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Russell Braun, Bass-Baritone
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Nov 2, 2022
8:00pm
Roy Thomson Hall
Here in Toronto to close the three-day inaugural FutureStops organ festival at Cathedral Church of St. James with Schlingen-Blängen, an “ever-evolving work/action” that he has been performing for almost 40 years, Charlemagne Palestine is an American visual artist and musician, now living in Brussels. One of the founders of the New York school of minimalist music (along with the likes of Terry Riley, Philip Glass, and Steve Reich), these days he prefers the label “maximalist”: “More is more” rather than “less is more”. Palestine stopped performing from the early 80s till the mid-90s, devoting himself entirely to creating “plush animal divinity altars as multi-media sculptures and installations.” Since his return, they have become an integral ingredient of what he describes as “Gesamtkunstwerk” – combining installations and performances.

PHOTO: UDO SIEGFRIEDT
STORIES & INTERVIEWS

23 AROUND OPERA | Ballycroy and beyond | LYDIA PEROVIĆ
26 A WORLD VIEW | Bridging the space between us - Nuit Blanche 2022 | ANDREW TIMAR
28 EARLY MUSIC | And now, back to live action | MJ BUELL
30 MAINLY CLUBS | Hugh’s and Poetry on the move | COLIN STORY

LISTINGS

31 The Blue Pages, 23rd annual directory of music makers
34 Events by date
Live and/or Live Streamed
44 CLUBS

DISCOVERIES: RECORDINGS REVIEWED

47 Editor’s Corner | DAVID OLDS
49 Strings Attached | TERRY ROBBINS
51 Vocal
53 Classical and Beyond
56 Modern and Contemporary
61 Jazz and Improvised Music
66 Pot Pourri
67 Something in the Air | KEN WAXMAN
69 New to the Listening Room, INDEX

NEW RELEASES

BACH CONCERTOS
L’Harmonie des saisons
Eric Milnes
The JUNO Award-winning ensemble returns with a brand new recording devoted to some of the best known concertos by J. S. Bach.
with soloists
Julia Wedman and Jessy Dubé
Matthew Jennejohn
oboe d’amore and oboe

MAESTRINO MOZART
Marie-Ève Munger
Les Boréade de Montréal
Soprano Marie-Ève Munger presents a program devoted exclusively to operatic repertoire by the young Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who composed these rarely heard arias between the ages of 10 and 16.

INDEX
By the Dawn's Early Light

David Perlman

Everything I know, for better and for worse, about making a magazine comes from watching my father pack the trunk ("the boot" we called it) of whatever second-hand family second car we were entrusting our lives to on that particular vacation ("holiday" we'd have called it).

"This time we are leaving crack of dawn" dad would say. So there I was, standing shivering in the dawn's early light, marvelling at dad's packing prowess – as wave after wave of impossibly large quantities of stuff kept arriving beside the car, somehow finding their way into every nook and cranny of the trunk.

Only an hour later than planned, victory! Dad slams the boot lid down. Well, nothing so satisfying as a slam, actually. More like a muffled "humph" as he stands on tiptoe and bears down till the latch clicks. And turns in triumph, only to see my mother coming out of the front door, dwarfed by the largest suitcase yet.

It's called explosive silence. With a little staring contest thrown in. "Well you didn't think I was going to leave my own suitcase behind, did you?" I can still hear Mom say, witheringly quiet, across the many years. I don't remember what ended up having to be left behind, except the things I thought I'd need, but which in the end didn't make the cut.

So as this first full post-pandemic season, fuelled by gallons of hope and a dash of denial, roars back to life, and you browse your way through this overstuffed first issue of our 28th season, spare a thought for all the packing and repacking that went into accommodating that last big story that got wheeled out to be added after we thought we were done. (I won't tell you which one it was.)

Saying I came to Canada with only a backpack is not strictly true, though. I walked into the U. of T. International Student Centre (on St. George St.), some afternoon in late August 1975, dragging my backpack with the broken strap behind me. "Hello, name please?" asked the friendly person at the desk. "Perlman" I said, and started to spell it "P-E-", but before I even got to R she turned around and shouted to whomever was on the other side of the partition behind the welcome desk, "PERLMAN'S HERE." And a loud "P-E-", which set off a chorus of "woo-hoos" came back in response. And all of a sudden I remembered the 30 something year old I had to sign when I first came to Canada years ago.

"This time we are leaving crack of dawn." I don't know why, but I used to quote my father to me. It's called explosive silence.

packing to come to Canada in 1975, some 18 years later, was a different story. "Just me and a backpack and a two month bus pass," is how I used to boast about it to my own children, until they started rolling their eyes. A full backpack it was, I should add: shoes for every occasion, passport with student visa, complete works of William Shakespeare – three favourite ties. Even a toothbrush. A masterfully stuffed backpack, every nook and cranny of it.

So as this first full post-pandemic season, fuelled by gallons of hope and a dash of denial, roars back to life, and you browse your way through this overstuffed first issue of our 28th season, spare a thought for all the packing and repacking that went into accommodating that last big story that got wheeled out to be added after we thought we were done. (I won't tell you which one it was.)

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The books we cannot bear to part with reveal us! Even now, 48 years later, if I spot one of them among the many hundreds more on my shelves, and touch it, take it down, turn to a page at random, it is like opening a time capsule.

I dip into the 27-year archive of The WholeNote in a similar way. (All our issues are available on line at kiosk.thewholenote.com.) I skim for the stories I am afraid of forgetting, then find myself lingering in the listings, marvelling: for the legendary artists I have been privileged to hear; for the ones I heard before they became legends; for the music I already liked, for music I never knew I would come to like; concerts I went to for some exalted piece of music I craved like comfort food, and instead came away gobsmacked by the joy of encountering something rich and strange that I would never have found on my own.

May the joy continue.
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2022–23 SEASON

STRINGS

October 13  Pacifica Quartet
November 17 Lafayette Quartet
December 1  St. Lawrence Quartet with Odin Quartet
February 2  Borealis Quartet
March 30  Gryphon Trio

PIANO

October 25  Michelle Cann
February 28  Janina Fialkowska

TICKETS: 416.366.7723, option 2  www.music-toronto.com

at the Jane Mallett Theatre
St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts
27 Front Street East, Toronto
FutureStops Festival is by no means Toronto’s first organ festival, but it is the first to expand the envelope to the contemporary potential of “the king of instruments”, highlighting the versatility of the centuries-old instrument and renewing interest in its capabilities.

“It’s about trying to create a program that will bridge the many different silos of activity that are going on around the organ that have so much in common,” said organist Blake Hargreaves, the festival’s curator.

The inaugural FutureStops Festival will be held September 29 to October 1, presenting a series of concerts and free talks across Downtown Toronto. It’s a global hub for 21st-century pipe organ music, convening artists from many different countries in three venues with three of the city’s most distinctive organs – Roy Thomson Hall, Cathedral Church of St. James and Metropolitan United Church. Roy Thomson Hall is an architectural gem whose pipe organ, the Gabriel Kney Pipe Organ, turns 40 this year and is one of the largest mechanical-action instruments in Canada. Metropolitan United Church’s organ, the largest pipe organ in Canada, was built by Casavant Frères of Quebec in 1930 and, according to the MUC website “has a tonal palette that places it among the finest recital instruments in the country.” And the organ at Cathedral Church of St. James was originally built in 1888 and has 5,101 pipes. Hearing cutting-edge organ players perform on these special instruments will be a treat, but for those who can’t attend in person, the festival will also be broadcast online, extending FutureStops’ community to the virtual world.

Recently, the pipe organ has received new attention across the contemporary music landscape. The instrument, which was one of the most complex creations invented before the Industrial Revolution, has long been lauded for its symphonic capabilities. Currently, one of the oft-explored aspects of the organ is its distorted, resonant sound that’s similar to electronic music, but purely acoustic. For reasons like this, the organ has become a fertile place for experimental music, launching a revival in interest in the sound of the instrument.

What I find exciting about FutureStops is how it highlights the wide range of organ music being made today, uniting some of today’s most adventurous artists: At the festival, Sarah Davachi’s meandering drones, Amina Claudine Myers’ jazz improvisations and Sandra Boss’ homebuilt instruments unite, for example. Hargreaves shares this interest in exploring the organ’s potential, and inspiring connections with it.

“There’s so much to discover, and there’s so much character,” Hargreaves said. “It’s not surprising that suddenly people are going, ‘wait a minute, here’s this instrument that can absolutely create sounds that span the complete spectrum of human hearing and go beyond it.’”

Stasis and recharge

Hargreaves himself has had a long relationship with the organ that went through a period of stasis and recharge. During Sunday church services as a child, he improvised on the instrument while the churchgoers took communion. He later left the organ behind for electric guitar, but found it again by chance, and now, it’s the centre of his life. “There’s just something that the organ can do that nothing else can,” he said. “I love music that has a really rich harmonic and melodic language and the organ is a place where one person can explore all of that in real time.”

In 2016 and ’17, Hargreaves and other artists and presenters, inspired by the growing organ revival, came up with the idea to start an organization that would unify the different facets of modern organ playing. The idea became FutureStops, which is a three-pronged organization comprising the festival, a podcast hosted by Hargreaves and an online community of organ enthusiasts.

This year’s FutureStops Festival programming fulfills its promise to be a wide-ranging celebration of the 21st-century organ. The festival opens its weekend with a series of performances by leading organists and composers at the Cathedral Church of St. James, including acclaimed drone artists Kara-Lis Coverdale and Kali Malone. Then, on Saturday, the weekend’s centrepiece will be the Canadian premiere of Dine composer Raven Chacon’s 2022 Pulitzer Prize-winning work, Voiceless Mass, at Roy Thomson Hall. The work meditates on gathering spaces – who has access to them and the land they sit on – exploring how string instruments and pipe organ musically interact within the performance space. The Pulitzer Prize entry questionnaire
Voiceless Mass considers the futility of giving voice to the voiceless, when ceding space is never an option for those in power. The performance of Voiceless Mass will be held on Canada’s second National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, September 30.

After Voiceless Mass, Canadian emerging composers Rashaan Rori Allwood and Sarah Svendsen will perform, and American jazz artist Amina Claudine Myers will give the Canadian premiere of her boundary-pushing Improvisational Suite – uniting an eclectic group of artists in one packed evening. Sunday takes yet another turn, showcasing experimental organ instruments made by Japan’s FUJITTA and Denmark’s Sandra Boss, along with free roundtable talks. The festival then turns to Cathedral Church of St. James, where legendary minimalist-turned-maximalist, Charlemagne Palestine, will perform Schlingen-Blängen, an evolving work he’s played for nearly 40 years, that will put the Cathedral organ’s 5,000-plus pipes to the test.

It’s a unique opportunity: so many different aspects of 21st-century organ music, by artists from across the globe, all in one weekend. That’s the niche that FutureStops fills – it plants the seeds of organ renewal in the fertile soil of a vibrant city, finding unexpected connections between styles. For Hargreaves, much of organ playing – and music – is about discovering new ideas and finding links you may never have guessed existed. “All music has more in common with itself than difference from itself,” he said. “There’s something to experience and enjoy and learn from everything.”

Vanessa Ague is a Brooklyn-based violinist and writer who contributes to publications including The Wire, Pitchfork and Bandcamp Daily.
On Friday, September 9 there was a celebration of a book, and of a musician, and of a whole string of numbers, including 17 and 95. It took place within the cozy confines of the Canadian Music Centre, in the space of one hour give or take a half on either side. The book is the 17th published by John Beckwith, who doggedly refused to allow recognition of his 95th birthday, since it took place exactly one-half year ago, and who quibbled in good humour over the accuracy of the number 17. "I'm not sure they were all books..." and with utmost comic timing, added "I think some of them were pamphlets."

The evening was introduced by Beckwith's friend and vital collaborator, Robin Elliott. The printed program mentioned that opening remarks would be given by Beckwith himself, so one assumed (wrongly as it turned out), that John had asked Robin to take the lead. He sat down and the first of two performances took place. Once the singing stopped, Robin stood to ruefully ask if John would in fact still like to make the remarks he had planned. Which, of course, he then did, coming out with the "pamphlets" zinger along with a few more delightful digs at his own and our expense. "I hope you'll enjoy reading it...and if not I believe there are some pictures..." We were eating out of his hand.

Beckwith is modest and self-deprecatimg, which is no surprise to any who've worked with him. He simply won't give in to age, or inertia, or anything else one might associate with the notion of living well into one's tenth decade. The book's lengthy title is Music Annals: Research and Critical Writings by a Canadian Composer 1973-2014. Call it Volume II. (Elliott noted in his remarks that this book follows an earlier collection, underlining that this was only a selection from among many pieces not yet bound together.) Add to that, since the evening naturally included musical performances, he continues to draw up delightful and otherwise spends too much time on Twitter, @chxamaxhc.

Max Christie is a Toronto-based musician and writer. He performs as principal clarinet of the National Ballet Orchestra when restrictions allow; and otherwise spends too much time on Twitter, @chxamaxhc.

Beckwith. One through Twelve play about in the last three songs, which are drawn from his collection The Book of Numbers; the first text is a poem addressed to M.C. Escher!

During the same period, Beckwith was commissioned by the talented duo of pianist Edana Higham and percussionist Zac Pulak, together known as SHHH!! Ensemble. Meanwhile explores the beauty of folk melody, or perhaps simple devotional song, expressing grief by the end of the work. I thought of an old vine-covered stone structure brought suddenly down by the wrecking ball. Musically modern and deeply expressive, SHHH!!! play it like they own it, which in a sense they do; they clearly love performing it and do so with complete assurance and mastery. The duo will be back to release their first CD on October 29; Meanwhile is the title track. Their star continues to rise with news that their next project has already been green-lit.

But the book? What of the mind that communicates in words as well as in musical sounds? It’s early days and I am a slow reader. Beckwith chose the title carefully in reference to the work of a 19th-century French Canadian cleric named Thomas-Étienne Hamel. Hamel’s contribution to Franco-Canadian folkloric study was a collection of colloquial songs in a notebook titled “Annales Musicales du Petit-Cap.” One section in Beckwith’s collection describes and annotates the work of Hamel, and elsewhere he refers to it while discussing other scholarly study. Beckwith could well lay claim to various titles: academic researcher, music critic, polemicist, and of course composer. Often through the pages of the collection, carefully selected and annotated by Elliott, he sheds personal labels, and reminds the reader or listener (some selections are transcribed talks) that he remains committed to the work of composing and writing, but fundamentally considers the title “musician” to be sufficiently descriptive.

Mr. Beckwith’s curiosity and commitment to study make his book essential reading to any interested, as he so passionately is, in Canadian music making, especially that of the dominant settler cultures. But his wit and scathing humour make it a delight to read, especially in two letters he addressed to The Globe and Mail in the 1970s. The reader should be ready for a hearty chuckle at the expense of music critics overly fond of vapid verbiage. The critics should take note and tighten up their style; and their acuity.
Competition will be accepting applications starting Sept 6, 2022

ONLINE APPLICATIONS:
ap.getacceptd.com/the Isabel

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SECOND PRIZE: The Margaret Foster and Katherine Foster Prize for $6,000 CAD.

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Repertoire Information, Competition Rules and Application Online:
ap.getacceptd.com/theisabel
Online applications only. $50 CAD non-refundable application fee payable online.

WHO CAN ENTER? We invite pianists who are Canadian citizens and permanent residents of Canada and between the ages of eighteen (18) to twenty-nine (29) as of January 1, 2023 and who aspire to a professional concert career.

COMPETITION KEY DATES:
Application Deadline:
December 5, 2022 at 5 PM (EDT)
Semi-Finalist Round in Kingston (6 pianists):
May 10 and 11, 2023 at 1 PM
Finalist Round in Kingston (3 pianists):
May 13, 2023 at 6:30 PM

All concerts are open to the public.

Photo: Cameron Miller

The Isabel's Joan Tobin
Hamburg Steinway Piano

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Pianistic High-Wire Acts and More

PAUL ENNIS

When he was 24, Lucas Debargue finished fourth in the 2015 Tchaikovsky Piano Competition but, more importantly, the Moscow Music Critics Association bestowed their top honours on him as “the pianist whose performance at the Competition has become an event of genuine musical significance, and whose incredible gift, artistic vision and creative freedom have impressed the critics as well as the audience.”

Just before the COVID-19 protocols took effect in March 2020, Debargue made his third Koerner Hall appearance headlined by ten Scarlatti sonatas in support of his SONY recording released in 2019. He returns to Koerner Hall on October 29, just days after his 32nd birthday in an intriguing recital titled “An Evening in Paris.” It features music written by composers who lived in Paris or wrote the music while staying there – pillars of the repertoire by Mozart (Sonata for Piano No.8 in D Minor, K310) and Chopin (Ballade No. 2 in F major, Op. 38; Prelude in C sharp minor, Op. 45; Polonaise-Fantaisie in A flat major, Op. 61; and the rarely performed tour-de-force, Alkan’s Concerto for Solo Piano, Op.39 No. 8, Op.39 No. 8).

Arguably Canada’s greatest living pianist, Marc-André Hamelin – whose own recital on October 16, also at Koerner, features an exploration of works by Fauré – made his early reputation mining the treasure trove of music by 19th-century composer-pianists, including the enigmatic Alkan. When Hamelin recorded the Concerto for Solo Piano for Hyperion, their website called it “one of the great pianistic high-wire acts – an epic work which demands unprecedented levels of technical ability and physical stamina. It is conceived on a breathtakingly grand scale and is rich with both orchestral sonorities and lyrical pianistic passages.”

Debargue has said he likes to place lesser-known music later in a program after the audience has heard more familiar works. He told smART Magazine in January 2022: “I never choose repertoire for the sake of novelty alone. There are plenty – thousands! – of unknown composers. Some of them are really worth playing, but they have to connect with my heart.” It will be interesting to hear how Debargue plays the Mozart sonata – with the spirit of Dinu Lipatti still hovering in the air – and the Alkan concerto – with Hamelin’s long shadow still warm on the Koerner Hall stage.

Piano and Orchestra

The piano is also prominently positioned in three upcoming Toronto Symphony Orchestra programs. On September 21-24, artistic director Gustavo Gimeno conducts the TSO and Bruce Liu in Chopin’s Piano Concerto No.2 barely 11 months after Liu’s final round performance of Concerto No.1 helped make him the first Canadian to win the prestigious International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition. According to TSO sources, in the TSO’s 100-year history, Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No.3 has been performed 116 times, making it the most played (by the TSO) of the composer’s five piano concertos. The remarkable pianist Yefim Bronfman joins with Gimeno and the orchestra for three more performances on October 12, 14 and 15. A few days later, on October 20 and 22, the charismatic Yuja Wang, Gimeno and the orchestra will play the Canadian premiere of Magnus Lindberg’s Piano Concerto No.3.

