization struggling to hold on. All the pieces are inventive and the sounds could be described as “environmental” where strings are as likely to be plucked and scraped as bowed. Lyricism is often eschewed for a sombre layering of sounds. In Signal, MacKelvie’s saxophone is ephemeral and whimsical, sounding like someone searching through static for words or other signs of civilization. Stalkers has a science fiction air with forbidding noises and some kind of fog horn echoing through a tunnel.

In Unearth, New Hermitage have created a sparse and inventive world with scarce resources and a compelling story.

Ted Parkinson

Ontario 559 West
Harrison Argatoff; Ian McGimpsey
Independent n/a (harrisonargatoff.com)

Nick Drake was a British singer-songwriter who released three albums and died in 1974. Since that time he’s attracted a larger-than-cult following who have enjoyed his soft and melodic singing, subtle guitar playing and enigmatic lyrics. His third album, Pink Moon, was his most sparse with just guitar and vocals.

In March of 2020, Ian McGimpsey (guitar) and Harrison Argatoff (tenor saxophone) travelled on Ontario 559 West to Carling Township where they spent three days recording this album which is their tribute to, and interpretation of, Pink Moon. They have certainly captured the mood of Drake’s final album with the intricate guitar parts and luscious and melodic saxophone lines. Ontario 559 West is a genuine homage to the earlier album but maintains its own identity: I listened to Pink Moon before Ontario 559 West and could not identify any specific song or melody that is covered in the later album. The interplay between McGimpsey and Argatoff contains elements of jazz, folk and some free improvisation. At points Argatoff’s playing and tone are reminiscent of Stan Getz (particularly in the final song Swings) and McGimpsey’s guitar is clean and nuanced.

Ontario 559 West is an alluring concept which is executed by two sympathetic musicians.

Ted Parkinson

Recorder
François Houle 4
Songlines Records SGL1632-2
(songlines.com/release/recorder)

Canadian clarinetist/composer/improviser and all-round inspiring musician François Houle works here again with Canadian Gordon Grdina (guitar), and in first-time collaborations with Americans Mark Helias (double bass/clarinet) and Gerry Hemingway (drums). The eight free-improvised Houle/Helias clarinet duets, and seven full-band Houle compositions, are memorable in their smart stylistic modern jazz/contemporary diversities and performance virtuosities.

Houle’s spontaneous single-take improvisations with Helias are short – some less than a minute – yet bursting with musical ideas. Each duet is placed between the longer Houle compositions, giving a welcome contrast. The opening Prelude features tonal, short, sweet and calming two-clarinet melodic interchanges by the two masters. At under one minute, it teaks interest in what is to come. Interlude 1 features high-pitched contrapuntal lines, like the little birds singing outside my window, and is a great contrast to the fast, complex, dense full-band The Black Bird – the track just before it – with its slower guitar solo midsection and touches of superimposed jazz and avant-garde full-band sounds. The brilliant title track Recorder has all things musical, from pacesetting staccato guitar opening plucks, full-band, wall-of-sound effects, standard swinging grooves, amazing Houle rapid clarinet lines and clear production values.

Houle writes in his notes that he formulated “an approach that would be mindful of the constituent parts of Pink Moon within the quartet complete involvement.” From calm to intense, his brave musical approach drives Recorder to timeless musical permanence.

Tiina Kilk

Palladium 2020
Palladium
Independent
(2020palladium.bandcamp.com)

In celebration of the legendary Wayne Shorter’s 87th birthday, inspired impresario and producer Jesse Markowitz has created a two-disc, 22-track recording project featuring 30-plus musicians performing compositions written and/or made famous by the iconic saxophonist/composer. Released on Shorter’s birthday, August 25, this project is also an uplifting response to a world thrown into the harsh reality of a global pandemic. The impressive roster of artists on Palladium 2020 has been handpicked/curated by Markowitz, and reflects Shorter’s eclectic and luminous creative life, as well as many of his seminal collaborations, including those with Miles Davis, Art Blakey, Wynton Kelly, Weather Report and Herbie Hancock.

There are myriad brilliant contributions to this project, however several tracks stand out, having been culled from some of Shorter’s most memorable recordings. Embracing the length and breadth of his stellar career, it includes the ultra-cool bop exploration The Summit, taken from Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers’ 1960 release Meet You at the Jazz Corner of the World, and features Nicole Glover’s burning tenor. Consummate pianist Eric Reed’s interpretation of Sydney (from Wynton Kelly’s 1959 Kelly Great) is not only masterful, but has captured the very essence of Shorter’s deeply sensitive soul.