Orchestral Plethora

Perusing the listings from late September through October, it’s remarkable the number of orchestral events taking place apart from the TSO: Hamilton, Stratford, Niagara and Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestras, from beyond the GTA; the Greater Toronto Philharmonic Orchestra, Kindred Spirits Orchestra, Orchestra Toronto and more from within the GTA. Some repertoire that caught my eye: Aaron Schwebel playing Mendelssohn’s beloved Violin Concerto with Rafael Luz and the North York Concert Orchestra on October 2; Jonathan Crow playing – on October 21 – Brahms’ emotionally rich Violin Concerto with the Etobicoke Philharmonic Orchestra in celebration of that orchestra’s 60th anniversary.

Sinfonia Toronto under Nurhan Arman showcases two works for violin, piano and string orchestra: Alice Ping Yee Ho’s Capriccio Ballo which she describes as “whimsical and capricious” and Christos Hatzis’ Arabesque, a work he calls “mainly autobiographical.”

Christina Petrowska Quilico (piano) and Marc Djokic (violin) are the esteemed soloists on October 22. Dvořák’s joyous Serenade completes the strong program.

Chamber music is also making its presence felt as autumn rolls into the city. The free noon-time mini-concerts at COC’s Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre have returned in full force. Rising cellist Anita Graef opens a series of cello music spanning centuries with works by Joseph Dall’Abaco, Gaspar Cassadó and J.S. Bach, on September 21.

Made up of Rebekah Wolkstein (violin), Drew Jurecka (violin), Shannon Knights (viola) and Amahl Arulanandam (cello), the Venuti String Quartet is a highly versatile group, comfortable performing not only the great classical repertoire, but also jazz, contemporary, and many other musical genres. On September 27, the quartet will perform two new works written by Jurecka: The Spider and Quartet Number One, as well as Mendelssohn’s Op.80 String Quartet in F Minor. There is a wealth of listening pleasure to be had in the months to come.
Chamber and Recital

Women’s Musical Club of Toronto Career Development Award-winner, Michael Bridge, is the first accordionist so honoured. He will open the WMCT’s season on October 6, playing a diverse program – from Bach to Piazzolla – along with the Ladom Ensemble and special guest Joseph Macerollo. Grammy Award-winner, the Pacifica Quartet opens Music Toronto’s season on October 13 with two works inspired by American Folk music as well as Dvořák’s delightful String Quartet No.14 in A-flat Major, Op.105, begun in NYC as the composer was about to return to Prague after three years in America.

Returning to Koerner Hall, on October 2 at 5pm, the Emerson String Quartet’s Farewell Tour comes to Toronto. For 45 years, the Emersons have maintained a standard of excellence that won them nine Grammy Awards and three Gramophone Awards as well as the Avery Fisher Prize and Musical America’s Ensemble of the Year award. Their program – Mendelssohn’s String Quartet No.1 in E-flat Major, Op.12; Brahms’ String Quartet No.3 in B-flat Major, Op.67; Dvořák’s String Quartet No.14 in A-flat Major, Op.105 – is a journey to savour.

Finally, making his Koerner Hall debut on October 22, in only his second Toronto appearance since his 2007-2011 absence from the concert stage, Russian-born, Israeli violinist Maxim Vengerov was atop the musical world before an arm injury led to the concertizing pause. Now at 48 he’s back with a fully packed program: Bach’s Sonata No.1 for Violin and Harpsichord in B Minor, BWV1014; Beethoven’s Violin Sonata No 9 in A Major, Op.47 (“Kreutzer”); Shostakovich’s Suite for Violin and Piano from Jewish Folk Poetry, Op.79 (arr. S. Dreznin); Tchaikovsky’s Souvenir d’un lieu cher, Op.42 and Valse-Scherzo in C Major, Op.34. It’s a welcome return.

Paul Ennis is the managing editor of The WholeNote.
Why do we love Mendelssohn’s Elijah? For many conductors, performers and listeners, it is the perfect oratorio, combining all the dramatic musical elements required to bring this colourful story to life.

A more puzzling question is why do we love this character, Elijah? In the oratorio’s opening scene, the cantankerous prophet bursts into ominous incantation, pre-empting the overture with a curse. He condemns his people to drought and famine to force their allegiance to Jehovah, and then massacres the prophets of Baal at Kishon’s brook to ensure his rival cult will never rise again. But unlike other bad boy baritones (like Scarpia) or terrible tenors (like Pinkerton) or murderous mezzos (like Clytemnestra), we have sympathy for Elijah, thanks to librettist Julius Schubring’s careful management of Biblically inspired text. Elijah’s fiery, public character is balanced with his gentler, private self, with intimate scenes of tender compassion toward a widow and her child, his humble loyalty to his people, and his gratitude. Ultimately, in his own emotional wilderness scene, he confronts his self-doubt and contemplates suicide. He is saved by a group of angels who sing “Lift thine eyes to the mountains.”

Mendelssohn had a deep understanding of the power of oratorio, having revived, rehearsed and conducted J.S. Bach’s Saint Matthew Passion in 1829 as a 20-year-old in Berlin. Many of Elijah’s arias endure as staples of the solo repertoire with their timeless, memorable melodies and effective text setting. “O rest in the Lord” and “For the mountains shall depart” have the unpretentious air of popular song, while “Then shall the righteous shine forth” and “Hear ye, Israel” have the weight of Handelian opera. The supporting solo roles are also meaty, requiring depth of expression from the entire ensemble, with three of the four soloists playing multiple characters. The tenor must toggle between Elijah’s right-hand man, Obadiah, and his archenemy, Ahab, granting the tenor some wonderful tunes like “If with all your hearts ye truly seek me.” The mezzo portrays both the envious Jezebel and the graceful Angel. Perhaps the soprano has the most glorious music, with arias that were intended to be sung by the famous “Swedish Nightingale” Jenny Lind. Although Lind was unable to sing the premiere, letters between Mendelssohn and Lind survive, as he shared his struggle to write just the right notes for her.

The chorus, of course, is the big attraction. This robust assembly of enthusiastic singers devote many volunteer hours to intensive rehearsals as a group. They enliven Mendelssohn’s highly charged depiction of different groups of characters: starving citizens pleading for pity; enraged Baal worshippers competing for victory; astounded observers rejoicing at Elijah’s miraculous ascent to heaven in a fiery
chariot. In several instances Mendelssohn heightens dramatic effects by writing for double choir or employing only women’s voices or contrasting the voice of a single child with Elijah’s mature baritone.

The unsung heroes of Elijah are the people of the town of Birmingham, England. This West-Midlands industrial town maintained a firm, civic commitment to commission big, new works for its Triennial Festival. Founded in 1784 with the intention of raising funds for its general hospital, the festival became a great success; so much so that a purpose-built concert venue, the magnificent neo-classical Birmingham Town Hall, was erected in 1831. Mendelssohn’s Elijah (1846), Sullivan’s The Light of the World (1873), Dvořák’s Requiem (1891), Gounod’s Redemption (1882), Elgar’s Dream of Gerontius (1900), The Apostles (1903), The Kingdom (1906) and The Music Makers (1912) all received their first performance here. World War I put an end to Birmingham’s festival, but the city continues to support oratorio performances to this day. In February 2022 the oratorio The Ordering of Moses, composed by Canada’s own Nathaniel Dett, received its UK premiere at the new Birmingham Symphony Hall.

The tradition continues
This fall two Ontario cities can boast at least a century-long tradition of singing large oratorios. Two different productions of Elijah with full orchestra can be witnessed only nine days apart. In Kitchener-Waterloo on Saturday October 22, the Grand Philharmonic Choir (who are celebrating 100 years of singing) and the KW Symphony at The Centre in the Square, conducted by Mark Vuorinen, will feature James Westman as Elijah. On Wednesday November 2, the 128-year-old Toronto Mendelssohn Choir conducted by Jean-Sébastien Vallée (along with with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra who are marking their own 100th anniversary this season) present Russell Braun in the title role at Roy Thomson Hall.

Cities like Birmingham, Toronto and Kitchener-Waterloo have done well at bringing together all the diverse skills and resources required to present oratorios. Amateur choirs are the embodiment of community music-making, made even more powerful and poignant after our forced pandemic silence. Paired with a professional orchestra, communicative soloists and a receptive audience, the dramatic effect of an oratorio is like no other musical experience.

For the past six weeks I have been immersed, as stage manager, in the 19th-century world of Anton Chekhov’s Uncle Vanya – or rather, in a version of that world seen through a contemporary Canadian lens that illuminates a classic of the past and, in breaking it open, offers insights that apply equally to our own times. (The production is a new adaptation by award-winning Canadian actor Liisa Repo-Martell, bringing together a wonderful group of actors under the innovative and daring direction of Chris Abraham.)

Meanwhile, next door in the same building (Crow’s Theatre in Toronto’s East End), a new theatrical concert The Shape of Home: Songs in Search of Al Purdy is continuing to develop – undertaking a similar journey of turning a modern lens on an icon of the past. In this case the “unofficial poet laureate of Canada,” Al Purdy. The modern lens, in this case, is overtly musical.

To begin at the beginning, the Festival Players of Prince Edward County last year commissioned acclaimed music theatre performer Hailey Gillis to undertake an exploratory curation of poems, letters and musings written by Purdy, as a template for a musical exploration of his works. Gillis took up the challenge. Focusing on Purdy’s obsession with “where we are” and “what it is to be alive”, she extracted what she felt to be his most potent and provocative work. She then recruited a potent team of fellow theatrical song-makers and performers to bring the chosen poetry to life: Beau Dixon, Raha Javanfar, Andrew Penner, dramaturge Marni Jackson and director/performer Frank Cox O’Connell. The show now includes 20 original songs interwoven with spoken text that gives context and shape to the whole.

After its premiere production in the large Red Barn Theatre in Prince Edward County, where performers could point almost directly to places Purdy had known in his life, The Shape of Home is now far from home, in an intimate studio theatre in downtown urban Toronto. Consequently Gillis and company are continuing to develop the script and context of the show’s songs, to help an audience not as familiar with Purdy’s legacy feel the relationship to his words and philosophies as they are immersed in the show’s musical versions of his iconic poems.
Brampton Concert Band performs with one of Canada's most beloved vocalists, chart-topping jazz artist Micah Barnes. This concert features unique takes on theme songs you will know and love from decades of James Bond - and other secret agent movies. The show features vocalists Irene Torres, Queen Pepper and John Finley - who are backed up by a stellar band of seasoned veterans. The repertoire includes: "Diamonds are Forever", "Goldfinger", "Theme from Our Man Flint" and original songs such as "X-Ray Spectacles" and "Living In A Cage".

Alberto Urso and Mark Maari have joined The Tenors. Clifton Murray and Victor Micallef welcome these remarkable artists who bring their impressive solo performance history to The Tenors. Tenors have been thrilling audiences around the world with their powerful songs, outstanding harmonies, and undeniable charm, blending classical music and contemporary pop.

Beautiful Renegades

Over in Toronto’s gritty West End at The Theatre Centre, Canadian contemporary dance icon Peggy Baker has commissioned a new play to shine a bright light on some of her fellow dance iconoclasts, leading choreographic rebels from the 1970s called Beautiful Renegades – like The Shape of Home, bringing back into the spotlight essential Canadian artists whose contribution should not be forgotten. Playwright Michael Ross Albert mines the anti-establishment politics that helped shape the face and heart of the burgeoning contemporary dance in 1970s Toronto, while Baker herself leads a team of choreographic collaborators including Elizabeth Chitty, Margaret Dragu, Lily Eng, Louise Garland, Johanna Householder and Jennifer Mascall. Debashis Sinha is designing the soundscape, and acclaimed director Eda Homes directs. Words, music, dance combine – not just telling a story but illuminating an almost forgotten part of the history of contemporary dance in Toronto. This promises to be both illuminating and radically entertaining.

Beautiful Renegades plays at The Theatre Centre from September 20 to October 2. To watch Baker’s pre-show chat visit: https://bit.ly/3TGDZ4d

INNERChamber

Outside the city, in Stratford, INNERChamber is continuing to break down more genre walls with its upcoming theatrical concert: How We Live On. In this case the subject matter is very personal rather than iconic, and yet, by that very fact something that we can all relate to. How does one process grief and find a way to face the future? Known for its invitation to artists of various genres to join the ensemble in the intimate setting of the Church Restaurant, IC this time has invited acclaimed Canadian poet Heidi Sander to curate/create a very personal performance piece in collaboration with dancer Bonnie Jordan (of the Stratford Festival Company) and IC composer/arranger and cellist Ben Bolt-Martin.

Seven poems from Sander’s collection The Forest of My Mind will take the audience on a journey that travels from loss and grief...
“Dance is poetry for the body.”
— Heidi Sander

through to renewal. “Dance is poetry for the body and I’m thrilled to collaborate with Bonnie to create an experience that is a tribute to both of our moms,” Sander told me. “Ben’s compositions have added such a deep layer of expression to my words, and his arrangements are fluid and impactful, opening up a doorway for movement.” In turn, Bolt-Martin, writing for a mixed ensemble of great chamber players (Liesel Deppe, flute, Andrew Chung, violin, Julia Seager-Scott, harp and Graham Hargrove, percussion), praises the “powerfully visual nature of Heidi’s writing,” while dancer Bonnie Jordan also celebrates the new collaborative experiment saying, “I’ve always wanted to dance to poetry. The way even one single movement to a phrase can speak so loudly fills my soul.”

How We Live On has one live performance on October 2, in Stratford, but will also stream live and for 48 hours following the concert. For more details see innerchamber.ca/how-we-live-on

Fall for Dance

Dance is highlighted on the Toronto scene as well, with the increasingly popular and always “accessible to everyone” annual celebrity festival Fall for Dance North. Coming back to a mostly live performance slate this year, there will still be cinematic and streaming elements for those not yet comfortable with being in large crowds, elements that will likely now always be a part of festivals having become so essential in the restricting years of the pandemic. Highlighted is a new short film by Canadian choreographer Michael Greyeyes – a shared world premiere with Soundstreams – as part of the festival centrepiece presentation ARISE; 2022 at Meridian Hall. ARISE will also showcase a commission from visionary tap dancer, Dianne Montgomery, a traditional Indigenous Hawaiian performance from Ka Leo O Laka/Ka Hikina O Ka Lā, and the FFDN premiere of a monumental work by an increasingly prolific Indigenous Canadian choreographer Jera Wolfe featuring 110 students from Canada’s National Ballet School.

For more information on all the festival events running from September 17 to October 8, see ffdnorth.com

Under the Mirvish umbrella

In the world of the traditional musical there is no film more iconic than Singin’ in the Rain. The stage version of the glorious Comden and Green story of the coming of talkies to Hollywood is at last making its North American debut at the Princess of Wales Theatre under the Mirvish producing umbrella. This is a 2021 remounting of the hit 2012 production by Jonathan Church of England’s Chichester Theatre, that has already toured the UK, Ireland and Japan. Reviews in England and elsewhere have been rapturous so, like many, my hopes are high that the production will meet our high expectations. September 23-October 23. mirvish.com.

Mirvish has also recently extended the run of Harry Potter and the Cursed Child, a unique tour-de-force of technical and actual wizardry that is anchored by a serious, and very contemporary coming of age story, centred on the children of the heroes of the movie series: Harry, Hermione, Ron and… yes, Draco Malfoy. The production is astonishing in its non-stop movement, and is anchored by a strong Canadian cast featuring the wonderful Fiona Reid as Professor McGonagall and Sara Farb as the new character Delphi. Whirling staircases, dementors and intertwined storylines are woven together with clever choreography and Imogen Heap’s perfect score. The run of Harry Potter has now been extended into 2023. For more information see mirvish.com.

Whatever your music theatre tastes, from mainstream to renegade, there are wonderful shows to see this fall in Toronto and around Ontario.

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.

Beyond Obligatory Inclusion?

WENDALYN BARTLEY

As the new season of concerts gets underway in these somewhat post-COVID days, some of the larger-scale presenters have, with fingers crossed, announced ambitious season lineups. As I looked through their listings, a noteworthy trend was emerging: the regular programming of contemporary works. Perhaps there’s been a shift away from the token or obligatory inclusion of music by living composers which would indicate that past events such as the TSO’s New Creations Festivals, or several seasons of the 21C Festival have been successful in bringing in an eager audience interested in listening to current ideas and styles.
At the TSO

A good example of this lies with two October concerts presented by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. On their October 12 concert, the programming includes a work by Christina Volpini, a Hamilton/Toronto based composer whose music is known for its subtle and nuanced textures, and the Canadian premiere of subito con forza (2020) by Korean-born/Berlin-based composer Unsuk Chin. Volpini's piece is one of the five Celebration Preludes commissioned from GTA composers for the 2022/23 season. These recently composed pieces stand alongside 20th-century master Ligeti’s Atmosphères and classic compositions by Haydn and Beethoven. Chin’s piece was composed for the 2020 Beethoven anniversary year, and quotes from his 1807 Coriolan Overture are shape-shifted and woven throughout the orchestra. Other references to Beethoven’s music in Chin’s densely textured piece include the Fifth Symphony’s opening rhythm and flourishes from the Emperor Concerto.

On October 20, two more premieres are programmed: Janet Sit’s Celebration Prelude and Finnish composer Magnus Lindberg’s Piano Concerto No.3. Again, these works appear alongside an older work, a 19th-century symphony by Bruckner. Lindberg predominantly composes orchestral music using a highly complex musical language. In the early 1980s he was part of a Finnish group of composers that formed the Ears Open Society in order to advocate for contemporary music, a group that includes Kaija Saariaho and conductor-composer Esa-Pekka Salonen. As a touchstone for local audiences, Saariaho’s music was featured in the 2015 21C festival in Toronto. Lindberg’s new work is a co-commission between the New York Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony, Orchestre de Paris, China NCPA Orchestra, Norddeutscher Rundfunk, and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Earlier in Lindberg’s career, he was influenced by Gérard Grisey, the developer of spectral music, and also by the experimental work at IRCAM, a Paris-based institute dedicated to the research of music and sound founded by composer Pierre Boulez. Lindberg has a very practical and rigorous approach to writing orchestral music. In a 2019 interview for the online publication Adventures in Music he describes his approach in this way: “The fun part of being a composer is that at first you get to be a visionary, with your utopia. Then you have to be a realist, set up your worksite and have a meeting with the engineers, so to speak. Next, you become a blue-collar worker, in order to get the job done. At the final stages you put in the last touches with your client, to get the finished product.”