Of special profundity is legendary soprano player Dave Liebman’s journey around the galaxy, flying on Shorter’s Footprints, first released on Miles Davis’ 1966 Miles Smiles, and arranged in a fresh way – as an elemental duo with the great Willy Rodriguez on drums. Leibman is as dynamic and rife with ideas as usual. This entire project is a tribute not only to Shorter himself, but to the very elemental power of music – power to heal and transform – which is exactly what Shorter has done through his art for his entire career.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke
An example of bona fide musical time travel, Brazilian native Ricardo Grilli has released a truly haunting and meaning-laden set of tracks that lead us into another period in both musical and personal history that has shaped who the guitarist is now. The follow-up to a similarly themed album, 1954, this record is a reflection of Grilli’s thoughts on a meaningful era which he expresses through “[focusing] on the idea of evolution and change that characterized the 1960s” and embedding it into his music. Helping to realize his musical vision, the guitarist called together a quintet of famed musicians like saxophone great Mark Turner, pianist Kevin Hays and bassist Joe Martin.

Taking cues from the title, 1954–1962 is an ethereal and meandering piece that connects the previous record to this one, a true bridge through time with Grilli leading us on a spacious journey with his melancholic guitar melody. In Coyote, a simmering and sultry samba-flavoured song, we hear the Brazilian hark back to the history and culture of his homeland, a possible reflection of the tumultuous state his country was in at the time and a longing for something familiar. Voyager, a fittingly titled piece to close out the album, carries a note of hope and exploration within, the rollicking piano tune and driving drum groove letting us know that although our musical journey has come to a close, the future is always a continuous voyage.

Kati Kiilaspea

West Meets East
Adam Shulman Septet
Cellar Music CM110219
(cellarlive.com/collections/all)

San Francisco-based star pianist, bandleader and composer Adam Shulman has let his passion for the golden era of jazz shine with this latest release featuring a stellar gathering of musicians who really bring a unique light to each piece. With key talents such as David Wong on upright bass, Rodney Green on drums and Joe Magnarelli on trumpet, the tracks take on a life of their own, as everyone’s contribution brings out a different facet and aspect within the sonorous melodies. The album does a great job of showcasing Shulman’s talent as both a pianist and composer. Seven out of eight pieces are penned by him and bring forth a tremendous horn section balanced out by driving bass lines and sultry melodies from the keys.

The record starts off with a toe-tapping tune titled Nickel and Dime and is a little wink at a “borrowed chord structure from Tin Pan Alley’s Pennies from Heaven.” It’s a traditional swing piece that has an addictive groove to it carried forward by Green’s constant shuffle, Wong’s moving bass pizzicato topped off by Magnarelli’s soaring and bright trumpet melody. Lean and Mean is a unique composition with the main tune following a stepped pattern that meanders along the scale and truly shines a spotlight on the gifted horn section in the septet. Traditional jazz flavour with a renewed breath and twist to it makes this album a new staple for any jazz enthusiast.

Kati Kiilaspea

Into the Shadows
John Fedchock NY Sextet
Summit Records DCD 785
(summitrecords.com)

New York City-based John Fedchock has long been an internationally regarded trombonist, with an extensive list of credentials. On his tenth recording as a leader, Fedchock also serves as producer/composer/arranger in order to create a magnificent celebration of the jazz sextet. Perhaps better known as the leader of his multiple Grammy-nominated New York Big Band, Fedchock has chosen here to highlight the opportunities for musical and unique creative writing options while maintaining a sleek and mobile blend. Fedchock first debuted his sextet 20 years ago, and the gifted members include first-call jazz artists Scott Wendholt on trumpet and flugelhorn; Walt Weiskopf on tenor saxophone; Allen Farmah on piano; David Finck on bass; and Eric Halvorson on drums.

Of the eight compositions here, five are written by Fedchock and three are well-known standards that are rife with harmonic/dissident arranging choices – maintaining a healthy balance between pure swinging and improvisational exploration. Up first is the high-octane RSVP, a rhythmic, Latin-infused leader-penned piece, cleverly utilizing the changes from the standard Invitation and featuring masterful soloing from all, most especially tenorist Weiskopf who burns like a bonfire throughout. Alpha Dog’s Art Blakey-ish shuffle (kudos to Halvorson) is a total delight, replete with masterful solos from Fedchock, Wendholt and Farmah.