Composers Premiering New Works Including
Kara-Lis Coverdale, Rashaan Rori Allwood
21st Century Repertoire Performances by
Thomas Mellan, Matthew Larkin
Sarah Svendsen
Radical and Diverse Approaches to the Organ
FUJI|||TA, Sandra Boss, Charlemagne Palestine
He stressed how important clear and accurate notation is when writing orchestral music due to limited rehearsal time. He firmly believes that this is the composer’s responsibility and he has learned to write everything into the parts that will help the orchestra work things out as fast as possible. An earlier work of Lindberg’s, Arena II, composed in 1995, is being performed on October 25 by the University of Toronto’s Contemporary Music Ensemble, a concert that includes other contemporary works by Finnish composer Sampo Haapamaki and American composer Mason Bates.

**Chin’s longtime champions**

Returning to the music of Unsuk Chin, Esprit Orchestra will be programming SPIRA, her Concerto for orchestra in their October 27 concert. Esprit are longtime champions of Chin’s music, introducing Toronto audiences to her compositional language that is steeped in strong gestures, clear musical ideas, shimmering colours and a range of cultural perspectives. The earliest Esprit performance of a work by Unsuk Chin that we could locate was February 6, 2009 when Esprit played her Double Concerto for piano and percussion in a program titled Breathless. SPIRA, composed in 2019 and premiered by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, is inspired by the mathematical “spira mirabilis” or growth spiral seen in various natural forms such as a snail shell. True to the image, the music begins with the sounds of two bowed vibraphones that unleash a series of overtones picked up by the other instruments in an unfurling of explosive and shimmering detail, resulting in textures of both robust energy and quiet stillness.

Upcoming concerts by the U of T Wind Ensemble and Wind Symphony, October 14 and 15 respectively, are also signs of healthy change: very few of the 12 composers listed were familiar to me.

**Wata Lowell**

If Dan zen is a place of a more natural place in the life of concert music?

**Cait Nishimura**, a prominent voice in the concert band world, is also a composer who is constantly creating new music. Her upcoming concert at the U of T includes a new work by Mason Bates, an American composer who has had a significant impact on the world of contemporary music.

**Patricia O’Callaghan** is a soprano who has performed with many of the world’s leading ensembles. She will be performing in Toronto with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra on October 22 and 23.

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The Toronto Symphony Orchestra is one of the city’s most important cultural institutions. They will be performing a range of works, including a new piece by Canadian composer Ian Cusson.

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BALLYCROY and Beyond

LYDIA PEROVIĆ

Stratford: On April 29, 1875, a fire in Ballycroy, Ontario took three young lives. Several buildings went down in this probable arson, but the only human casualties were the three women trapped in their second floor room of the Small’s Hotel. Recent immigrants from Ireland, Mary Fanning, Bridget Burke and Margaret Daley had just started working in the millinery trade. They belonged to a Catholic parish in Colgan, one town over. Nothing else is known about them. Reasons for the arson, if indeed it was, remain unknown. The once vibrant all-Irish town, Ballycroy itself is now a ghost town.

Something about this story deeply touched composer and writer Marek Norman who, upon coming across an article about it in a local paper, felt called to imagine and write these women’s lives. The result is Ballycroy, his two-act play with music in which the three women come back as ghosts to recount their lives. Stratford-based INNERChamber Ensemble with its artistic director Andrew Chung on violin and Norman conducting from the piano will perform a condensed concert version of the play on November 5 in Avondale United Church in Stratford. The piece is scored for three voices, piano, violin, viola, cello, flute, oboe, clarinet and percussion. Directing the production: one of Canada’s theatre legends, Marti Maraden.

Norman was kind enough to share the libretto with me and just a few pages in it became clear to me that we are in for a treat. The narrative is non-linear and oneiric, reminiscent of Lincoln in the Bardo, but the three milliners are generously and sharply drawn. Various hints are dropped about potential storylines that may lead to arson. Other town characters appear through their voices, men who’ve helped them, and men fuelled by the Catholic-Protestant divide among the Irish. Little is known about the three women, but Norman has filled their shapes with life. “Their journeys were born of my imagination,” Norman told me in an email.
mattered to him very much that each woman be honoured in her own unique way in word and song. What attracted Marti Maraden to this piece? She’s worked with Norman before, and has known him for many years, she tells me. And she found this piece “extraordinarily evocative and emotionally engaging” on first read-through. “My own Swedish grandmother was an early 20th-century immigrant who came to America all by herself at the age of 17. Her own story was deeply poignant. Whenever I think of immigrants in our own time, who come from profound poverty or frighteningly dangerous environments, I am reminded that displacement and exile are a continuing part of the human journey.” What would she say this ghostly, melancholy play is ultimately about? “For me it is the uncertainty of life, the hopes and aspirations – particularly in this case of women in a time when having a profession is rare. It’s a play about our unknown and often unknowable fate. It is about strangers becoming family and about love and loyalty. But it’s also kind of ghost story – and I love ghost stories!”

The music and writing are beautiful, she adds, and the artists involved are extraordinary. “Although the actors will carry their scripts, there will be some very discreet staging and, with the ingenuity of designer Stephen Degenstein, there will be some wonderful visual elements: projections, draped fabric, simple means of delineating place: a window, a milliner’s workshop, etc.”

Elsewhere this season in opera:
On November 4, Glenn Gould School of Opera is staging the rarely seen in Toronto Venus and Adonis, composed in 1683 by John Blow and written, it appears, by a woman, Anne Kingsmill. (Blow worked on a different play with Aphra Benn, which is an unusually high incidence of co-creating things with playwrights of the female sex for any opera composer before or since.) Venus and Adonis seems a delightfully comic and playful opera, and we’ll see what the director Derek Boyes makes of it. Peter Tiefenbach returns as music director. November 4 and at 7:30pm, Mazzoleni Concert Hall.
On October 21, 22 and 23, Toronto OperaettA Theatre is presenting its take on Offenbach’s Orpheus in the Underworld at the lane Mallett Theatre. Is it going to be entirely in English, will the dialogues be updated? No info yet, so lots remains to be seen, but the young cast is promising: the always-worth-listening-to soprano Vania Chan, the young tenor Tonatiuh Abrego, and baritone Gregory Finney who has rock solid comedic chops. Guillermo Silva-Marin directing, Larry Beckwith conducting.

Lydia Perović is an arts and culture writer in Toronto. Sign up to receive her newsletter at longplay.substack.com.
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TORONTO 2022

ANDREW TIMAR

White Night Roots
While some cite Paris’ 2001 Nuit Blanche as the concept’s ground zero, it likely had its roots in Helsinki in 1989; Helsinki’s nighttime festival of the arts, with all museums and galleries open “until at least midnight” proved to be contagious, steadily spreading to over a hundred of the world’s cities, including across Canada, including Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Edmonton, Calgary, Halifax, Winnipeg and Saskatoon.

I well recall the buzz around Toronto’s premiere Nuit Blanche in 2006. I cut out the double-page downtown event map in NOW magazine to facilitate my bicycle-driven art crawl to well over a dozen events and installations. Dubbed Scotiabank Nuit Blanche for its title sponsor, it is today the City of Toronto’s baby, after the bank withdrew in 20125, saying the event no longer aligned with its sponsorship priorities. By then, it had “grown into one of the largest public art exhibitions in North America,” according to the city’s website. How large? In 2015 the city claimed in a promotional video that “Since the inaugural event, more than 9.5 million people explored 1,200 art projects by 4,500 artists.”

Nuit Blanche Toronto 2022
As they did to all other in-person events, the last two pandemic-ridden years put a damper on Nuit Blanche too. The good news is that this celebration of contemporary art returns this year “bigger than ever,” from sunset on October 1 to sunrise on October 2.

Past Nuit Blanche exhibitions have been primarily sited downtown, with occasional nods to Scarborough venues. This year that geography has been substantially expanded to include numerous installations in Etobicoke and North York. A total of some 162 artwork locations are listed on its website map.

Led by artistic director Dr. Julie Nagam, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Arts, Collaboration and Digital Media at the University of Winnipeg, Nuit Blanche Toronto features more than 150 artworks by local, national and international artists. This year’s ambitious curatorial theme, The Space Between Us, “reveals the space between us as a potential site for sharing knowledge” and invites artists to “transform the city by creatively sharing stories about their connection to place while bridging cultures and connecting with communities and the environment.”

Ajagutaq/Parhelion
Nuit Blanche Toronto generally privileges visual experiences. (All-night outdoor music is by its nature problematic.) In fact “Music” doesn’t even appear among the 19 “mediums” listed in the pull-down program filter on this year’s website, though there are eight events under “Sound Installation.”

One of these caught my eye; the intriguingly multifaceted Ajagutaq/Parhelion by award-winning Inuk artist, improvisational diva, composer and novelist Tanya Tagaq and her team. Tagaq’s work at the Harbourfront Centre was inspired by a dream she recounted in her novel Split Tooth.

In Ajagutaq/Parhelion the Nuit Blanche audience is “transported to a magnificent landscape in Nunavut, where Arctic beings and spirits become one. The storm has caused a whiteout... The light is blazing. It’s the New Sun. Hungry for justice, hungry for truth, hungry for sustenance. Walk the frozen tundra, embraced by brilliant light as ice crystals form, and surround yourself with the beauty of seven sun dogs... It’s a story of redemption, a story of survival. The awakening of self.”

Digital multimedia artist Driftnote (Omar Rivero) directs Ajagutaq/Parhelion, virtually transporting attendees to an arctic landscape. As the “audience’s ear” composer Daedelus (Alfred Darlington) “translates time and space,” transforming each listener into a “bear and human lover, ice pleaser.”

“You will live another year,” is Tagaq’s optimistic promise, at the end of her program notes.

Music at the Aga Khan Museum
The Aga Khan Museum has curated an extensive series of exhibitions and performances including visual art, music, dance, ritual and music for its Nuit Blanche card. Titled Collective Effervescence, it’s designed to celebrate the joy of being able to perform in-person and to communally gather to experience the arts once again.

In a commercial stretch of the Don Mills neighbourhood of North York the architecturally striking Aga Khan Museum has been a home for inclusive, transcultural music performances ever since it opened its doors in 2014. Early this September I spoke to Amirali Alibhai, head of performing arts at the AKM. He outlined a rich series of live music...
performances from dusk to dawn, not only at the Museum but also in the adjacent park and at the Ismaili Centre next door.

Confirmed acts as of press time include the Haneen Women’s Choir, a Toronto Syrian collective established in 2018. Haneen means “nostalgia” in Arabic, and their threefold mission includes bringing the feeling of home to participants, preserving the lyrical and musical heritage of Syria and enhancing social and cultural exchanges with Canadians. This inspiring community choir’s guiding belief centres the essential value of music to community: “singing is necessary to preserve Syrian cultural heritage during a time of war and destruction.”

Following Haneen, Sufi performances will be presented in a sama (Arabic for a ceremonial meditation and prayer practice) setting. These performances often include singing, instrumentals, dancing, recitation of prayers and poetry, all in symbolic attire. (The “Melevi Sama Ceremony” of Turkey was inducted into UNESCO’s Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2008.)

The professional Little Pear Garden Dance Company has long specialized in creating a body of Chinese-inspired dance and music works in Toronto. Their Nuit Blanche presentation embraces storytelling, dance and music. The stage then shifts to the distinguished Indo-Canadian dance artist and musician Bageshree Vaze and party who present a program of kathak (North Indian classical dance) with live music. Co-produced with pioneer Indian classical music presenter Raag-Mala Toronto, the evening will be capped by a full-length Hindustani concert.

Rounding out the wee-hours programming is a series of TBA pop-up music performances in the museum’s intimate Bellerive Room and open air courtyard, long a signature of the museum’s music programming.

All in all, it feels like a substantial music feast warranting a trip to the heart of Don Mills – and perhaps staying there all night. I may even see you there!

Andrew Timar is a Toronto musician, composer and music journalist. He can be contacted at worldmusic@thewholenote.com.

members of Rumi Canada

Members of the Haneen Choir of Toronto
And Now, Back to Live Action

MJ BUELL

First, full disclosure of a personal bias: I prefer my early music live – up close and in person, the way it was intended at the time of its composition. Recordings of period music, even on period instruments, always leave me feeling a bit weird. So the past way-too-many months have been a real struggle for me. Now, there’s so much live performance to choose from that I hardly know where to begin. (Details of all these events mentioned here can be found in the listings, starting on page 34.)

Up first

Sep 23 & 24: Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra invites us to “picture a vibrant city humming with creative spirit, attracting artists who exchange diverse ideas and perspectives.” Present day New York or Toronto? No, 18th-century London. “Handel’s London” offers up Handel, Purcell and Geminiani, also lesser-known works by Kusser and Hellendraa, and a Purcell-inspired piece by one of Tafelmusik’s own, the late Allan Whear. Guest director, leading from the harpsichord, is Avi Stein, associate organist and chorus master at Trinity Wall Street, a teacher at The Juilliard School and Yale University, and artistic director of the Helicon Foundation (New York).

Oct 12 Confluence Concerts offer us “Boccheriniana”. Not only works by Luigi Boccherini but his contemporaries, including Maddlena, Lombardi, and Sirmen. Cellist Elinor Frey will bring together a stellar group of musicians from Montreal and Europe.

Oct 20, 22 and 23, Opera Atelier, open their 2022/23 season with Purcell’s Dido and Aeneas, with Meghan Lindsay and Colin Almworth portraying the ill-fated lovers, Mireille Asselin as Belinda, and Measha Brueggergosman-Le as the nasty and incredibly funny Sorceress. The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, the Bach Children’s Choir and the Tafelmusik Orchestra will be conducted by OA music director David Fallis on Oct 20 and 22, and assistant music director Christopher Bagan, in his OA conducting debut, on October 23.

Dido and Aeneas was Opera Atelier’s debut production in 1986, and Canada’s first ever staged production of the work. Many people consider it to be the greatest opera written in the English language (and not just because of the superb music, dancing, baroque stage effects, and those outrageously funny witches.)

Oct 27 and 29: Tafelmusik’s second concert of the season, “Trailblazers” is one I’m particularly looking forward to, for the return of violinist Aisslinn Nosky, a former member of Tafelmusik and a trailblazer in her own right – with Toronto’s I Furiosi Baroque Ensemble, as a founding member of the Eybler Quartet, and now, as concertmaster of the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston (since 2011). Nosky will direct a program of “large-scale chamber music by trailblazers of the romantic period” – Mendelssohn’s Octet in E-flat, and a Nonet for winds and strings by French composer Louise Farrenc (1804-1875) whose music is enjoying a long overdue renaissance.

Nov 6 Rezonance Baroque Ensemble presents soprano Vania Chan in “Vivaldi: But Not ‘The Seasons’” – a program of arias. The concert will also include some of Vivaldi’s concerti for strings – terrific music in the way that it showcase the entire ensemble. Chan’s early music dance-card is filling up fast! She’ll sing the role of Eurydice in Offenbach’s Orpheus in the Underworld with Toronto Operetta Theatre, Celia in Mozart’s Lucio Silla with Voicebox: Opera in Concert), and join in with the Toronto Consort for their Praetorius Christmas Vespers concert.

And next

Nov 13 Toronto Chamber Choir presents “The Kappellmeister of Dresden” (Kaffemusik) in collaboration with SchützFest 350, featuring Peter Tiefenbach as the Kappellmeister himself. The elderly Schütz will regale us with tales from his long and storied life while the TCC sings works from across his vast oeuvre, from the Italian madrigals of his student days in Venice to profound unpublished works from his final years. And on Dec 9 and 10 the TCC will play a role in Toronto Consort’s “Praetorius Christmas Vespers”. This beloved holiday concert is conducted by former TCC director David Fallis.

Dec 10 Etobicoke Centennial Choir will present “Sing We Joyfully” – in a program that includes features J.S. Bach’s stunning Magnificat, with vocal soloists and baroque orchestra.

I also look forward to finding out what SINE NOMINE Ensemble for Medieval Music, silent too long, has in store for us. All we know is that they are currently working on a project that will “present the diverse repertoire of a remarkable 14th-century northern Italian manuscript through both music and dance.” Intriguing!

And finally, echoing my own desire for a return to early music live and in person, the Toronto Early Music Players Organization (TEMPO) are back with monthly Sunday workshops, starting with “And now, back to Live Action!” on Oct 2, led by Colin Savage, a favourite TEMPO presenter, who will guide those attending through some Renaissance, Baroque and other familiar repertoire, to help everyone remember the joy of making music together. Upcoming workshops include Anne Massicotte, recorders, (Nov 6) ; Vincent Lauzer, recorders, (Dec 4) ; and Joseph Lanza, baroque violin, (Jan 8).

MJ Buell is a core member of the WholeNote production team and occasional writer, who particularly enjoys historically informed performance.
We’re Back!

2022-2023 Season: A Golden Anniversary Celebration

LA RUTA DEL SOL PEREGRINO
or Sons of the Pilgrim Sun

NOVEMBER 10 at 7:30 pm
Tickets $25
Artistic Direction by Esteban La Rotta

Join us for the release of Sons of the Pilgrim Sun, filmed July 2022 – an all-new digital production exploring the virtually endless array of harmonies, melodies, and rhythms that make up South America’s captivating sentimiento. Don’t miss our debut on the big screen!

PRAETORIUS CHRISTMAS VESPERS

DEC. 9 & 10 AT 8 PM
DEC. 10 AT 2 PM
Artistic Direction by David Fallis

Artistic Director Emeritus David Fallis returns with one of Toronto’s beloved Christmas traditions! A sell-out in previous seasons, this yuletide celebration marks the triumphant return of live audiences!

WINTER REVELS

JANUARY 27 & 28, 2023 AT 8PM

Artistic Direction by Laura Pudwell & Alison Melville

Chase those winter blues away with a rollicking Elizabethan kitchen party! This New Year soirée is a celebration of spirit guaranteed to send you home smiling from ear to ear – and partying like it’s 1599!

CANTICUM CANTICORUM

MARCH 10 & 11, 2023 AT 8PM
A Concert by Canticum Trombonorum

The most poetic book of the Bible, Song of Songs is a story of two lovers. Swiss ensemble, Canticum Trombonorum follows the journey of these lovers with excerpts, motets and interludes for two trombones, organ, and a high voice.

CELESTIAL REVOLUTIONS

MAY 3 & 4, 2023 AT 8PM
Artistic Direction by Ben Grossman & Alison Melville

The heavens changed and astronomer Tycho Brahe was the first to notice. Join us for an exploration of his fascinating life and times, with a world premiere of a new commission by Canadian composer Alex Eddington, featuring cymbalom master Richard Moore, and director Tyler Seguin.