The languid title track plumbs the depth and solitude of the creative process itself, while the sextet displays some of the most symbiotic playing on the project, parented-sized by Fedchock’s sonorous trombone. Finck’s considerable skill with Latin modalities is clearly ascertainable on the compelling arrangement of Star Eyes (Raye/DePaul) and the up-tempo closer, On the Edge, embraces everything that the art form of jazz is about and also transports this sacred musical expression boldly into the future.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

2 Part Solution
Frank Basile/Sam Dillon Quintet
Cellar Music CM110519
(cellarlive.com/collections/all)

In the art world, to make something distinctive one doesn’t necessarily have to aim for unprece- dented or boundary-pushing new forms; Frank Basile and Sam Dillon have proven that relying on the tried and true can be equally effective. On their latest release, Two Part Solution, this approach takes the form of straight-ahead standard jazz arrangements. Musically speaking, the main selling point here is the tenor/baritone sax interplay that anchors each track. Basile’s rich baritone soars over the lavish mix, commanding the ensemble with impeccable phrasing and making the quintet sound almost as full as a big band. Dillon’s sheer virtuosity on tenor provides a perfect musical foil.

The original compositions that Dillon and Basile have provided are highlights of the collection, easily measuring up to the well-chosen standards of the set. In particular, Dillon’s Monk-esque title track is a thing of beauty, featuring some of the most elegant and intricate harmony on the album. It is thanks to the unusual bottom-heavy tonality courtesy of the dynamic band-leading duo, the production efforts of Cory Weeds and the powerful contributions of drummer Aaron Kimmel that the quintet achieves such a gratifyingly dense sound.

While far from the most left-field jazz recording this year, Two Part Solution breathes refreshing new life into a sound that has too often been presumed dead.

Yoshi Wall
Inland Empire
Inland Empire
Clean Feed CF 548 CD (cleanfeed-records.com)

Cementing a Northern alliance, Canadian pianist Kris Davis joins Swedish tenor saxophonist/clarinetist Fredrik Ljungkvist and Norwegians, bassist Ole Morten Vågan and drummer Øyvind Skarbø for six originals that slyly build on each player’s skills.

A mercurial stylist who often unexpectedly changes course in the middle of a tune, Davis’ Surf Curl vibrates with intermittent keyboard fluctuations. These quicken alongside reed peeps and tambourine-like smacks to invest the performance with nervous energy. Contrast this with her Arcadian patterning, evolving in tandem with Ljungkvist’s rustic clarinet squeezy on his jag Viet Inte. It’s a tune that’s so understated that Skarbø’s beat is the result of pulsed brush work. He makes up for that on his own Fighter which carves out space for a pugnacious drum break that’s all splatters and ruffs within a composition that’s as slyly and mysterious as a cop show soundtrack. Vågan’s string thumps here and his distinctive woody reprise on his tunes Truffle Pigs and Katmandu Stray Dogs are the bassist’s only features. But his cohesive pulse is a constant. Like Davis’ crimped asides or Ljungkvist’s theme variations cycling through multiple pitches and volumes, technical interludes usually evolve in duo situations or only briefly as singular showpieces. Group sensibility and keeping cohesion paramount throughout appear to be the CD’s aim. It fits with the common view of the musicians’ respective countries as reflections of non-aggressive competence. Clichés aside, musically this is one Inland Empire worth a visit.

Ken Waxman

Rome-ing
Leimgruber; Willers; Curran; Spera
Leo Records CD LR 872 (leorecords.com)

Not a formal suite, but anything but formless jamming, the four interlocking improvisations that make up Rome-ing confirm creative unity among sophisticated musicians. Doyen of the quartet is American composer Alvin Curran, long a Rome resident, on piano and sampler. His associates are Swiss soprano/tenor saxophonist Urs Leimgruber, German guitarist Andreas Willers and Italian drummer Fabrizio Spera.

Laud da Gama

Although pioneered in the 1960s by Curran in MEV (Musica Elettronica Viva), his samples and Willers’ electronics are used sparingly. There are vague suggestions of a muezzin’s adhan sharing space with accelerating reed whistles and oud-like strums on Part III, while a sampled lyric soprano voice warbles intermittently throughout the disc often ornamenting the narrative when pressurized licks from anyone become too harsh.

Other than that, the creation unfolds logically with trilling reed split tones and tremolo keyboard runs defining the exposition, backed by twangs, buzzes and shakes from the guitarist and drummer. The nearly hour-long improvisation slows and calms at the end following a final bluesy detour from a horizontal saxophone line. Earlier sonic deviations and dissections make room for logical asides such as repeated tremolo patterns and swift glissandi from Curran; Leimgruber’s passages circular breathed to display strident whistles or Bronx cheer-like tongue stops; Willers’ strums and flanges; and Spera’s unforced clanks and clip clops. Narrowed when needed or expansive elsewhere, the ongoing suite sequences expose just enough unexpected motifs and timbral insertions to make the program consistently fascinating.

Ken Waxman

POT POURRI

Safar-E-Daroon
Gordon Grdina’s The Marrow
Songlines SGL2410-2 (songlines.com/release/safar-e-daroon)

Gordon Grdina draws on two distinct musical cultures, contemporary jazz and traditional Middle Eastern music; chooses musical partners from two different cities, Vancouver and New York; and realizes his musical visions on two distinct instruments, the electric guitar and the oud, a short-necked, fretless Middle Eastern lute. Among Grdina’s various ensembles, The Marrow is the one most strongly marked by Arabic and Persian sources; the musicians are Vancouverites (violinist Josh Zubot and percussionist Hamin Honari) and New Yorkers (bassist Mark Helias and cellist Hank Roberts); further, Grdina plays only oud in this band, making it a group of fretless strings and percussion with strong ties to the tonal inflections and compound rhythms of music that have stretched from the Eastern Mediterranean to India and Spain.

Safar-e-Daroon (inner journey) isn’t pure Eastern music (the journey East likely led for some by John Coltrane), and Western harmonic manaces supplement the focused modal intensity, but there’s a consistent emotional and spiritual dimension. Mini-con, a brooding Grdina theme launched by Helias, has a soaring improvisation by Zubot, while Roberts, one of jazz cello’s finest representatives, articulates the keening wail at the heart of Shamsir. Illumination is marked by the dense and subtle counterpoint of picked bowed and plucked strings.

The concluding Gabriel James, named for Grdina’s son and inspired by a moment when the two played together, has the composer strumming a harmonic pattern under the sustained strings’ melodies. It suggests the wide-open spaces of the North American West.

Stuart Brooner

Perhaps the Gods of Love
Beth Anne Cole
Independent BAC103 (bethannecole.com)

Aristotle, Horace and Longinus, all writing with passion on the art of poetry – and speaking in a forthright manner of art in the mimesis (adopting Plato’s word for the imitation) of life – have stressed, in no uncertain terms, that the rhythm of music and dance elevates the drama of art. It would seem that Beth Anne Cole declares her unstinting allegiance to those classic dictates and she appears do so with elemental facility. This is why we easily fall prey to her beguiling music.

Throughout her breathtaking recording, Perhaps the Gods of Love, Cole infuses the convention of song with an emotional intensity that can only be described as the poetry of feeling. This too seems instinctual, for she weaves recitation and singing together with one melodic invention inexorably following the other seamlessly; the instrumentation ornamenting the lyric and vice versa.

Cole’s rendering of this music is striking; with perfect diction, intonation and expression – all this whilst singing Sailor (in English), La Fille de l’île (in French) and Arnol Iz Geven a Mayse (in Yiddish). In original work too, such as My Story of Ruth, Cole displays an inventiveness that comes from an uncommon understanding of character and emotion born of accuracy and sensitivity, all of which is framed in a judicious mix of traditional and modern expression. Throughout this recording, Cole’s instrument-playing cohort is fully attuned to her vision and artistry.

Raul da Gama

October 2020 | 65
Honeywood
Emilyn Stam and John David Williams
Independent (emilynandjohn.com)

► This toe-tapping, instrumental/folk 15-track release showcases the superb Ontario-based duo Emilyn Stam (five-string fiddle, piano accordion) and her husband John David Williams (clarinet, diatonic accordion) in both their original and their arranged traditional “ballfolk” style tunes, a Western European Dutch, German and French style of folk dances such as waltzes, schottisches, rondanes and mazurkas.

Great entertaining diverse musical feels throughout. Their tune J & C Mazurka opens with a reflective lead clarinet against fiddle plucks leading to a tight quiet duet. Their cover of the traditional Brittany tune Larides features upbeat conversational fiddle/clarinet interludes, and clarinet octave shifts. Williams plays diatonic accordion with Stam’s fiddle in the lyrical, sensitive, tightly phrased cover of the traditional Dutch Marche de Roux/La Baignoise (Marche/Waltz).