Subscribe on TorontoConsort.org | Stream on EarlyMusic.TV
Hugh's and Poetry on the Move

COLIN STORY

Of the many experiences that point to our collective hunger for dependable post-lockdown life, none has hit quite so close to home for me as seeing post-secondary students get back to classes. Sure, it still feels like a novelty to watch maskless people thanking melons in the grocery store, restaurant patrons trying each other's drinks, or a trumpet player mercilessly spraying the floor of a venue with spit-valve effluvia. But – as I experienced on an unexpectedly brisk morning in early September, walking across the University of Toronto campus for coffee with a friend – nothing quite says “we’re back” like overhearing two new roommates arguing about whether hanging a Quentin Tarantino poster would be “edgy and transgressive” or “you know, uh, maybe a bit much, like... politically?”

During COVID, we witnessed seismic changes on the club scene: closures, pivots, renovations, and rebrandings. For some organizations, the enforced and recurring lockdowns meant the end: time ran out. For others the lockdowns bought time for necessary rethinking and new developments.

Hugh's Room Live is one such development.

The original Hugh’s Room opened in Roncesvalles in 2001, and was one of Toronto’s premier destinations for folk music, as well as rock, jazz, world music, and a variety of other genres typical of Toronto’s club scene – in a comfortable, quiet setting with clear sightlines that allowed for the kind of engaged listening that performers relish.

After a 19-year run, though, the venue closed in March of 2020, due to an unsustainably high increase in rent. Then, after a relatively short hiatus, the Hugh’s Room team undertook two initiatives. The first: fundraising, planning and developing a new permanent location: the Broadview Faith Temple, at 296 Broadview Avenue. Originally built in 1894, the Temple was designed by E.J. Lennox, architect for Toronto’s Old City Hall and Casa Loma. Through donations and loans, Hugh’s Room raised more than $2 million for the purchase. A $2.2 million loan from the city sealed the deal. If all goes according to plan, the new east-end iteration of Hugh’s Room will reopen at some point in 2024.

In the meantime, Hugh’s Room Live is operational as a concert presenter, with shows this fall mostly taking place at 3030 Dundas West, in the Junction. A multi-use venue that hosts musical performances, parties, weddings and more, 3030 Dundas is anchored by the restaurant Young Animal, which is owned and operated by the chef Adisa Glasgow. Glasgow – who grew up in South Oropouche, in Trinidad – brings the flavours of his childhood to Toronto, with modern and personal touches (think grilled pineapple chow, curry prawns, and oxtail risotto). The bar menu reflects the same heritage, with drinks like Island Old Fashioned, Tamarind Whiskey Sour, and Scarlet Ibis sharing the bill with a variety of wines and Ontario craft beers.

On Thursday, October 20, Hugh’s Room Live presents Sammy Jackson at 3030 Dundas. Jackson – who took home a Juno Award for Vocal Jazz Album of the Year for her 2021 album With You – is a young Jamaican-Canadian vocalist who is quickly establishing herself in Toronto and beyond. Joined by pianist Chris Pruden, bassist Mark Godfrey, guitarist Tom Fleming and drummer Ian Wright, Jackson sings modern jazz inflected with pop and R&B, mixing her originals with revamped arrangements of classics such as Every Time We Say Goodbye and All of You.

Poetry Jazz Café

Another organization on the move is Poetry Jazz Café, formerly in Kensington Market, and now located at 1078 Queen St. West. The original Poetry – a long, narrow room, decorated with books, empty bottles of high-end alcohol, and posters of musicians, both local and internationally famous – evoked New York in a way that few other Toronto venues do. It is no surprise, then, that Sean Pascale, Poetry’s longtime owner/operator, refers to the new location as Poetry Lower Westside.

I spoke to drummer Eric West, who has taken over programming duties at the new location. (Some late-September highlights: the incredible trumpeter Kae Murphy, September 24, the group Moonbliss, September 28, and bassist/sound designer Caleb Klager, September 30.) West has a long history with Sean Pascalle: “He and I go back about a decade. I started playing at Poetry while I was doing my undergrad, working quite a bit as a side person in other people’s bands.” Later, West put together his own residency, which lasted for years, and his working relationship with Pascale grew into a real friendship.

The Kensington location featured a select number of acts playing regular residencies. For the Queen West location, West wanted to “branch out and cast a wider net.” Initial feedback from both staff and clientele started to inform certain decisions regarding weekdays vs. weekends. “The weekend crowd seems to favour more of an R&B/Soul style of music, whereas the weekdays lend themselves well to jazz and experimental music,” West explained, adding that these are divisions definitely not set in stone. Whatever the genre, West has “no doubt that if someone walks in on any day of the week, they’re going to witness a high–quality performance.”

The new space is still undergoing an aesthetic transformation. “Sean works hard to create an atmosphere that highlights the performers and is attractive to passers-by, who poke their heads in and decide to stay for a drink.” The Kensington location “had a speakeasy, dive-bar kind of vibe,” as West put it. The Queen location distills this spirit in an upgraded facility with better amenities, a kitchen, a back room “for local electronic dance music artists, and more.”

It’s early days – the new Poetry is only four months old – but well worth a visit, both for fans of the original and first-timers wanting to show support for live music as it re-emerges.

Our Mainly Clubs list of performance venues follows on page 44.

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.
23rd annual directory of MUSIC MAKERS

The arrival of Fall means the beginning of new concert seasons for many. As you begin to plan your musical adventures at a time when we hopefully leave the worst of the pandemic behind us, we invite you to have a look at our annual “Blue Pages” directory of presenters. The organizations listed below (with a bit of “teaser” info!) have opted in via their WholeNote membership - full profiles can be found online at thewholenote.com - hover over our “Who’s Who” tab, then click on “2022-23 Presenter Profiles” to see the details of what’s coming up this season. Profiles will remain online for the year, and we’ll be adding more as they come in, so check back often. For information on WholeNote membership and how to join the Blue Pages, email members@thewholenote.com

Wishing you all a happy musical season!

Aga Khan Museum
“Experience the magic of performance at the Aga Khan Museum as local and global artists connect cultures through the power of the arts.”
agakhanmuseum.org

Alliance Française Toronto
“Alliance Française Toronto is dedicated to the Greater Toronto Area Community and committed to promoting and presenting cultural events that highlight the diversity of Francophone Culture, such as concerts, exhibitions, lectures or cinema.”
alliance-francaise.ca/en

Amadeus Choir
“Toronto’s 90-member Amadeus Choir is delighted to present a 2022/23 season of live choral performances with new commissions, classic favourites, outdoor and indoor performances, and a stellar roster of guest artists.”
amadeuschoir.com

Amici Chamber Ensemble
“Amici Chamber Ensemble celebrates 33 years as one of Canada’s most distinguished chamber music ensembles. Artistic Directors clarinetist Joaquin Valdepeñas, cellist David Hetherton and pianist Serouj Kradjian invite some of the finest musicians to join them in innovative and eclectic programming.”
amiciensemble.com

Annex Singers of Toronto
“Now in its 43rd season, The Annex Singers is a spirited, auditioned, 65-voice choir with an eclectic repertoire spanning seven centuries.”
annexsingers.com

Art of Time Ensemble
“Exploring the relationship between classical music in its many forms and other genres such as jazz, pop, electronic, rock, folk, electroacoustic, gospel and others, Art of Time seeks to reveal the qualities that lie at the heart of all great music.”
atofimeensemble.com

Azrieli Music Prizes
“The Azrieli Music Prizes: Discovering, creating, performing and celebrating excellence in music composition.”
azrielfoundation.org/amp

Barrie Concert Band
“Over the years, the Barrie Concert Band has participated in various city events, presenting regular winter and summer concerts, and providing music at local churches and seniors’ homes. The band performs an average of 8 concerts per year and is available for special functions.”
barrieconcertband.org

Canadian Opera Company
“The Canadian Opera Company is the largest producer of opera in Canada.”
coc.ca

Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra
“Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra has been bringing to Greater Toronto audiences some of the greatest musical masterpieces, and new Canadian compositions, since 1986. Our 2022/23 season, under the baton of Maestro Martin MacDonald, promises six evenings of exceptional orchestral music.”
cathedralbluffs.com

Church of St. Mary Magdalene Gallery Choir
“Every Sunday an award winning choir of volunteers sings music from the early Renaissance to the most recent Canadian composers.”
stmarymagdalene.ca

Confluence Concerts
“An act or process of merging”: “Confluence produces joyful, daring and thought-provoking events within a warm atmosphere of intimacy and discovery. Artistic Associates Larry Beckwith, Marion Newman, Andrew Downing, Patricia O’Callaghan and Suba Sankaran curate a wide variety of collaborative programs.”
confluenceconcerts.ca

COSA Canada: The Centre for Opera Studies & Appreciation
“We excite the music in everyone - the story-singers on stage, and the story-catchers in the audience! Join in our house concerts, premieres, productions, artist spotlights and opera pops!”
www.cosacanada.org

Don Wright Faculty of Music at Western University
“In our 2022/23 season, we are proud to welcome you in person to the incredible diversity of musical styles and genres our students, faculty and guest artists have to offer.”
music.uwo.ca

Edison Singers
“The Edison Singers is a fully professional chamber choir. This upcoming season is literally our second new beginning. We can’t wait to see you at a performance this season.”
theedisonsingers.com

Elmer Iseler Singers
“Elmer Iseler Singers is a 20-voice Toronto-based professional chamber choir directed by Lydia Adams. Founded by the late Dr. Elmer Iseler in 1979, EIS is known for tonal beauty and interpretive range.”
elmeriseleringers.com

Ensemble Vivant
“Chamber music at its evocative best!”
ensemblevivant.com

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.”
espritorchestra.com

September 20 - November 8, 2022 | 31
Blue Pages

23rd Annual

Etobicoke Centennial Choir
"After a joyful return to live performance in May 2022, Etobicoke Centennial Choir looks forward with great anticipation and hopes to a full season of live choral music!" etobockentennialchoir.ca

Etobicoke Community Concert Band
"Great music ... right in your own backyard!" ecch.ca

Etobicoke Philharmonic Orchestra
"Priding itself on being an affordable, accessible and welcoming concert experience, the Etobicoke Philharmonic Orchestra (EPO) has been celebrating symphonic music in Etobicoke for over 60 years." eporchestra.ca

Flute Street
"Flute Street is comprised entirely of flutes, from the tiny twelve inch piccolo through to the very rare twelve foot double contrabass flute. flutestreet.ca

Glionna Mansell Corporation
"Glionna Mansell presents excellence in organ installations and concert presentations. Whether MOSAIC Canadian Vocal Ensemble, Allen Organs or ORGANIX CONCERTS, the effort is always focused on producing excellence and unique musical experiences." glionnamansell.com

Greater Toronto Philharmonic Orchestra
"Now in its 15th season, the GTPH has become a unique organization built upon a collaborative artistic model, a trusted partner for other arts groups and a showcase opportunity for young talented musicians." gtpo.ca

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." queensu.ca/theisabel

Jubilate Singers
"The Jubilate Singers is a Toronto-based SATB community choir performing multicultural music under the direction of Isabel Bernaus; an auditioned choir plus a Choral Development program." jubilatesingers.ca

Kindred Spirits Orchestra
"The Kindred Spirits Orchestra (KSO) is a critically acclaimed auditioned civic orchestra performing at the Flato Markham Theatre, the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, and the CBC Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto." ksoorchestra.ca

Koerner Hall at 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).
rcmusic.com/performance

Mississauga Festival Choir
"Under the leadership of David Ambrose, MFC performs many concerts, raises money for local charities, records professional CDs, holds an annual choral competition and tours the world."
mfchoir.com

Music at St. Andrew’s
"Music at St. Andrew’s presents great music at affordable prices!" standrewstoronto.org

Music Gallery
"The Music Gallery has been Toronto’s Centre for Creative Music since 1976."
musicgallery.org

Music in the Afternoon
(Women’s Musical Club of Toronto)
"Through its "Music in the Afternoon" concert series, the WMCT presents chamber music concerts featuring musicians on the threshold of international recognition, as well as established artists and ensembles." wmct.on.ca

Music TORONTO
"We invite you to join us for our main series and for the Small Ensembles Celebration, chamber music concerts traditional and ground-breaking." music-toronto.com

Nine Sparrows Arts Foundation
"... dedicated to bringing the best in inspirational arts programming."
9sparrowarts.org

Off Centre Music Salon
"Art is how we decorate space, music is how we decorate time."-Jean-Michel Basquiat. "Join us for our 28th season as we present unique, innovative "salon-style" concerts." offcentremusic.com

Orchestra Toronto
"Michael Newnham conducts five thrilling performances by musicians from your community making music for the love of it." orchestrautoronto.ca

Oriana Women’s Choir
"Oriana explores the possibilities in choral music for upper voices. We foster the creation of Canadian choral music, regularly commissioning works from Canadian composers for upper voices." orianachoir.com

Orpheus Choir of Toronto
"The season features the poetry of Leonard Cohen; music celebrating beauty through music of the past. Founded on the pillars of passion, learning, and artistic excellence, Tafelmusik brings new energy to baroque music and beyond." orpheuschoirontario.com

Pax Christi Chorale
"Pax Christi Chorale, under the artistic direction of Elaine Choi, champions great choral music and performs a wide range of repertoire. Join us for four concerts over the 2022-23 season."
paxchristichorale.org

Performing Arts Brampton
"Performing Arts Brampton builds an inspiring community that reflects Brampton’s spirit and diversity. Comprised of four incredible venues - The Rose Brampton, LBP Brampton, Cyril Clark Brampton and Garden Square Brampton."
therosebrampton.ca

Peterborough Singers
"A challenging choir in Peterborough for adults and youth." peterboroughsingers.com

Rezonance Baroque Ensemble
"Inspired by history and informed by the present, Rezonance leads audiences through the discovery of under-appreciated and unusual works, and new ways of hearing the classics." rezonanceensemble.com

Royal Canadian College of Organists, Toronto
"...dedicated to bringing the best in inspirational arts programming."

SINE NOMINE Ensemble for Medieval Music
"SINE NOMINE offers vocal and instrumental music from medieval courts and churches to provide insight into the fascinating artistic and intellectual culture of the Middle Ages."
pims.ca/article/sine-nomine

Soundstreams.ca
"Visit Soundstreams.ca for tickets and full program details for our exciting concert line up for our 40th Anniversary Season!" soundstreams.ca

Southern Ontario Lyric Opera (SOLO)
"Southern Ontario Lyric Opera (SOLO) seeks to advance the public’s appreciation and enjoyment of the arts by providing high-quality performances of classical operatic works, for diverse audiences of all ages." southernontariolyricopera.com

St. Olave’s Anglican Church
"St. Olave’s celebrates the Anglican choral tradition Sunday mornings at 10:30am, and presents occasional Eveningsongs and other musical events." stolaves.ca

Tafelmusik
"Tafelmusik is an orchestra, choir, and experience that celebrates beauty through music of the past. Founded on the pillars of passion, learning, and artistic excellence, Tafelmusik brings new energy to baroque music and beyond." tafelmusik.org
That Choir
“Currently in its 15th season, That Choir is one of Toronto’s most exciting a cappella ensembles, combining high-calibre performance with storytelling through choral music.”
thatchoir.com

Toronto Chamber Choir
“We live and breathe Early Music and love to share it with others.”
torontochamberchoir.ca

Toronto Children’s Chorus
“Entering its 45th season, the Toronto Children’s Chorus is recognized worldwide as a leading choral organization for children and youth. We are committed to offering exceptional, inclusive choral music education.”
torontochildrenschorus.com

Toronto Classical Singers
“With its exuberant approach, TCS celebrates the choral tradition with the complex sonority of a large choir with professional orchestra.”
torontoclassicalsingers.ca

Toronto Consort
“Founded in 1972, The Toronto Consort is internationally celebrated for its excellence in the performance of Medieval, Renaissance, and Early Baroque music.”
torontoconsort.org

Toronto Mendelssohn Choir
“The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir boldly returns with exciting new works, inspiring new faces, and a fresh new look!”
tmmchoir.org

Toronto Operetta Theatre
“TOT will return to the St. Lawrence Centre stage with a new season of musical entertainment from the wide world of Operetta and Music Theatre.”
torontooperetta.com

Toronto Symphony Orchestra
“One of Canada’s most respected arts organizations, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO) plays a vital role in the city’s dynamic cultural life. The TSO is celebrating its 100th anniversary season in 2022/23.”
tso.ca

Trio Arkel
“Trio Arkel, now in its 10th season, is composed of Marie Berard, violinist, Rémi Pelletier, violist, and Winona Zelenka, cellist, who collaborate with guest artists to present fascinating programs of chamber music for their Toronto audience.”
trioarkel.com

University of Toronto Faculty of Music
“The University of Toronto Faculty of Music is thrilled to present a wide range of performances, lectures, colloquia and more, as part of our annual season of events.”
music.utoronto.ca

Upper Canada Choristers
“The Upper Canada Choristers is an SATB community choir in Toronto with a history of collaboration with choirs and professional guest artists. UCC is committed to excellence and diversity.”
uppercanadachoristers.org

VOCA Chorus of Toronto
“A dynamic, auditioned ensemble under the leadership of artistic director Jenny Crober, VOCA performs a broad range of repertoire in collaboration with a variety of superb guest artists. Our seasons feature concerts, cabaret fundraisers, community performances and workshops.”
vocachorus.ca

VOICEBOX: Opera in Concert
“VOICEBOX-OIC’s tradition continues in the coming season with astonishing works by the very young Mozart, Luigi Cherubini, and Joseph Bologne.”
operainconcert.com

Wychwood Clarinet Choir
“Five varieties of clarinets playing in harmony. What could be more beautiful?”
wychwoodclarinetchoir.ca

Xenia Concerts Inc.
“Xenia Concerts works with the neurodiversity and disability communities to produce and present exceptional performing arts experiences for children, families, and any others who face systemic barriers to inclusion.”
xeniaconcerts.com

Yorkminster Park Baptist Church
“Yorkminster Park is synonymous with magnificent music. Whether it’s the choir accompanied by the majestic Casavant organ or the congregation lifting their voices in hymns of praise, vocal and instrumental expressions of faith are integral to the Yorkminster Park experience.”
yorkminsterpark.com

ARTS SERVICES

Agence Station Bleue
“...one of the most important artists agencies in Canada, in classical, jazz and global music.”
stationbleue.com/en

Linda Litvack Publicity
“Arts publicist Linda Litvack is a long-practiced matchmaker between artists and the media.”
linked.com/in/linda-litvack-15371320

Rebecca Davis Public Relations
“...provides publicity, media and communications services to musicians, arts organisations and record labels, specialising in classical music and opera.”
rebeccadavispr.com
listings@theWholeNote.com

Event listings are free of charge to artists, venues and presenters.

This issue contains event listings from September 20 to November 8, 2022.

LISTINGS IN THIS ISSUE

- Beginning on this page you will find live and livestream daily listings for events with an announced date and time that one could circle on a calendar in order to “be there.” Listing requests that were received at the time of going to press are included on these pages.

- Our listing requests continue to arrive every day and are updated and published each weekend in The WholeNote WEEKLY LISTINGS UPDATE e-letter (see below for further information).

How to List

1. Use the convenient online form at thewholenote.com/applylistings OR
2. Email listings to listings@thewholenote.com.

Please note, we do not take listings over the phone.

Deadlines

Weekly: Eligible listings received by 6pm Tuesday, each week, will be included in The WholeNote WEEKLY LISTINGS UPDATE e-letter sent to registered readers the following Sunday. Listings received for the Weekly Listings Update are simultaneously posted to JUST ASK, our searchable online listings database. The weekly listings update looks five to six weeks into the future on an ongoing basis.

Print: Our next print issue, Volume 28 no.2 covers from November 1 to December 13. The print submission deadline for that issue will be October 18.

Readers are encouraged to register for the Weekly Listings update, or to check our online listings regularly for new listings or updates to listings previously submitted. Each weekly update looks 5-6 weeks into the future.

Register for the weekly updates at thewholenote.com/newsletter

LIVE OR ONLINE

Tuesday September 20

- 12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company. Vocal Series: Meet the Ensemble Studio. Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio introduce themselves by singing one of their favourite arias. Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. Free.
- 7:00: St. James Cathedral. Organ Recital. Dr. Peter Naikoruk, organ, Cathedral Church of St. James, 106 King St. E. 416-384-7865. Free. LIVE & ONLINE.
- 8:00: Burlington Performing Arts Centre. Tom Cochrane with Red Rider. 440 Locust St., Burlington. tpcaboxoffice@burlington.ca.

Wednesday September 21

- 12:15: St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church (Kitchener). Douglas Haas Legacy Concerts. Full House Brass: Dave Manning, trumpeter; Debra Lacoste, trumpet; Randi Patterson, horn; Carolyn Culp, trombone; Susan Fowles, bass trombone. 54 Queen St. N, Kitchener. 519-578-4430. Free. LIVE & LIVE STREAMED.
- 7:30: Gary’s Gig. The Art of a Virtuoso: An Evening with David Shewchuk. Dave Shewchuk, violin, viola. Theatre in the Wings, 30 Bridge St. E., Belleville. Eventbrite or cash at the door. $15.
- 8:00: Soundstreams. Choral Splendour. Arvo Pärt: Stabat Mater; Paul Frehner: LEX. Also the world premiere of the film Zizipho, directed by award-winning Indigenous artist and actor Michael Greeyes and music from Claude Vivier. Soundstreams’ Choir 21; Meghan Lindsay, soprano; Rebecca Cuddy, mezzo; Owen Caustul, tenor; Alain Cau- lobom, bass. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or www.rcmusic.com/events-and-performances. From $50.25.
- 8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Gimeno Conducts Chopin & Scherzhersade. Law: Celebration Prelude (World Premiere); Auerbach: Icarus; Chopin: Piano Concerto No.2; Rimsy-Korsakov: Scherzhersade.

Thursday September 22

- 7:00: Magisterra at the Museum. Leading Women. Clara Schumann: Romance; Amanda Raier-Röntgen: String Quartet; Dorothy Chang: Mirage; Dorothy Chang: Four Bagatelles; Fanny Hensel: String Quartet. Bobbi Thompson, saxophone. Museum London, 421 Ridout St. N., London. www.eventbrite. com. $35; $30(sr); $15(st with id); $10(child); $120(young adult - pass - 30 and under).
- 7:30: Nightwood Theatre/Ampified Opera/Canadian Opera Company/Toronto Theatre Gargantuans. The Queen in Me. Arias from Puccini’s La Bohème, Madama Butterfly, Turandot, and Manon Lescaut; Donizetti’s Lucia di Lammermoor; Verdi's Macbeth and Rigoletto; R. Strauss’s Salome; and Mozart’s The Magic Flute. Created and performed by Tejaa Laga and other artists. $60-$65. LIVE & ONLINE.

Friday September 23

- 11:00am: Hamilton Philharmonic Orches- tra. Talk & Tea: Gemma Conducts Rachmaninoff, Stage Door @ FirstOntario Concert Hall, 10 MacNab St. S., Hamilton. 905-526-7756 or boxoffice@torham.kcm.ca. Free.
- 7:00pm: Festival of the Sound of Peace. Cantus. St. Thomas. 352 Queen St. E., St. Thomas. 519-841-8411. Free.
- 8:00pm: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Gimeno Conducts Chopin & Scherzhersade. Law: Celebration Prelude (World Premiere); Auerbach: Icarus; Chopin: Piano Concerto No.2; Rimsy-Korsakov: Scherzhersade. Bruce Liu, piano, Jonathan Crow, violin; Gustavo Gimeno, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $35, Also Sep 21, 24.
Saturday September 24

- 2:00 Avenue Road Music. Piano Recital. Chopin: Mazurka in Op.63 No.2; Ravel: La Valse; Kapustin: Sonata-Fantasy Op. 1 No. 99; Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No.3 (3rd mvtnt). Sean Sutherland, piano. Avenue Road Music and Performance Academy, 460 Avenue Rd. 416-922-0855. $30. [url]
- 2:00 Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Free Concert Conducted by TSO Music Director Gustavo Gimeno. Andrew Balloff: Kvintentin-acafics (North Star); Chopin: Piano Concerto No.2; Rimsky-Korsakov: Scheherazade; Arturo Marquez: Danzón No.2; and works by Martin Mansour and Luis Ramirez. Bruno Liu, piano; Jonathan Crow, violin; Gustavo Gimeno, conductor; Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser, host. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. www.tso.ca/OpenHouse. Guests are required to register in advance. RSVP beginning on Sep 15.

Tuesday September 27

- 12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company. Instrumental Series: The Spider and Quartet Number One. Drew Jurkewa: The Spider; Drew Jurkewa: Quartet No.1; Mendelssohn: String Quartet in F major; Schubert: String Quartet in A minor; Beethoven: String Quartet in C major. Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. Free. [url]
- 1:00 St. James Cathedral. Organ Recital. Imre Olah, organ. Cathedral Church of St. James, 106 King St. E. 416-384-7065. Free. Live & ONLINE.
- 9:00 Roy Thomson Hall. Father John Misty. 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. From $10.

Wednesday September 28

- 12:15 St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. (Kitcheners). Douglas Haas Legacy Concerts. Cynthia Steele, cello, 54 Queen St. N. Kitcheners. 599-578-4430. Live & LIVESTREAM.
- 5:00: Massey Hall. Ringo Starr and His All Starr Band. 178 Victoria St. 416-872-4255. From $54.

Sunday September 25

- 2:00 Royal Conservatory of Music. Mazzoleni Masters: John Constantin, Mazzoleni Concert Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or [url]. com/performances.
- 2:00 Saint Margaret's Church. Vania Chan, viola; Noah Costa, cello; Daniel Hazzard, piano; Charles Hopp, organ. 3440 155 RR 2; Mitchell, www.st-margaretschurch.ca/c-2s.
- 5:00 Don Wright Faculty of Music. Faculty Concert: Konji Kim and Michael Kim: Konji Kim and Michael Kim, piano duo. Von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3876 or [url]. com/events. Live. FREE & LIVESTREAM.

Friday September 30

- 7:30 Toronto Orchestra. Festival. Dvorak: Symphony No.7. Von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3876 or [url]. com/events. Live. FREE & LIVESTREAM.
- 8:00 Rose Theatre. The Tenors: Now and Forever. 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-876-2800 or [url]. ca. $93-$119.

Saturday October 1

- 4:00 Toronto Operaetta Theatre. Cabaret: At the Savoy with G&D. Featuring the works of Gilbert & Sullivan. Toronto Operaetta Theatre Cabaret Ensemble. Edward Jackman Centre, 947 Queen St. E., 2nd Floor. 416-366-7725 or 1-800-708-6754 or [url]. com/events. $45.
- 6:00 Don Wright Faculty of Music. Faculty of Music Concert. Hening Schröder, vocalist; Sonny Balcones, saxophone; Yu-Lien The, piano. Von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3876 or [url]. com/events. Live. FREE & LIVESTREAM.


**Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra**

**Saturday Oct. 1 8 pm**

**P.C. Ho Theatre**

**Vivian Fung** (Canadian) **Prayer**

**Liszt Piano Concerto No.1 in Eflat with soloist Ryan Huang**

**Elgar Enigma Variations**

The event features a variety of musical performances by prominent artists and ensembles, including a world premiere of a new work by Vivian Fung and a Liszt Piano Concerto No.1 performed by Ryan Huang. The event also includes Elgar Enigma Variations by the Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra.

**Together Again**

**Isaac Page**

**World Premiere!**

**Sun. Oct. 2, 4pm**

**www.flutestreet.ca**

The Together Again event includes a world premiere of a new work by Isaac Page. The event is held at the Flutestreet venue.

**Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra**

**Sept 20 to Nov 8, 2022**

The Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra presents a series of concerts featuring various musical works and artists. The event includes performances by Vivian Fung, Ryan Huang, and the Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra.

**LIVE & ONLINE**

The event is available both live and online.

**Violin Masterclass with Vivian Fung**

Vivian Fung will be presenting a masterclass for violinists. The event is scheduled for a specific date and time.

**Flute Street**

Flute Street is a venue where various musical performances and events take place. The event listed is the Together Again event.

**Cathedral Bluffs**

Cathedral Bluffs is another venue where musical performances and events take place. The event listed is the Together Again event.

**Notes to the Unforgettable**

This event features a variety of musical works and artists, including a world premiere by Vivian Fung. The event is held at a specific venue and is scheduled for a specific date and time.
Larkin, Organ. All Saints Kingsway Anglican Church, 2850 Bloor St. W. 416-571-3680 or organconcerts.ca. Freewill offering ($20 suggested).


8:00: Massey Hall. The Mars Volta Tour. 178 Victoria St. 416-872-4255. From $83.

October Thursday 6 | 1.30 PM
Michael Bridge with Ladom Ensemble & Joseph Macerollo 416-923-7052 wmct.on.ca

- 1:30: Music in the Afternoon. Michael Bridge with Ladom Ensemble and Joseph Macerollo. Works by Bach, Gabrieli, Piazzolla, and Radiohead. Michael Bridge, accordion; Ladom Ensemble (Michael Bridge, accordion; Adam Campbell, percussion; Pouya Hamidi, piano; Beth Silver, cello); Joseph Macerollo, accordion. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-923-7052 X1. $45; free (with ID).

- 7:30: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Star Wars: The Force Awakens - In Concert. Sarah Hicks, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $78. Also Oct 6 (8:10 PM) and 7:30 PM.


- 8:00: Rose Theatre. Johnny Reid: Live Someone. 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. 805-874-2800 or www.therosetheatre.ca. $64.84.

- 8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Joshua Weilerstein Conducts the Royal Conservatory Orchestra. Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmconservatory.ca. From $25.

Saturday October 8

- 12:30: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Star Wars: The Force Awakens - In Concert. Sarah Hicks, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $78. Also Oct 7 (8:10 PM) and 7:30 PM.

- 8:00: Don Wright Faculty of Music. New Orford String Quartet. Von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767 or www.music.uwo.ca/events. Free. LIVE & LIVESTREAM.

October Friday 7 | 12:10 PM
Music at St. Andrew’s. Noontime Recital. Works by Beethoven and Mischa Oshima. The Ezra Duo: Jacob Clewell, violin; Sasha Bult-Itzo, piano. St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church (Toronto), 73 Simcoe

Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmconservatory.ca. From $25.

Sunday October 9

- 12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company. The Flying Dutchman. See Oct 7. Also Oct 15, 19, 21, 23(2pm). At 7:30 PM unless otherwise noted.


- 7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Toronto Composers Concert. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-878-3750 or music.uwaterloo.ca. Free.

Wednesday October 12

- 12:15: St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church (Kitchener). Douglas Haas Legacy Concerts. Matthew Gartshore, piano. 54 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-578-4430. LIVE & LIVESTREAM.


- 7:00: Tafelmusik. Tafel Talks: The New Romantics.果Can historical information perform (HP) bring something new and vital to music by 19th-century composers? Join us for a lively panel discussion exploring the expanding repertoire of HP, Ruth Denton, Vijay Chalassani, and Tanya Tomkins, panelists; Keiran Campbell, moderator: 1-833-964-6337 or tickets@tafelmusik.org. $5. Join live and then re-watch for up to 48 hours after the original broadcast. ONLINE.

- 7:30: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Pacifica String Quartet. Bocchenniana. Works by Luigi Boccherini and his contemporary, including Maddalena, Lombardi, and Sirnen. Elinor Frey, cello; and others. St. Thomas’s Anglican Church (Toronto), 363 Huron St. info@confluenceconcerts.ca. FREE. LIVE & ONLINE.

- 7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Chamber Music Concert. Hahn: Variations chantantes sur un air ancien; Fauré: Gavotte in E minor. TSO.CA

October 13 at 8 pm music-toronto.com

- 8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Bron- mom Plays Beethoven. Volpini: Celebration Prelude (World Premiere); Ligeti: Atmos- phères; Haydn: Symphony No. 39 (“Tempesta di mare”); Schuman: subito con forza (Canadian Premiere); Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 3 and others. Yefim Bronfman, piano; Gustavo Gimeno, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $35. Also Oct 14 (7:30 PM), 15.

- 8:00: Massey Hall. Regina Spektor. 178 Victoria St. 416-872-4255. From $52.
Pay-Your-Age (18-35).  
- 9:00: Silence. Pierre Bensusan in Concert. World music, Latin jazz, Celtic, classical fusion. Pierre Bensusan, guitar. 46 Essex St., Guelph. www.silencesounds.ca/events or info@silencesounds.ca.

Friday October 14

- 12:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Fridays at 12:30 Concert Series. Simona Genga, mezzo; Stéphane Mayer, piano. Von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767 or www.music.uwo.ca/events. Free. Live & LIVESTREAM.
- 7:30: Canadian Opera Company. Carmen. Music by Georges Bizet. J.Nai Bridges/ Ribah Ochale, mezzo (Carmen); Marcelo Puente, tenor (Don José); Joyce El-Khoury/ Anna-Sophie Neher, soprano (Morganza); Lucas Meacham, baritone (Escamillo); Alain Coulombe, bass (Zuniga); and others. Canadian Opera Company Orchestra & Chorus; Jacques Lacombe, conductor; Joel Ivany, director. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. 416-868-8333 or 1-800-265-4633. From $22. Also Oct 16(2pm), 20, 22, 26, 28, 30(2pm), Nov 4. At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.
- 7:30: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Bruch: Violin Concerto No.1 in G minor (Carmen); Violin: Violin Concerto No.1 in G minor (Carmen); Violin: Violin Concerto No.1 in G minor. Carmen. Music by Georges Bizet. J.Nai Bridges/ Ribah Ochale, mezzo (Carmen); Marcelo Puente, tenor (Don José); Joyce El-Khoury/ Anna-Sophie Neher, soprano (Morganza); Lucas Meacham, baritone (Escamillo); Alain Coulombe, bass (Zuniga); and others. Canadian Opera Company Orchestra & Chorus; Jacques Lacombe, conductor; Joel Ivany, director. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. 416-868-8333 or 1-800-265-4633. From $22. Also Oct 16(2pm), 20, 22, 26, 28, 30(2pm), Nov 4. At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.
- 7:30: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Bruch: Violin Concerto No.1 in G minor (Carmen); Violin: Violin Concerto No.1 in G minor (Carmen); Violin: Violin Concerto No.1 in G minor. Carmen. Music by Georges Bizet. J.Nai Bridges/ Ribah Ochale, mezzo (Carmen); Marcelo Puente, tenor (Don José); Joyce El-Khoury/ Anna-Sophie Neher, soprano (Morganza); Lucas Meacham, baritone (Escamillo); Alain Coulombe, bass (Zuniga); and others. Canadian Opera Company Orchestra & Chorus; Jacques Lacombe, conductor; Joel Ivany, director. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. 416-868-8333 or 1-800-265-4633. From $22. Also Oct 16(2pm), 20, 22, 26, 28, 30(2pm), Nov 4. At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.

5:00: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Western University Symphony Orchestra: Pastiche. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-5767 or www.music.uwo.ca/events. Free, LIVE & LIVESTREAM.

8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Piano Recital: Marc-André Hamelin. Dukas: Sonata in e-flat; Debussy: New Work (world premiere); Fauré: Barcarolle no.1 in a, Nocturne no.2 in B, Nocturne no.12 in e, Barcarolle no.6 in E-flat and others. Keenner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performance. $45-$95.

4:00: Burlington Performing Arts Centre. Art of Time Ensemble: To The End of Love – The Songs of Leonard Cohen. Steven Page, Sarah Sloan, Tom Wilson, Gregory Hoskins and Tamara Lindeman. 440 Locust St., Burlington. bpacboxoffice@burlington.ca.

Tuesday October 18

11:30am: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Piano Master Class. Dr. Margo Garrett, collaborative piano. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750 or www.music.utoronto.ca.


7:30: Amici Chamber Ensemble. La Flûte Enchantée. Marina Piccinni, flute; Erik Baum, cello; Studio Stain, piano. Thompson Recital Hall, Don Wright Faculty of Music. Dr. Margo Garrett, collaborative piano. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750 or www.music.utoronto.ca.

1:00: Dr. Margo Garrett. Organ Recital. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750 or www.music.utoronto.ca. Free.


Wednesday October 19


10:00am: Beach United Church. Lecture: The Beatles and Their World. See Lectures below.


12:30: ORGANIX Concerts. Aaron James, organ. All Saints Kingsway Anglican Church, 2850 Bloor St. W. 416-571-3680 or organixconcerts.ca. Freewill offering ($20 suggested)


7:15: Barrie Concert Band. Veterans Salute. A variety of music will be performed at this concert held annually to thank both our veterans and our members that are currently serving, The Barrie Concert Band & The Skyliners, Royal Canadian Legion (Barrie), 410 St. Vincent St., Barrie. 705-735-0720 or www.barrieconcertband.org/view-event/annual-veterans-salute. Free. No ticket required. Donations to the Barrie Food Bank will be gratefully accepted.

7:30: Canadian Opera Company. The Flying Dutchman. See Oct 7. Also Oct 21, 23(2pm). At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.

Thursday October 20


12:10: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Laureates. Aaron Chow, piano, DMA Competition Winner; Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750 or www.music.utoronto.ca. Free.

7:00: Burlington Performing Arts Centre. Across the Pond: The British Invasion. 440 Locust St., Burlington. bpacboxoffice@burlington.ca. Also Oct 21, 22 & 23.