Five special guests add new colour to select tracks including upright bassist Alan Mackie’s deep low pitches in After the Snow/Autumn in the Valley (Schottische); and Nathan Smith’s great fiddling as Stam picks up the piano accordion to play backdrop grooves and doubling driving clarinet lines in Red Bay/The Stone Whale/Stukjes (Jig Chapelloise).

Stam and Williams play with joy, technique and superb musicianship. Honeywood is the Ontario town where Stam and Williams were married in 2017, and also where their first two Big Branch Festivals for balko were held. No festival this year due to the pandemic, but there is so much great music here to keep you dancing at home, and hopefully out and about soon!

Tiina Kiik

Something in the Air
Sophisticated Solo Reed Sessions
Score with Surprises
KEN WAXMAN

Once a rite of passage, solo outings for reed players have now become almost as commonplace in improvised music as jazz piano trio discs. At the same time, figuratively performing musically naked like that involves more than desire and technical skill. Cerebral planning as well as deciding which horn(s) to use, plus the suitability of the location’s acoustics are necessary as well. These new discs demonstrate how international reed players deal with the challenges.

Performing on Geminga (Creative Sources CS 637 CD creativesourcesrec.com), German Julius Gabriel uses the spatial dimensions of an ancient chapel in Montemor-o-Novo, Portugal to expand his improvisation on soprano, tenor and baritone saxophones. That means that sometimes not only is he creating a thematic line and a vibrated secondary commentary but echoes from the chapel add a third aural element. Hear this at work on the extended Asteroids, as lively tones spill from his tenor saxophone augmented by a lower-pitch continuum and, following an upwards pitch shift, are joined by moderated trills that seem to vibrate from a second distant tenor saxophone. During ten tracks, Gabriel works his way to a lower-pitch continuum and, following an upwards pitch shift, are dissected into terse peeps and screech passages at the edge of hearing using only stiff percussive breath. Subsequently, on Exquisite Corpus Callusum, he unearth slurry and slippery theme variations of temporal and timbral activity with a series of tongue stops, sliding from low pitches to elevated trills without upsetting andante motion. Charuest also uses barely there reed bites and tongue stabs to vibrate a secondary theme that is both spiky and stimulating. All together his tracks are terse, tart and throbbing and also expand the properties of the saxophone’s metal body, as exhalation digs textures from the body tube that owe nothing to reed or mouthpiece. He can also approximate mellow with connective slurs as on Rohrwurm. But his usual strategies involve moving timbres from shrill to shriller. Although these continuous eviscerated honks and piercing squeaks make the architecture of a tune like Interstittial Defect seem like a merry-go-round of musical motifs endlessly rotating, circular breathing leads to tone extensions not limitations. By the concluding Anaëmphile, as tongue slaps and whistles presage varied textures, he’s made a convincing case for the validity of brief, strident, metal-accented pitches as the basis for profoundly distinctive improvisations.

Dividing her sonic explorations in two, French soprano saxophonist Alexandra Grimal has put out the monkey in the abstract garden (Ovni OVB 0003 alexandraigrimal.com), a two-CD set of which only Disc 1 is of concern. The second features her abstract vocalizing further altered and processed by Benjamin Levy’s electronics. However, it’s her nine solo soprano saxophone variations on Ma that are fascinating. Dedicated to the intervals between and among notes, she projects a moderated tone, uses more pauses and stops than any of the other soloists here, in improvisations that are calm and dulcet without being cloying. With the tracks fluid, the sole dissonant texture occurs at the beginning of Ma 5.
Old Wine, New Bottles
Fine Old Recordings Re-Released

BRUCE SURTEES

British pianist Solomon Cutner, who had a natural talent for the piano, was born in London on August 9, 1902. He was the seventh child of musical parents of German-Jewish and Polish-Jewish extraction and began to play the family piano aged five. He made his debut, of sorts, aged seven, in his father’s tailor shop playing his own arrangement of Tchaikovsky’s 1812 Overture. He became a pupil of Mathilde Verne, herself a former pupil of no less than Clara Schumann. He learned well. As did she. She tied him to a five-year contract with her company and toured him as “Solomon, the Child Prodigy.” Solomon made his real debut in Queen’s Hall in 1911. In 1914, the 12-year-old played Beethoven’s Second Piano Concerto at the Proms. Proms founder, Sir Henry Wood insisted that he continue his studies and he made it to Paris where he studied with Marcel Dupré and others. He appeared in the United States in 1926 and again in 1939. During WWII and after, he played for the Allied troops around the world including Australia and New Zealand.

Solomon was a mighty talent whose brilliant recordings produced by English Columbia and His Master’s Voice. EMI were treasured by discerning music lovers everywhere who appreciated his artistry and technique. He first recorded in 1929. He was in the midst of recording the complete cycle of Beethoven sonatas for EMI Records when he suffered a devastating stroke in 1956, which paralyzed his right arm. He never recorded or performed in public again, but lived on for another 32 years, dying in 1988 in London.

The recordings that Profil selected for the collection Solomon – Concertos, Sonatas and Pieces (Profil PH20032 naxosdirect.com/search/881488200324) cover repertoire from J.S. Bach to Sir Arthur Bliss and include concertos, duos and solo works all in the best HMV/Columbia sound. There is not a single performance that is anything less than individual and many that surprise. On CD8 is the most welcome first recording of the unique and devilishly difficult 1938 piano concerto by Bliss, conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. The Bliss concerto was written specifically for the New York World’s Fair in 1939 and the familiar gestures of the grand Romantic manner were calculated to please audiences of the day. Listening to Solomon play the poetic Grieg concerto that follows, conducted by Herbert Menges, the listener can only but marvel at how, in the first movement, the keys could be depressed so gently and still be making the notes. That disc concludes with two pieces by Brahms, the Intermezzo in B-flat Minor, Op.17 No.2 and the Rhapsody in G Minor, Op.79 No.2 in definitive performances. As may be expected by now, this listener is attuned to expect Solomon’s articulation and clarity, and so, Schumann’s Carnaval is unusually fresh. On CD5, The Beethoven “Archduke” Trio with Henry Holst (violin) and Anthony Pini (cello) follows the Brahms Piano Sonata No.3 Op.5. CD6 contains three of Beethoven’s most loved piano sonatas, Pathétique, Moonlight and Appassionata. To put the icing on the cake, cellist Gregor Piattiigorsky joins Solomon for the Cello Sonata No.5, Op.102 No.2.

What a shock on CD7 when the stentorian Liszt’s Hungarian Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra conducted by Walter Susskind laughs out following Scriabin’s Concerto in F-sharp Minor and Tchaikovsky’s First, both conducted by Issay Dobrowen.

On these ten discs, there are concertos by Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Scriabin and Bliss of course, in addition to a multitude of piano works by Bach, Mozart, Haydn,
Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms and Chopin. The sound throughout this valuable collection is utterly true, particularly the piano solos, a tribute to EMI’s people and whoever did the transfers to disc for Profil.

This year the German label Orfeo is celebrating its 40th anniversary of issuing significant recordings of live performances given by various artists that were not made available elsewhere. Devout collectors who look beyond the well-known labels may well own, or know of, some of the treasures in the Orfeo catalogue. Orfeo has chosen a collection featuring 20 Soloists and Conductors and 20 Legendary Voices and issued them all on two CDs as Orfeo 40th Anniversary Edition – 40 Ultimate Recordings (Orfeo ORF-C200032 naxosdirect.com/search/401790200323). The solists and conductors disc running just seconds short of 80 minutes contains Wolfgang Sawallisch in the overture to The Magic Flute, Otto Klemperer in Bach’s Overture No.3 in D Major; Carlos Kleiber in the Adagio from Beethoven’s Fourth Symphony; Wilhelm Furtwängler in the finale of the Haydn Symphony No.88; Rafael Kubelik conducts Rudolf Serkin in the Adagio from Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No.2; etc. etc. The generous program continues with performances featuring Gerhard Oppitz, Andris Nelsons; Oleg Maisenberg, Neeme Järvi; Vaclav Neumann and the music goes on... Sir Thomas Beecham would have called this pleasing program not “lollipops” but “bonbons.”

The accompanying 20 Legendary Voices belong to 20 males and females singing mostly arias from operas by Rossini, Spohr, Gluck, Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, Cilea, Bizet, Richard Strauss, Gounod, etc. etc. The generous program continues with performances featuring Gerhard Oppitz, Andris Nelsons; Oleg Maisenberg, Neeme Järvi; Vaclav Neumann and the music goes on... Sir Thomas Beecham would have called this pleasing program not “lollipops” but “bonbons.”


These live recordings of the SWS Symphony, the Vienna Philharmonic and the Vienna Symphony Orchestras are full bodied and richly detailed and if there were such an absolute, the performances may be considered definitive.