12:30: Niagara Symphony Orchestra. Sympohonically Hip. Braey Thachuk, conductor. Avalon Theatre (Fallsview Casino), 6380 Fallsview Blvd., Niagara Falls. 905-687-4893. $65; $60(sr); $39(arts worker with valid ID); $15(students/university or college with valid ID); $15(lastyear-18 and under with valid ID).
Burlington Performing Arts Centre, 7:30:

- 7:30: Opera Atelier. Purcell’s Dido & Aeneas. Megan Lindsay, soprano (Dido); Colin Ainsworth, tenor (Aeneas); Melody Louledjian, soprano (Belinda); Maasha Brueggengrass-Leen, soprano (Sorceress); Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and others. Elgin Theatre, 189 Yonge St. 416-733-7474 x700 or OperaAtelier.com. From $55. Also Oct 22, 23(2:30pm).

- 8:00: Flato Markham Theatre. Abbamania & Night Fever. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. www.flatomarkhamtheatre.ca or 905-305-3669 or boxoffice@markham.ca. $60-$65.


Friday October 21


- 5:00: North York Concert Orchestra. Mendelssohn’s Symphony No.3 (Italian). St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church (London), 468 Wellington St., London. 519-661-3767 or www.music.uwo.ca/events. Free. LIVE & LIVESTREAM.

- 7:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Days at 12:30 Concert Series: Duo Concert. Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767 or www.music.uwo.ca/events. $45/$20(adv); $50/$25 at door. LIVE & LIVESTREAM.


Saturday October 22


- 3:00: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Western University Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Band: Affirmation. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767 or www.music.uwo.ca/events. Free. LIVE & LIVESTREAM.

- 4:00: Elmer Iseler Singers. Walk and Touch Peace. Timothy Corlis: Om Saha Nāvavatu (may we all be protected and blessed); Hussein Janmohamed: Sun on Water; Myros: Souvenir for Violin & Piano from Jewish Folk Poetry (Ban, benedict); Lalo: Cello Concerto; Grieg: Paganini Concerto. Elmer Iseler Singers; Lydia Adams, conductor. Eglinton St. George’s United Church, 35 Lytton Blvd. 416-217-0537 or info@elmeriseleringers.com.


- 7:30: Soundstreams. Surface Tension. Donnacha Dennehy: Surface Tension. TorQ Percussion Quartet. Universal Music, 80 Atlantic Avenue. kirktsoundsca.com or 416-504-1282 or www.soundstreams.ca. $20-$75. Also 9:30pm.

- 7:30: Burlington Performing Arts Centre. Across the Pond: The British Invasion. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Burlington. bpacboxoffice@burlington.ca. From $35.

- 7:30: Canadian Opera Company. Carmen. See Oct 14. Also Oct 26, 28, 30(2pm), Nov 4. At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.

- 7:30: Grand Philharmonic Choir. Mendelssohn’s Elijah. Jacqueline Woodley, soprano; Allison McHardy, mezzo; Owen McCausland, tenor; Jacqueline Woodley, baritone; Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony; Grand Philharmonic Choir: Mark Vuorinen, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-578-5660 x 2290 or info@grandphilchoir.com or www.grandphilchoir.com. $27-$41; $19(st/under-30); $9(child/high-school st). Also Oct 21 & 23.

- 7:30: Canadian Opera Company. Carmen. See Oct 14. Also Oct 26, 28, 30(2pm), Nov 4. At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.


- 8:00: Sinfonia Toronto. Dvorak & Dvořák. Host: Capriccio Ball; Hatzis; Arabeque; Dvořák; Serenade. Christina Quilic, piano;
Marc Djokic, violin; Nurhan Arman, conductor. George Weston Recital Hall, Meridian Arts Centre, 5040 Yonge St. 416-499-0403 or info@sinfoniatoronto.com. TBA.


- 8:00: Toronto Operaetta Theatre. Orpheus in the Underworld. See Oct 21. Also Oct 23(2pm).


- 8:30: Soundstreams. Surface Tension. Donnacha Dennehy: Surface Tension. Tord O Perussion Quartet. Universal Music, 80 Atlantic Avenue. kirk@soundstreams.ca or 416-504-1282 or www.soundstreams.ca. $20-$75. Also 7pm.

- 7:30: Opera Atelier. Purcell’s Dido & Aeneas. See Oct 20

Sunday October 23

- 2:00: Canadian Opera Company. The Flying Dutchman. See Oct 7.

Monday October 24

- 8:00: Orchestra Toronto. Symphony Pathétique. Elizabeth Raum: Mirror Image; Grieg: Piano Concerto in a; Tchaikovsky: Symphony No.6 in b “Pathétique”. Alexander Panizza, piano; Michael Newnham, conductor. George Weston Recital Hall, Meridian Arts Centre, 5040 Yonge St. 1-855-885-2707 or ticket-master.ca, $45; $39 (sr); $19 (OTOPus ages 13 to 29); $15 (ages 5-12). OTOPus patrons may purchase one additional ticket at the discounted rate for a guest of any age. Pre-concert chat at 2:15pm.

- 8:00: Toronto Operaetta Theatre. Orpheus in the Underworld. See Oct 21.

- 1:00: Organ Recital. Michelle Cann, Piano

- 7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Contemporary Music Ensemble. Alfred Schnittke: Four Aporhisms; Sampo Haapamaki: Signature; Mason Bates: Omnivorous Furniture; Magnus Lindberg: Arena II. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-408-0208. $30; $20 (sr); $10 (st). U of T students admitted free with a valid TCARD, space permitting.


- 8:00: Brampton Civic Centre. Jazz at LBP: Music for Secret Agents - The Music of James Bond and More Spy Jazz! Diamonds Are Forever, Goldfinger, Theme from Our Man Flint and original songs such as X-Ray Spectacles" and Living in A Cage. Irene Torres, vocals; Queen Pepper, vocals; John Finley, vocals; Jaynee Bee, host. Lester B. Pearson Theatre, 2411 Mississauga Rd. $25. Free. Retiring collection.

- 8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Gustavo Gimeno, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performances. $50-$100. World Premiere of Thomas Adès: Asyla for large orchestra. Alex Rupta by Lorenzo Naccarato Trio. Benjamin Naud, drums; Lorenzo Naccarato, piano and original songs such as X-Ray Spectacles” and Living in A Cage. Irene Torres, vocals; Queen Pepper, vocals; John Finley, vocals; Jaynee Bee, host. Lester B. Pearson Theatre, 2411 Mississauga Rd. $25. Free. Retiring collection.

Tuesday October 25


- 7:30: Canadian Opera Company. Carmen. See Oct 14. Also Oct 28, 7:30(2pm), Nov 4. At 730pm unless otherwise noted.

- 7:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Choral Concert: Leipzig Choristers & St. Cecilia Singers. Von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767 or www.music.uwo.ca/events. Free. LIVE & LIVESTREAM.


- 12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company. Showcase Series: Cuban Rhythms. Richard Braddish Amphitheatre, Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. Free.

- 7:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Choral Concert: Oratorio & Western University Singers. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767 or www.music.uwo.ca/events. Free. LIVE & LIVESTREAM.


- 8:00: Esprit Orchestra. Spira. Unsuk Chin: Spira, concerto for orchestra (Canadian premiere); Christopher Goddard: Les vingtes des jutres titanesque pour orchestre; Thomas Ades: Asyla for large orchestra. Alex
Unsuk Chin Spira
Concerto for Orchestra
Thu Oct 27
ESPRIT ORCHESTRA
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Pauk, conductor. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 237 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or www.espiritorchestra.com or info@espiritorchestra.com. $27-$65. 7:15pm; pre-concert chat with Alexina Louie.


Friday October 28


Saturday October 29


Sunday October 30

2:00: Canadian Opera Company. Carmen. See Oct 4. Also Oct 29. At 3pm.


2:30: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Grieg & Sibelius. Assignment: MegaKwaaang (In the Woods) (KWS commission): Grieg: Piano Concerto in a; Sibelius: Symphony No.3 in C. Alexander Dariescu, piano; Andrei Fehr, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717. 8:00. Also Oct 30(2:30pm).


8:00: Rose Theatre. Northern Happiness. The Pursuit of Happiness: Kevin Kane, Jay Semko, Bryan Potvin, Don Schmid; The Northern Pikes. 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-874-2800 or www.therosetheatre.ca. $15-$49.


NOVA RUPTA BY LORENZO NACCARATO TRIO
OCTOBER 25 AT 8PM

ALLIANCE FRANCAISE TORONTO

thewholenote.com
2022-09-18   12:29:25 PM

- **Niagara Symphony Orchestra.** Mahler’s Fourth. Morlock: My Name Is Adminda Todd; Barber: Knoxville: Summer 1915; Mahler: Symphony No.4. Claire de Sévigné, soprano; Bradley Thachuk, conductor. Partridge Hall, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 905-681-4995; $58; $45(sr); $30(arts worker with valid ID); $15(students-university or college with valid ID); $15(youth-18 and under with valid ID).

- **University of Toronto Faculty of Music.** Soprano-Alto Chorus, Tenor-Bass Choir, and Chamber Choir. Kathleen Allan: Maid on the Shore, The Green and Salty Days; Fauré: Lydia; Darius Lim: The Fire Dance of Luna; Alexandra Olsavsky: What Happens When a Woman; Veljo Tormis: Tantsulaul; Jean-Sébastien Vallée, conductor. Roy Thomason Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3873; $35-$59.50; $37-$55(sr); $24.95(VODTicket).


- **Toronto Mendelssohn Choir.** Mendelssohn’s Elijah. Mendelssohn Choir; Wendy Wagler, director. 54 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-578-4430. LIVESTREAM.

- **Organix Concerts.** Zoe Kai Wai Lai, Organ. All Saints Kingsway Anglican Church, 2850 Bloor St. W. 416-571-3680 or organixconcerts.ca. Freewill offering ($30 suggested).


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LIVE OR ONLINE | Sep 20 to Nov 8, 2022

Guelph Chamber Choir; Guelph Youth Singers; Rainbow Chorus of Waterloo-Wellingto-; University of Guelph Symphonic Choir; Gryphon Singers Charlene Pauls, conductor. Harcourt United Church, 87 Dean Ave., Guelph. www.guelphchamberchoir.ca/events/side-by-side.- $35; $30(sr); $10(ages 16-30); $5(ages under 15); $20(livestream). LIVE & LIVESTREAM.

- 7:30: INNERchamber Inc. Ballycroy. Marek Norman's tragic tale of the death of three Irish milliners is inspired by a true story from Ballycroy, Ontario at the end of the 19th century. INNERchamber Ensemble; Barbara Barsky (Mary Fanning); Laura Condlitn (Bridget Burke); Marti Maraden, stage director; Krista Leis, choreographer. Avondale United Church, 194 Avondale Ave., Stratford. tickets@innerchamber.ca. $40; $10(arts works/st). LIVE & LIVESTREAM. Pre-show 7pm. No meal available.
- 8:00: Masssey Hall. Naseer Shamma and Anwar Abudagha. 178 Victoria St. 416-872-4255. From $46.
- 8:00: Rose Theatre. This Is Brampton: Drive- wire. 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-874-2800 or www.therosetheatre.ca. $15.
- 8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Quiet Please, There’s a Lady on Stage. Jazmina Ho. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performance. From $45.

Sunday November 6

- 2:00: St. Anne’s Music & Drama Soci- ety. The Sorcerer. Sea Nov 4. Also Nov 10(7:30pm); 11(7:30pm); 12(2pm); 13(2pm).

Tuesday November 8

- 12:30: ORGANIX Concerts. Ian Grundy, Organ. Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church, 3055 Bloor St. W. 416-471-3680 or organixconcerts.ca. Free will offering ($20 suggested).

MAINLY CLUBS

Live music is back! As venues begin to reopen, please consult their web- sites and social media directly to confirm their reopening plans, COVID-19 policies, and any other pertinent information to make your visit fun, safe, and enjoyable. Enjoy!

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Drom Taberna
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Grossman’s Tavern
379 Spadina Ave. 416-977-7000 grossmantavern.com
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Hirut Cafe and Restaurant
2050 Danforth Ave. 416-551-7560 hirut.ca
A major destination for delicious and nutritious Ethiopian cuisine, with monthly jazz residencies and jam sessions.

Home Smith Bar – See Old Mill, The
296 Broadway Ave. 416-533-5483 hughroom.com
A dedicated listening room with an intimate performing space, great acoustics, and an attentive audience.

Jazz Bistro, The
251 Victoria St. W. 416-363-5299 jazzbistro.ca
In an historic location, Jazz Bistro features great food, a stellar wine list, and world-class jazz musicians in airy club environs.

Jazz Room, The
Located in the Humber Hotel, 59 King St. N., Waterdown. 1.26-476-1665 kvjazzroom.com
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Lula Lounge
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Toronto’s mecca for salsa, jazz, afro-Cuban, and world music, with Latin dance classes, and excellent food and drinks.

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951 Gordon St., Guelph 519-767-2440 manhattans.ca
An independently owned neighbourhood restaurant boasting a unique dining experience that features live music almost every night of the week.

Mezzetta Restaurant
681 St. Clair Ave. W. 416-658-5687 mezzetarestaurant.com
With a cozy atmosphere and a menu of Mid- dle-Eastern cuisine, Mezzetta hosts music on Wednesday evenings.

Monarch Tavern
12 Clinton St. 416-531-5833 themonarchtavern.com
With a café/cocktail bar on the main floor and a pub with microbrews upstairs, Monarch Tavern regularly hosts indie, rock, and other musical genres on its stage.

Nico Bistro, The
117 Brock St. N., Whitby. 905-668-8399 nicobistro.com
A French restaurant with Mediterranean flare; Nice Bistro hosts ticketed live music events once every month or so.

Old Mill, The
21 Old Mill Rd. 416-236-2641 oldmilltoronto.com
The Home Smith Bar: With a stone-lined room and deep, pasting, the Home Smith Bar provides elevated pub food and cocktails along with straight-head live jazz.

Pilot Tavern, The
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Poetry Jazz Café
1078 Queen St West. poetryjazzcafe.com
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Reposado Bar & Lounge
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Reservoir Lounge, The
52 Wellington St. E. 416-955-0857 reservourlounge.com
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The Senator Winebar
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292 Brunswick Ave. 416-923-8137 tranzac.org
A community arts venue dedicated to supporting, presenting, and promoting creative and cultural activity in Toronto, with live shows in multiple rooms every day of the week.

CLASSES, LECTURES & WORKSHOPS

CLUBS
- Sep 22 8:00: Hugh’s Room. Lonesome Ave Stringband. 3030 Dundas West, 3030 Dundas St. W... hughsroomlive.com.
- Sep 30 8:00: Hugh’s Room. Jadae Kelly With Ryan O’Reilly. Revideo Bar, 763 College St. www.hughsroomlive.com. $35(live); $10(livestream). LIVING & LIVESTREAM.
- Oct 02 8:00: The Emmet Ray. E3 by Alex Lakusta Live at The Emmet Ray. Alex Lakusta, bass; Josh Smiley, keyboards/synthesizers; Keagan Eksridd, drums/symbols. 904 College St. Contact resosara@erbar.ca to reserve. $10(with reservation); $15(walk in).
- Oct 06 7:00: Revideo Bar. Paolo Angelil, Guitar; 783 College St. Suggested donation: $25.
- Nov 03 8:00: Hugh’s Room. Alfre Zappacosta. 3030 Dundas West, 3030 Dundas St. W... hughsroomlive.com.

FESTIVALS
- 11:00am: Screening of Glenn Gould: The Russian Journey by Yosif Fyigernberg. Following the film, a panel discussion on the geo-political importance of cultural diplomacy and soft power during times of global conflict like these. Panelists: Janice Stein, Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy and architect Jack Diamond.
- 1:35pm: Concert. Daniel Harris, cello; Kevin Arabit, piano.
- 2:45pm: Artificial Intelligence Demonstration and Canadian Premiere of Dear Glenn.
- 3:15pm: Panel Discussion on the Implications of Artificial Intelligence for the Future of Music and Human Creativity.
- 3:45pm: Presentation: Glenn Gould’s
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- 4:30pm: Film Screening: The Goldberg Variations.
- 7:30pm: Concert. Leila Josefowicz, violin.


LIVE REHEARSAL OPPORTUNITIES
- The Choralairs. Welcoming singers in all voice parts as they resume in-person rehearsals (with masks & Covid safety protocols) starting Tuesday September 13th. Rehearsals are 7pm-8:45pm at Edithvale C.C. 131 Finch Ave W. Toronto. Please contact Elaine at 905-731-8416 or choralairs@gmail.com to let us know if you are coming. Check out our website at: www.choralairschoir.com.

- Etobicoke Centennial Choir welcomes new choristers for the 2022-2023 season. Interested singers are invited to attend our Open Rehearsal on Sep 13 at 7:30 pm at Humber Valley United Church, 76 Anglesey Blvd. in Etobicoke. Participants will sing with the choir during rehearsal, meet the conductor and choristers and discover what ECC has to offer. Some prior choral experience and ability to read music is recommended. Masking is required while singing and inside the building. Discover the rewards of singing in our wonderful community choir! For further information: info@etobicokecentennialchoir.ca or 416-433-5495 or www.etobicokecentennialchoir.ca

ONLINE GROUPS
- Recollective; A unique musical online meeting group made up of people affected by memory challenges caused by illness (such as dementia) or brain injury (stroke, PTSD, etc.) and their care partners. Participation is free with pre-registration. Email info@recollective.ca for meeting times, information and registration.

ONLINE ON DEMAND & PODCASTS
- Arts@Home. A vibrant hub connecting Torontonians to arts and culture. Designed to strengthen personal and societal resilience through the arts. www.artsathome.ca.
- Canadian Opera Company. Bluebeard’s Castle (Digital Performance). In this hybrid work, Atom Egoyan melds his acclaimed film Felicia’s Journey with the chilling one-act opera about an infamous recluse whose previous young wives have mysteriously disappeared. Kyle Ketelsen, bass-baritone (Duke Bluebeard); Krisztina Szabó, mezzo (Judith). Free with COC’s digital membership. Sign-up now at www.coc.ca/stream and www.coc.ca/Bluebeard for more information on how to watch, cast and creative team, and other Spring programming. Streaming now until Sep 24.

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(Skip the hug.)