OTHER FINE VINTAGES

Edward Cowie – Concerto for Orchestra; Clarinet Concert No.2
Alan Hacker; Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra; Howard Williams
Metier msv 92108 (naxosdirect.com/search/809730210822)

► Hearing Edward Cowie’s Clarinet Concerto is like opening the door into a room where a glorious family tragedy is unfolding; one can observe the mayhem without interrupting it. Three abrupt fortissimo pitches in the low brass and timpani, from lower to higher, initiate the action with an interrogative accusation presupposing the worst possible answer. And the arguments develop.

Clarinetist Alan Hacker, with his excellent technique, portrays an articulate yet seemingly incoherent character. At the midpoint, the centre of this labyrinth, one encounters the motivation behind the arduous musical journey of the past century: nostalgia for tonality, and a sinking suspicion that we can’t get it back. Carl Nielsen described, in the low brass and timpani, from lower to higher, initiate the action with an interrogative accusation presupposing the worst possible answer. And the arguments develop.

The second piece on the disc is the Concerto for Orchestra. As in the introduction of the other work, Cowie favours jangle and jolt, though here with somewhat less of the latter. Following the introductory passage is an extremely virtuosic section for all the woodwinds, then the brass interrupt to announce a matching answer from the strings. Cowie’s strokes are clear and precise, his expression of sound via the orchestra, confident. He reminds me of Alfred Schnittke in his exploitation of quasi-tuned percussion instruments to undermine the security of pitch to which we are so accustomed.

The material lasts just under 45 minutes in total. The recording was made in 1983-84, by the excellent Royal Liverpool Philharmonic under Howard Williams and was originally issued on LP by Hyperion.

Max Christie

49th Parallel
Neil Swainson Quintet
Reel to Real RTRCD004 (cellarlive.com/collections/all)

► Bassist Neil Swainson has been a significant figure in Toronto jazz for over 40 years. During that time, he has released one recording under his own name, 49th Parallel, in 1988. The style is mid-60s Blue Note post-bop, announced immediately in a frontline made up of two of the style’s stars, tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson and trumpeter Woody Shaw, musicians with few peers even in New York. Swainson had toured with Shaw and appeared on two of his recordings, a source for the empathy evident here. Two Toronto musicians deserving of much wider recognition, pianist Gary Williamson and drummer Jerry Fuller, make up the rest of the band.

Swainson crafted most of the compositions, solid idiomatic material that catches fire in the hands of this short-lived band. The session gives the Canadian contingent rare opportunities to shine at the highest levels. Swainson, as leader, gets to solo out of customary order, sometimes coming to the fore as first or second soloist, highlighting his inventive, articulate playing rather than leaving it a closing afterthought. Williamson was a fine soloist, and he also had a gift for multi-dimensional support. Port of Spain, a lyrical feature for Shaw, finds Williamson still adding energetic, expansive detail to the trumpeter’s final theme statement. Fuller gives and takes inspiration with Henderson, fuelling the saxophonist’s kinetic, bouncing lines on Southern Exposure.

This is a distinguished session, one that definitely merits its reissue on both CD and LP.

Stuart Broomer
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I’ve written before about how difficult I’ve been finding it to listen to much music these anechoic coronavirus days. My recordings aren’t doing it for me; the livestream efforts I check out, however admirable, leave me cold; I sadly and inexplicably want to punch all the cheerful radio hosts I hear right in the nose. (sorry Tom, Julie, Paulo, Mark, Alexa, Kathleen, Mike and Jean and whoever else I’ve offended)

So I’m not listening much these days, but, lo and behold, much to my surprise I find that I’m playing more – a lot more, actually. I’m a pianist – well, OK, I play the piano, to be more accurate; there’s a difference, and I’m on the spectator side of the difference. I’m strictly an amateur player. I got my Grade 10 from the Royal Conservatory in my teens, and studied piano for my three years in the Music Department at the University of Ottawa, but never had the discipline, or nerves, or the temperament to be a professional player. Nonetheless, I make some music virtually every day one way or another and am still playing the Gerhard upright my parents bought me when I was nine. It’s been a daily part of my life for over 60 years now – the same instrument – maybe my closest companion. I can tell you where every scrape, scratch, discolouration from partying drinks inadvertently left on its surface, gouges and broken pedals came from (the move up and down the three flights of stairs in the house in which we had an apartment in Peterborough, with just my wife and I doing the hauling, was especially memorable). Next to my wife, daughter and dogs, my piano is the closest thing to me that I know. I really don’t know how I could live without it.