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Editor’s Corner

DAVID OLDS

Russian composer Nicolai Korndorf (1947-2001) was a co-founder of the “new” ACM (association for contemporary music) in Moscow in 1990, but upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union he emigrated to Canada the following year. Russia’s loss was Canada’s gain and for a decade, until his sudden death in 2001, Korndorf was an associate composer of the Canadian Music Centre and an integral part of Vancouver’s contemporary music scene. The Smile of Maud Lewis (Redshift Records TK516 redshift-records.org), released to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the composer’s birth, features three works “that mark a creative high-point and artistic rite of passage from his native Russia to Canada.” As the liner notes point out, all three are based on thematic material from earlier works. The booklet includes notational examples of these themes from Con Sordino for 16 strings and the included Lullaby, both dating from 1984, which became a sort of signature for Korndorf in his later works.

The disc begins with the title work, a tribute to the Nova Scotia folk artist who lived from 1903 until 1970. Korndorf said in an interview in 1998: “Discovering the art of Maud Lewis was the most important cultural experience for me since moving to Canada.” The Smile of Maud Lewis captures the sunny disposition and sense of wonder inherent in Lewis’ paintings, with a joyous ostinato of mallet percussion, celesta, flute/piccolo/recorder and full strings underpinning long, melodious horn lines. Somewhat reminiscent of early John Adams, with swelling cadences à la Philip Glass, the work builds dynamically Bolero-like throughout its quarter-hour length, only relaxing in its final minute to a glorious, gentle close. Conductor Leslie Dala captures both the exuberance and the nuance of this sparkling work.

Triptych for cello and piano opens abruptly with raucous chords in the cello which gradually resolve into an extended solo Lament in which Ariel Barnes is eventually joined by pianist Anna Levy. Levy begins the second movement Response with an ostinato once again drawing on Korndorf’s signature themes, this time supporting an extended melody line in the cello. Quiet pizzicato opens the final Glorification where arco cello and piano counterpoint gradually grow into celebratory ecstasy. Jane Hayes joins Levy for the final two tracks, Korndorf’s above-mentioned ebullient, though quiet, Lullaby for two pianos, and the gentle half-light, somnolent rains for piano duo by his former student Jocelyn Morlock, written in tribute to her mentor on the fifth anniversary of his death. These marvellous performances are a strong testament to the importance Nicolai Korndorf and his legacy.

The title of this next disc, ppp (i.e. pianississimo), led me to expect a quiet and contemplative experience; it turns out, however, to be an acronym for the last names of the Latvian composers involved: Peteris Plakidis, Kristaps Petersons and Georgs Pelecs. ppp features Gidon Kremer and his Kremerata Baltica (LMIC/SKANI 139 skani. lv) in works for various chamber combinations and for full ensemble. It begins with Little Concerto for two violins (1991) by Plakidis (1947-2019), a three-movement work performed by Kremer and Madara Petersone, which reminds me of Bartók and Berio violin duos with its folk-like idioms and exuberance. Petersone’s (b.1982) performs his own craggy Ground for double bass solo and is joined by Juri Gavriljuk and Andrei Pushkarev for it = 3,14 for two double basses, percussion and recording, a work somewhat suggestive of a sci-fi soundtrack. Petersone’s Music for Large Ensemble is performed by Kremerata Lettonica, a nine-piece string ensemble supplemented with electric guitar played by the composer. This too seems to have electronic aspects, presumably executed by the guitarist since no recording is mentioned. It is in three movements, the last and longest of which is nominally minimalist and features violin solos themselves reminiscent of electric guitar lines.

Three pieces from Fiori Musicali (2017-2022) by Pelēcis (b.1947) prove to be the most traditional on the album, the use of vibraphone as soloist with string orchestra notwithstanding. Pelēcis named his “blooming garden” after a collection of liturgical organ works by Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643). The middle movement Dance of the Peonies has definite shades of Respighi about it. Cosmea Melancholy features Kremer as soloist, and once again we hear the vibraphone in an unusual context in this gloomy finale to a somewhat surprising disc.

Speaking of string ensembles, the All-American Cello Band performs the title track of the CD The Strange Highway featuring music by Iranian-American composer Gity Razaz (b.1986) (BIS-2634 bis.se). I feel compelled to point out that this so-called all-American band includes the Halifax-born Denise Djokic of the famed Nova Scotia musical dynasty, and also Icelander Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir, although admittedly they both currently reside in America. The Strange Highway takes its title from a poem by Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño: “You wish the angst would disappear / While rain falls on the strange highway / Where you find yourself.” Razaz says she was “moved by the potent sense of desolation and vulnerability expressed through the poem’s imagery.” The cello octet she has created, beginning with a driving, almost violent, moto perpetuo that gradually shifts into lyrical melancholia before coming full circle and effectively “capture[s] and recreate[s] these emotions.”

The next three works are for smaller forces – Duo for violin and piano, Legend of the Sigh for cello and electronics and Spellbound for solo viola – composed in 2007, 2015 and 2020 respectively. Francesca dalPasquale and Scott Cuellar shine in the two movements of the duo that explores contrasting aspects of a single melody. Inbal Segev is the dedicatee of Legend and he performs the challenging yet lyrical live and pre-recorded cello parts against an eerie and effective electronic backdrop. Katharina Kang Litton is the soloist in the haunting Spellbound, based on an original melody that “evokes the improvisatory lyricism of traditional Persian music.”

The final work, Metamorphosis of Narcissus for chamber orchestra
and fixed electronics dates from 2011. Haunting again comes to mind as an apt descriptor, as solo woodwinds rise above a dense texture of strings, gongs and cymbals. Perhaps it is the surface similarity to George Crumb’s A Haunted Landscape that suggests the term. At any rate, Andrew Cyr and the Metropolis Ensemble are stellar in this culminating work on an excellent portrait disc. Razaz is definitely a young composer to keep an eye (ear) on.

Cellist Claire Bryant’s Whole Heart (Bright Shiny Things BSTC-0178 bright-shiny.ninja) represents both sides of her mandate as Assistant Professor of Cello and Coordinator for Community Engagement at the University of South Carolina. Bryant also directs the criminal justice initiative “Music for Transformation,” spearheaded by Carnegie Hall’s affiliate ensemble, Decoda, of which she is a co-founder. The seven works she has chosen, all by friends and colleagues, span 20 years of her career. Bryant says: “All these passionate works reflect love and the great human experience. Whole Heart is a reminder of the collective challenges we face and the resilience and strength that live inside each of us.”

Andrea Casarrubios’ SEVEN was composed in 2020 and was inspired by the early pandemic ritual in New York City of citizens celebrating and encouraging frontline workers by banging pots and pans each evening at 7pm. Ayudame (2004) by Adam Schoenberg was the first piece that Bryant ever commissioned, back when she was a student at Juilliard. Schoenberg says the Spanish title translates as “help me’ and refers, in part, to my struggle in composing the piece,” which also pushed the cellist with its juxtaposition of extreme virtuosity and high emotional output. They have both risen admirably to the challenge. Delta Sunrise by Jessica Meyer is a gentler, at times ethereal piece, inspired by the view from an early morning airplane journey after the composer’s inaugural trip to New Orleans. The other solo works are Varsha (Rain) by Reena Esmail, based on Hindustani ragas sung to beckon rain, and the playful And Even These Small Wonders by Tanner Porter which was “conceived in a trying time, but looks brightly towards the future.”

Bryant is joined by violinist Nadia Sirota for the quietly boisterous Limestone & Felt by her longtime friend Caroline Shaw. Shaw and Bryant met as young children as summer campers and Suzuki collaborators. There’s lots of pizzicato and some rolling unison passages in this piece which explores two “contrasting, common textures resonant, gleaming limestone and muted, soft felt.” The final work on this excellent and intriguing disc, Duo for violin and cello by Jessie Montgomery, features Ari Streifeld, another longtime friend and colleague. The opening and closing movements, - Meandering and Presto – are virtuosic and playful, while the contrasting middle Dirge is melancholy and contemplative. Montgomery says “the piece is meant as an ode to friendship with movements characterizing laughter, compassion, adventure, and sometimes silliness.” A perfect ending to an enticing disc.

Violinist Johnny Gandelsman embarked on a similar, although more ambitious, voyage during the pandemic by commissioning works from a number of his colleagues that would “reflect in some way on the time we were all living through,” a time that was overshadowed not only by COVID-19, but also by escalating racism, police brutality and the ever-increasing effects of climate change. This is America – An Anthology 2020-2021 (In A Circle Records IRC023 inacircle-records.com/releases) is a 3CD set of works for mostly solo violin by some two dozen composers ranging from five to 24 minutes in length. I say mostly solo violin because some tracks involve voice(s) and/or electronics, and some call for Gandelsman to perform on alternative instruments including acoustic and electric tenor guitars and five-string violin. Clocking in at nearly three and a half hours, one might expect the set to grow tiresome after a while; but I must say there is more than enough diversity to command and hold attention, at least when consumed one disc at a time.

There are far too many tracks to enumerate here, but some of the highlights for me include the following. Disc one opens with O for overdubbed voices and violin by Clarice Assad. It is a hauntingly lyrical meditation on oxygen ("O") referencing not only the respiratory distress and failure brought on by COVID-19 but also George-Floyd’s last words “I can’t breathe.” Layale Chaker’s Sinekeman, in which the solo violin evokes the spirit of the Ottoman ancestor of the violin (sinekeman) characterized by its seven sympathetic strings, is a study on solitude, “an ongoing flux of moments of self-sufficiency and struggle, lucidity and confusion, power and despair, already depicted by the aloneness of the solo instrument.” Nick Dunston’s percussive and scratchy Tardigrades was inspired by the phylum of eight-legged segmented micro-animals that can survive lack of food or water for up to three decades, withstand extreme temperatures and have even been reported to be able to survive the vacuum of outer space (although those on board Israel’s Beresheet mission, which crash-landed on the moon in 2019, are thought not to have survived).

Disc two begins gently with Gandelsman singing and whistling while strumming a tenor guitar on Marika Hughes’ With Love From J, commemorating the life of Jewlia Eisenberg with the lyric “...The sky above us / the ground below / 360 support around us / cut discursive thought. Can you hear / What we’ve learned / Through the years? That love, sweet love / Reminds us / What to listen for.” Angélica Negrón’s A través del manto luminoso (Through the luminous mantle) takes its inspiration from dark-sky photographs of the constellations of the southern sky in Puerto Rico. It juxtaposes the acoustic violin with synthetic sounds meant to replicate audio recordings of ancient stars made using data from NASA’s Kepler/K2 missions. The eerie sounds and the “lonely” violin suggest the depths of space and the wonder of the universe. The minimalist pioneer Terry Riley is one of the few composers on this anthology with whose music I would have said I am familiar. But I must say that Barbary Coast 1955 for five-string violin is unlike anything else of his that I have heard. Riley gives a blow-by-blow description of the genesis and development of the work in his 11-part program note, including a number of false starts and rejected ideas. What we are left with is a kind of alarming, South American melody “that might have found itself drifting into the weed-scented room of a Beat poet” in North Beach (San Francisco’s “Barbary Coast” section) in the 1950s. This slowly morphs into a rollicking Bach-like quasi-contrapuntal section before gradually winding down. Quite a striking work.

Disc three begins with the brief Stitched by Matana Roberts that seems to pick up right where Riley’s piece left off, opening very quietly with a longing melody that develops gently over its four-and-a-half-minute length before fading. With a seamless segue, Aeryn Santillan’s Withdraw is a work “reflecting on the state of society in 2020 through an intimate lens.” These two relatively short works are followed by more extended pieces by Tyshawn Sorey – For Courtney Bryan, strangely the only piece to not have a contextual program note in the otherwise quite detailed booklet – Anjna Swaminathan, Conrad Tao and Akshaya Tucker. The disc concludes with Breathe by Kojiro Umezaki, another meditation on the “world being brought to its knees by an inconspicuous peril replicating exponentially (and paradoxically) through the life-giving/sustaining act of breathing.” Throughout this impressive undertaking Gandelsman rises to all the myriad challenges, be they technical, stylistic or emotional. This is a compelling snapshot, or rather compendium, of America in the depths of a very troubled time, expressing anger, remorse, anguish and, most importantly, hope. Kudos to all concerned, especially Gandelsman who conceived the project and brought it to glorious fruition.

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.

David Olds, DISCoveries Editor discoveries@thewholenote.com
Every now and then a CD comes along of such stunning quality that it almost leaves you speechless. Such is the case with Avant Forage – French String Trios 1926-1939, a 2CD set priced as a single disc, featuring seven beautifully crafted works, mostly by composers who aren’t household names, in simply superb performances by the Chicago-based Black Oak Ensemble of violinist Desiree Ruhstrat, violist Aurelien Fort Pederzoli and cellist David Cunliffe (Cedille CD90000 212 cedillerecords.org).

The trios by Henri Tomasi, Robert Casadesus and Gustave Samazeuilh are world-premiere recordings; these three works, along with the trios by Jean Francois and Gabriel Pierne were all written for and dedicated to the renowned Trio Pasquier. The other two trios here are by Jean Cras and Emile Goue. All seven works are high quality and extremely attractive, and it’s hard to imagine their ever being played better – or with better recorded sound, for that matter.

The Madrid-based violist Wenting Kang, ably supported by pianist Sergei Kvitko makes her album debut with Mosaic, a CD celebrating an era in which Spanish and French composers were frequently friends and collaborators (Blue Griffin Records BGR609 bluegriffin.com).

Nearly all the tracks were adapted by Kang from violin or cello arrangement scores, to great effect – in fact, Kang sounds like a violin or cello in many of the pieces; her beautifully clear tone and dazzling technical perfection resulting in a wide range of tonal colour.

There are two pieces by Debussy, two by Ravel and four by Fauré, with Spain represented by the Tárrega Recuerdos de la Alhambra in the challenging Ruggiero Ricci solo transcription, the Albéniz Tango and the da Falla Seven Popular Spanish Songs. Casals’ Song of the Birds and a solo Fantasia on the same song by the Japanese composer Akira Nishimura round out a superlative disc.

There’s more outstanding viola playing on Charm, Passion, and Acrobatics – Music for Viola and Piano featuring violist Misha Galaganov and pianist John Owings (Navona NV6434 navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6434). The CD resulted from Galaganov’s purchase of a collection of music scores from the library of Armand Pushman, who died in 1999 aged 98, and who studied viola at the Paris Conservatory in his youth. Among the long-forgotten works were five featured here: the Nocturne (1905), the charming Prelude et Saltarelle (1907) and the short but intense Impromptu from 1922 by the French composer and conductor Désiré-Émile Inghelbrecht (1880-1965), and the 1921 Sonata and 1939 Rhapsodie by the French composer and organist Pierre Kunc (1865-1941), whose manuscripts remained available only to copyright holders until 2021. All are premiere recordings.

Chausson’s final work, the 1897 Piece for Cello (Violin or Viola) Op.39 completes an impressive CD.

Sonus et una (“Together and alone”) is a reflection on cellist Amit Peled’s journey during the COVID-19 pandemic, when he spent a lot of time playing the Bach cello suites in his home studio. The two that attracted him the most were the Suite No.4 in E-flat Major BWV1010 and the Suite No.5 in C Minor BWV1011, both presented on this deeply felt and immensely satisfying CD (CTM Classics 95269 15090 ctmclassics.com).

The cello is a Giovanni Grancino from c.1695, and Peled uses its deep, warm tone to maximum effect, creating smooth, flowing lines in beautifully judged readings that mine the emotional depths of these exceptional works.

An encore track is the one piece Peled was able to record with his students during the lockdown: an arrangement for eight cellos and piano of the Andante from Brahms’ Symphony No.3. It’s a lovely end to a quite beautiful disc.

When the Danish cellist Jonathan Swensen won the 2019 Windsor Festival International String Competition part of the prize was a debut recording with Champs Hill Records; his CD Fantasia – works for solo cello is the result (chandos.net/products/reviews/HR_168).

Swensen says that he wanted the studio recording to have “exactly the same energy that comes from a live concert,” and he certainly succeeds with a
stunning recital that simply cranks with electricity and intensity.

The established works are the Ligeti Sonata for Solo Cello with a dazzling Capriccio second movement, Dutilleux’s Trois strophes sur le nom de Sacher and a towering reading of the monumental Kodály Sonata for Solo Cello Op.8. A lesser-known work – which should surely be part of the standard repertoire – is Khachaturian’s terrific Sonata Fantasie for Solo Cello Op.104 from 1974, and the CD’s title track is the 2021 commission Farewell Fantasie by the Danish composer Bent Sørensen.

Outstanding technique and musical intelligence combine for a superb start to Swensen’s recording career.

Corazon (Heart) is the new CD from the American cellist John-Henry Crawford, accompanied for the most part by pianist Victor Santiago Asuncion and in three pieces by the South Korean guitarist Ji-Ji (Jiyeon Kim) in a program that reflects the cellist’s love of Latin American music (Orchard Classics ORC100198 orchid-classics.com).

The major work is the Sonata in G Minor by the Mexican composer Manuel Ponce, also represented by the well-known Estrellita and the title track Por ti mi corazón. There are short single pieces by Leo Brouwer, Carlos Guastavino and Egberto Gismonti, as well as three by Heitor Villa-Lobos and two by Astor Piazzolla, whose closing track Oblivion features Crawford on multiple-tracked cello. The guitar provides the accompaniment in Estrellita and the Brouwer and Gismonti pieces.

Every track is a gem, with Crawford quite superb in music he says “pulls at the heartstrings and exudes romance and passion” – as does the playing on a captivatingly gorgeous disc.

Longtime collaborators John Williams and Yo-Yo Ma reunite for A Gathering of Friends, their new CD with the New York Philharmonic featuring the premiere recording of the revised version of Williams’ Cello Concerto, originally written for Ma in 1994. Selections from three of Williams’ movie scores are also heard in new arrangements with solo cello (Sony Classical 8864.497.41939 sonyclassical.com/releases).

Don’t expect any Korngold-like movie material in the concerto – it’s an intense and highly compelling work very much in a modern style, with some lovely cello writing and a beautiful tonal final resolution.

Three pieces from Schindler’s List – Theme, Krakau Ghetto Winter 41 and Remembrances – need little introduction. The other movie tracks are With Malice Toward None from Lincoln and A Prayer For Peace from Munich, the latter a duo for Ma and guitarist Pablo Sáinz Villegas.

Ma is joined by harpist Jessica Zhou in A Gathering of Friends – Highwood’s Ghost, written in 2018 for the Bernstein Centenary at Tanglewood, where there is a legend of a ghost in the manor house.

If you still believe that contemporary string quartets are always a tough listen then Robert Paterson String Quartets 1-3 in superb performances by the Indianapolis Quartet should change your mind (American Modern Recordings AMR1054 americammodern-recordings.com).

This is clearly music to be enjoyed. String Quartet No.1 includes a “swing” first movement, a country waltz with a middle section called “Andrew Lloyd Webber Disease” and an Energetic Polka. String Quartet No.2 features Rigor Mortis, portraying the barking dog from the comic strip of the same name.