As I say, I probably have spent some time at that Gerhard virtually every day since I was a kid. However, in these silent pandemic days, when other music-making has been stilled, my playing for myself has taken on a new vitality. I’m not just noodling through and sight-reading the various pieces of music that have accumulated over the years in my personal playing library, I’m actually sitting down diligently and trying to learn them thoroughly and completely and play them with something approaching a real artistic polish. Or the best I can muster. Maybe for the first time in my life, I’m really seriously practising.

The range of pieces I play is hilarious to me, sort of an archeological dig through my musical life story. There’s the Grieg concerto, that an optimistic teacher had me try and learn when I was 13. There’s the Scriabín Etude Op.2. No.1, which I photocopied from the U of T library and pasted onto one of my Dad’s shirt cardboards after hearing it played as an encore on Horowitz’s Return to Carnegie Hall disc in 1965. A piano solo arrangement of Rhapsody in Blue that still has my name and old phone number written neatly in a childish hand on the inside front cover. These days I’m focusing on an eclectic range of repertoire: the Bach prelude and fugue from Book 1 of the WTC – No.5 in D Major, that I studied in university; the Gershwin piano concerto; Schubert’s E-flat Major impromptu; Schumann’s Des Abends and his astonishing Op.28 F-sharp Major Romance; the first Brahms concerto; Schoenberg’s Five Piano Pieces Op.19. And so on.

And, as I play, new insights about music and performance have been flooding over me. Especially when I compare my renewed efforts to the professionals beckoning to me from YouTube. I know you’re not supposed to do that, but how can you avoid it? But, as I do, I am struck, not quite for the first time, but close, by how important the physicality of music-making is. Not the phrasing, or tone, but the sheer physical presence of a performance. The way your fingers or hands actually touch the keys and connect to the sound they coax out of the instrument. Hardly a gloriously original revelation, but important for me. And telling.

For instance, I’ve been playing, or trying to play, that D-Major prelude from Book 1 of the WTC for many years, decades actually – and I’ve always been alternately fascinated and alienated by Glenn Gould’s performance of it, at a ridiculously quick tempo.

This summer, I decided to try to practise enough to finally match his speed – I’m still not quite there, the piece demands a strength in the fourth and fifth fingers of the right hand which I don’t yet have (and may never develop), but I’m getting close, much to my delight and surprise. However, what I’ve discovered, equally to my surprise, is that I find absolutely no satisfaction playing the piece at that tempo, even when I can. This I find fascinating, because I love listening to Gould play it at that tempo. I have come to realize that my interpretations of pieces of music are very much tied to my
We have robbed music of much of its power by failing to sufficiently understand or honour this brute, bodily, sensual physicality of the music-making experience.

And not only do I find a new appreciation of Abbate’s polemics (as I sit at my keyboard trying to get the damn contrary-motion section at the end of my Bach prelude to work properly, realizing that part of the beauty of the music lies in the sheer physical sensations allied with playing it), I’m beginning to wonder if she hasn’t put her finger on exactly what we have been missing in the life of live music-making these days. It’s not the community aspect; it’s not the exuberant enjoyment of the sonic pleasures of a live hall, impossible to duplicate no matter how excellent a recording. It’s that physicality of exuberant enjoyment of the sonic pleasures of a live hall, impossible to cease to be, so that only the pure mind and spirit can find realization in the music. I’m now beginning to wonder if that is true, or even should be an ideal.

I ask this question because I’ve been re-reading a famous article from about 15 years ago by musicologist Carolyn Abbate called “Music – Drastic or Gnostic” based on her studies of French philosopher Vladimir Jankelevitch’s theories of music. Jankelevitch and Abbate are convinced that we in the West have seriously underestimated the value of the physical and the immediate in music-making (the “drastic” or event-based) and consequently overvalued the intellectual (the “Gnostic” or knowledge-based). To them, music-making is only and can only be an immediate, this-moment, intensely physical experience, even when we appreciate it only as listeners. They are convinced we have robbed music of much of its power by failing to sufficiently understand or honour this brute, bodily, sensual physicality of the music-making experience.

That’s why our musical sensibility seems so starved today; we’re missing the touch of music (the “grain” Roland Barthes once famously called it), which we need as much as, if not even more than, the sound. If Abatte is right – and as I sit on my piano bench with my Bach prelude beckoning me, tantalizing me from the music stand, I think she might be – we may have learned something very important in these sequestered days, something we should remember when the air has cleared and we can breathe freely again.

If we can recall, when this is over, exactly what we were missing when we lost our music, we will find ourselves in touch with it all the more vividly when it is returned to us.

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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