String Quartet No.3, commissioned by the Indianapolis Quartet explores “other voices,” including Tourette’s syndrome in Twist and Shout and an auctioneer and country fiddling in Auction Chant.

It’s imaginative, hugely entertaining and quite brilliant writing, with Paterson always in total control of style and structure.

Prism IV – Beethoven Mendelssohn Bach is the penultimate release by the Danish String Quartet in their Prism project, where a Bach fugue is connected to a late Beethoven quartet that is in turn connected to a quartet by a later master (ECM New Series ECM2564 ecmrecords.com/shop).

Bach’s Fugue in G Minor from Book 1 of the Well-Tempered Clavier opens the disc, followed by an intense performance of Beethoven’s String Quartet No.15 in A Minor Op.132, published in 1826. Crystal-clear definition, terrific ensemble, dynamics and tone all make for an outstanding reading.

The standard never drops in Mendelssohn’s String Quartet No.2 in A Minor Op.13, begun in July 1827 just months after Beethoven’s death. Mendelssohn was fascinated by Beethoven’s late quartets, and his Op.13 continues their progress towards the new Romanticism.

The 2CD set of Mozart String Quartets Vol.5 is the final volume in the series by the Armida Quartet (Avi 8353.496 avi-music.de).

The two earliest quartets are No.3 in G Major K196 and No.5 in F Major K158 from a group of six written in Milan in 1772. The Quartets No.10 in C Major K170, No.11 in E-flat Major K171 and No.13 in D Minor K173 are from the six “Viennese” quartets written the following year after Mozart’s exposure to Haydn’s recently published string quartets.

Finally, there are two works from the six “Haydn” quartets that followed the publication of Haydn’s own Op.33 set of six in 1783: No.15 in D Minor K421 and No.16 in E-flat Major K428.

The Armida Quartet is working with the publisher G. Henle Verlag on a new Urtext Edition of the Mozart quartets, and their insight and attention to detail are evident throughout finely judged performances.

There’s more top-notch quartet playing, this time from the Takács Quartet, on Haydn String Quartets Opp.42, 77 and 103 (Hyperion CDA68364 hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D_CDA68364).

The String Quartet in D Minor Op.42 was the first following the huge success of Haydn’s Op.33 set. The two Op.77 quartets – No.1 in G Major and No.2 in F Major – were the final two quartets that Haydn completed, the two middle movements of a quartet unfinished at his death and published as Op.103 completing the CD.

The Takács Quartet has previously released CDs of Haydn’s Op.71 and Op.74 Quartets to great acclaim and it’s easy to hear why, with bright, clear playing, a lovely dynamic range and a resonant recording making for a delightful disc.

The Brazilian guitarist Plínio Fernandes, now resident in London, makes his CD debut with Saudade (Nostalgia), a “virtuoso, soaring melodic set” combining his two passions – the popular songs of Brazil and the classical tradition of Villa-Lobos (Decca Gold 4857617 pliniofernandesmusic.com).

It’s the familiar Five Preludes of Villa-Lobos that are at the centre of a very attractive recital, the other 13 tracks featuring songs by, among others, Antônio Carlos Jobim, Milton Nascimento, Violeta Parra and Jacob do Bandolim, mostly in arrangements by Sergio Assad. Guest artists are cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason, his violinist brother Braimah and...
There’s another 2CD set of Beethoven Complete Music for Piano and Cello, an album dedicated to works by Debussy and Ravel and compositions by contemporary French guitarists Roland Dyens and Arnaud Dumont (ATMA Classique ACD2 2835 atmaclassique.com/en).

A dozen guitars sounds like a lot of separate voices, but the arrangements here are all in four parts with three players assigned to each, a system essentially ensuring a strong, even tone with no loss of dynamic range.

Forestaré, the Montreal ensemble of 12 guitars and a double bass celebrates its close ties with France on Douze Guitares à Paris, an album dedicated to works by Debussy and Ravel and compositions by contemporary French guitarists Roland Dyens and Arnaud Dumont (ATMA Classique ACD2 2835 atmaclassique.com/en).

A dozen guitars sounds like a lot of separate voices, but the arrangements here are all in four parts with three players assigned to each, a system essentially ensuring a strong, even tone with no loss of dynamic range.

DeMaine plays with a quite dark and rich tone, but tends to sound a bit muffled or indistinct at times, as if set too far back in the balance. There’s fine playing and ensemble work here though, particularly in the really tricky Allegro vivace movements.

Debut is the first recording by the Brazilian-Canadian Amorim-Rufino Duo of violinist Vladimir Rufino and violinist Fabiola Amorim in a recital of somewhat uneven musical and technical quality (Azul AMDA1755 azulmusic.com.br).

The 1789 Sonata No.1 by Paul Wanitsky and the 1788 Duo in C Major Op.19 No.4 by Franz Anton Hoffmeister open the disc, the latter the stronger piece with some particularly good viola work. The Villa-Lobos Duo from 1946 is followed by the world-premiere recording of Two Hearts in Concert, the short 2021 work written for the duo by Canadian composer Frank Horvat. The best work in the recital, Bohuslav Martinů’s Three Madrigals H.315, closes the disc.

There’s competent playing of challenging works here, although the recorded sound could be better balanced and warmer.

VOCAL

Canadian Art Song Project: Jeffrey Ryan – Found Frozen
Danika Lorèn; Krisztina Szabò; Dion Mazerolle; Steven Philcox
Centrediscs CMCCD 30222 (cmccanada.org/shop/cd-cmccd-30222)

Canadian Art Song Project (CASP) – a national treasure of an organiza-
tion that perennially commissions, performs and records the art song canon of our country – has just released a consummate record of Jeffrey Ryan’s music. Ryan has come to be regarded as an important compositional voice in Canada and here, his unassuming, sensitive lyricism and narrative panache make for a first-rate audio survey of songs.

This new album casts a cyclic triptych featuring eminent voices framed by the superlative pianism of Steven Philcox: the urgent, theatrical soprano of Danika Lorèn; the silken, magnetic mezzo of Krisztina Szabò and the lush, brazen baritone of Dion Mazerolle (whose sensual performance of Ryan’s earliest cycle is amorously candid).

The two youthful cycles on this disc – Of Passion’s Tide and Found Frozen – date from 1991 and 1997, respectively. Here we note Ryan’s vernal approach to the genre, flattering both singer and pianist alike with full-blooded melody and neo-Romantic gesture. (The marked song style of American composer Ned Rorem comes to mind.) There is a quality in Ryan’s musical language that feels familiar, shaped – perhaps involuntarily – by folk traditions: a Canadian lingua franca, earnestly cultivated and sung from the heart.

A departure from the early essays, Miss Carr in Seven Scenes (2017) employs austere accompaniments and dark, wistful lines. Conversational and at times monodic, Ryan’s new set is expertly realized by Szabo, whose refined acting and characterful musicality blazons on full display.

Adam Sherkin
With over 400 published works to his name, Samuel Adler is a composer who is difficult to fit into a single category or niche. This recording focuses specifically on Adler's religious choral music and how the composer’s versatility and wide-ranging style take us on a journey blending contemporary musical techniques with the influence of his Jewish heritage.

Adler was born in Mannheim, Germany, where his father was a highly respected synagogue cantor and liturgical composer. Within a year after the nationally orchestrated pogrom known as Kristallnacht, the Adler family emigrated to America, where the elder Adler obtained a position as a cantor in Massachusetts and Samuel began demonstrating his musical talents. He became his father’s choir director when he was only 13 and remained at that post until he began his university studies. During that early period, he began composing liturgical settings, at first university studies. During that early period, he began composing liturgical settings, at first

From the very beginning of this recording, the opening A Hymn of Praise reflects these composers' admiration (not “appropriation”) of a marginalized ethnic minority’s distinctively spicy, rhapsodic music. This exhilarating cross-cultural excursion is enthusiastically recommended!

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La Zingarella: Through Romany Songland
Isabela Bayrakdarian; Gryphon Trio;
Juan-Miguel Hernandez; Mark Fewer
Avie Records AV2508 (avie-records.com/releases/la-zingarella-through-romany-songland)

-- Gypsies, Romanies, Zigeuner, Gitans – however they were named, the peripatetic people from north India who entered and traversed Europe in medieval times were everywhere scorned as moutebanks, maligned as thieves. Nevertheless, the wanderers’ music, with its exotic timbres, vibrant rhythms and soulful melodies, has been an enduring source of inspiration for innumerable composers, including the 11 on this CD.

Multi-Juno-winning soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian, singing here in German, Czech, Spanish, French and English, is joined by violinist Mark Fewer, violin Juan-Miguel Hernandez and the Gryphon Trio performing vigorous, freshly created instrumental arrangements by Peter Tiefenbach and John Greer.

Accounting for 15 of the disc’s 27 tracks are two song-cycle masterworks known in English as “Gypsy Songs” – Brahms’ Zigeunerlieder, Op.103 and Dvořák’s Cigánské melodie, Op.55 (including the much-loved Když mne stará matka – “Songs My Mother Taught Me”). Three sassy, saucy Spanish songs by Sebastián Laidler are especially ingratiating; the third, El arreglo (Canción habanera), was the tune Georges Bizet borrowed and slightly modified for the CD's following track – the Habanera from Carmen!

Bayrakdarian is in fine voice and exuberant high spirits for these mostly high-spirited selections, yet poignant or sensuous when appropriate. Songs by Franz Liszt, Joaquin Valverde and Henry F.B. Gilbert, plus arias from operettas by Maurice Yvain, Franz Lehár, Emmerich Kálmán and Victor Herbert, all reflect these composers’ admiration (not “appropriation”) of a marginalized ethnic minority’s distinctively spicy, rhapsodic music. This exhilarating cross-cultural excursion is enthusiastically recommended!

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James Kallembach – Antigone
Lorelei Ensemble; Beth Willer
New Focus Recordings FCR331 (newfocusrecordings.com)

-- James Kallembach’s Antigone relocates Sophocles’ seminal Athenian tragedy to the landscape of Nazi Germany. His libretto draws inspiration from the tragic poetry found in Sophie Scholl’s diary. Scholl, a member of the non-violent student White Rose Movement was arrested and later guillotined along with her brother Hans – by the Nazis in 1943.

Kallembach’s Antigone unfolds in the impassioned struggle of the title character, a woman determined to fight for the truth amid tyranny. The struggle features Antigone and Ismene locking proverbial horns with their dictatorial uncle Creon. Kallembach’s narrative seamlessly weaves the characters’ lives in and out of Athens into the warp and weft of Nazi Germany. Members of the Lorelei Ensemble create a shimmering luminosity as they delicately vocalize the sisters and the powerful voice of Creon. In particular, Christina English, Sarah Brailey and Rebecca Myers Hoke sing with enormous sensitivity, superbly characterizing everyone from the sensitive Ismene to the powerful Creon and the tragic Antigone who is none other than Scholl.

The Ensemble delivers this outstanding libretto, directed by the sensitive yet firm hand of Beth Willer. In particular the encounters between Scholl and Lisa Remppis, with words from the former’s diary entries, have a pared-down style, particularly effective in the vignettes from late March, 1942. The reading of Scholl’s pamphlets is expertly melded into the disturbing backdrop created by moaning cellos. Something elegant and different emerges after each hearing of this disc.

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Raul da Gama

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Matthew Whitfield

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Samuel Adler – To Speak To Our Time
Gloriae Dei Cantores; Richard K. Pugsley
Gloriae Die Cantores GDCD 066 (gdcrecordings.com/new-release-samuel-adler)

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James Kallemback – Xeniae
Latvian Radio Choir; Sigvards Klava
LMIC SKANI 140 (skani.lv)

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When encountering a piece of music for the first time, the brain begins searching for general thematic similarities: is this like Bach or Black Sabbath; Monteverdi or Miles Davis? While this “compare and contrast” method works well for most music, occasionally a listener is confronted by a single work that contains such a vast synthesis of styles that it is both disorienting and astonishing; such is the case with Juris Ābols’ opera Xeniae.

From the very first movement of this opera, we are introduced to a staggering tapestry of eras and references, including early Baroque recitative accompanied by guitar and smooth jazz. As improbable as this may seem, the effect is both successful and addictive, for as we make our way through this stagger- ing work, we can never guess what comes next, and this propels us forward with eager anticipation. There is, perhaps, no parallel to Xeniae in the world of classical music, for the breadth of material is simply too diverse, and it is rather similar in a number of ways to Pink Floyd’s The Wall.

What cannot be overstated is just how impressive the performance of the Latvian Radio Choir and its director Sigvards Klava is on this recording, especially considering that the entire opera was recorded in the basement of Klava’s home. Although an unknown name to many, Ābols makes a tremendous impact with Xeniae, and proves that he is one of the 21st century’s most eclectic and exciting composers. This disc is highly recommended, not only to those who favour classical music, but to those who appreciate any music, for there truly is something here for everyone.

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James Kallembach – Xeniae
Latvian Radio Choir; Sigvards Klava
LMIC SKANI 140 (skani.lv)
Jonathan Berger; Harriet Scott Chessman – Mỹ Lai
Kronos Quartet; Ván-Ánh Vanessa Vo; Rinde Eckert
Folkways SFW CD 40251 (folkways.si.edu)

Every once and a while the invisible cosmic forces align in such a manner as to create art that is spectacularly dark and forbidding, yet utterly irresistible and monumental. For the operetta Mỹ Lai those forces fuelled its composers, the musician Jonathan Berger and the librettist Harriet Scott Chessman, who conspired to bring Mỹ Lai back to life with the great Kronos Quartet, traditional Vietnamese instrumentalist Ván-Ánh Vanessa Vo and the ineffably brilliant vocalist Rinde Eckert.

Ordinarily you would credit any operetta as having a fairly linear narrative line. But Mỹ Lai is no ordinary operetta. It is a revelation of an open wound in the history of the Vietnam War, one in which US soldiers’ massacred 504 South Vietnamese civilians in Mỹ Lai village.

On this recording the terrifying narrative is woven into the howl of the Kronos strings and the roar of Eckert’s singing – voicing several characters who were involved in or witnessed the event. Meanwhile the evocative percussion colours of Vo’s instruments add an eerie contrapuntal voice, redolent of delicate tintinabulation and ghostly echoes of mallets on metal keys.

Highly charged performances by the Kronos and Vo, employing the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employing the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employing the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work Kronos and Võ, employ the soundmass textures of Berger’s orchestral work

Global Wagner: From Bayreuth to the World
A Film by Axel Brüggemann
Naxos 2.110708 (naxos.com/catalogue/item.asp?item_code=2.110708)

German director/scriptwriter/filmmaker Axel Brüggemann made this documentary film almost 140 years after composer Richard Wagner’s death. Brüggemann offers a look at and listen to Wagner’s life, music and his Festspielhaus in Bayreuth, by exploring and filming backstage at rehearsals and performances, and including countless Wagnerite fans, international Wagner societies around the world today and individual viewpoints about the enigmatic, controversial composer. Mostly in German with no voiceovers, the subtitles in English (among other languages) are legible.

Brüggemann’s journalistic documentary approach, with colourful scenic visuals throughout, is to be commended. The film opens in Venice, where Wagner lived, loving the city’s calmness, with breathtaking city clips, including fascinating emotional footage from the room where he died in 1883. Then to Bayreuth with astounding aerial views. Other worldwide sites include Newark New Jersey, Riga Latvia, Abu Dhabi, Tel Aviv and Tokyo, with these city visuals complementing interviews, concerts and fans, making this a “never leave your home” trip around the world. And the background Wagner music performances are perfect!

Lots to learn from the interviews with such Wagnerites as Bayreuth artistic director/business manager Katharina Wagner, conductor Christian Thielemann, operatic bass-baritone Kevin Maynor and American music critic Alex Ross, among others. Especially fun are day-to-day commentaries from Ulrike and Georg Rauch who own a butcher shop near the festival theatre. Emotional contrasting footage is of Jerusalem-based Jewish lawyer and chairman/founder of the Israel Wagner Society, Jonathan Livny, who is quoted in the liner notes as saying “Wagner was a terrible person but he wrote heavenly music.”

And viewers get up-close looks at rehearsals and performances. We see the Bayreuth orchestra musicians rehearse and set volume and dynamic levels, we watch stage hands move and place sets and hear director commentaries during sung/acted rehearsals and subsequent performance footage in the acoustically unique theatre. All are eye-opening. Lots of packed crowds of well-dressed fans of (surprisingly) all ages to see entering the theatre.

Short fragmented music, visuals and interview cuts are joined seamlessly together, making this an easy group of stories for all to follow about the world’s fascination for Wagner today.

Tiiina Kiik

CLASSICAL AND BEYOND

Beethoven: The Symphonies
Chamber Orchestra of Europe; Yannick Nézet-Séguin
Deutsche Grammophon
deutschegrammophon.com/en/catalogue/products/beethoven-the-symphonies-nezet-seguin-12724

The summer of 2021 was not an easy one so it isn’t hard to imagine the excitement the Chamber Orchestra of Europe must have felt when it came together to perform the Symphonies! A Film by Axel Brüggemann

Short fragmented music, visuals and interview cuts are joined seamlessly together, making this an easy group of stories for all to follow about the world’s fascination for Wagner today.

Tiiina Kiik
record a new version of the nine Beethoven Symphonies with none other than Yannick Nézet-Séguin, one of the most expressive and thoughtful conductors on the scene today, someone capable of truly joyous music-making. Add to this the backing of Deutsche Grammophon and you have the makings of a wonderful project: the first recording of the New Complete Edition of the Symphonies, painstakingly prepared for the Beethoven celebrations in 2020.

What is new in this edition? As a contrabassist myself, I’m delighted to say that the program notes make quite a lot of the fact that the most noticeable change is a much-expanded role for the contrabassoon in the Seventh Symphony. Designated contrabassoon parts in Beethoven’s hand exist for the finales of the Fifth and Ninth Symphonies but the liner notes point out that Beethoven created tailor-made versions of the Ninth for various specific performances and that the new contra part is an amalgam of six different contra parts from Beethoven’s day.

I was curious to find out if these changes are audible; bad contrabassoon playing quickly makes itself heard but a well-rendered contra part can make a performance seem rich or deep without the listener knowing exactly why. Such is the case in this set. I deliberately listened to the Ninth without any clue as to where the contra has been added, just to see if I could hear anything new and I’m happy to say that I did. Behind the baritone’s first solo after the recitative, there is definitely more of a “spine” in the bassline, and at the Turkish March, one can hear that the contra has been moved up an octave as it used to appear in older editions.

Are there other audible changes in this edition? In the second movement of the Ninth, the repeats have been sorted out (559 bars total vs. 954) and there is a diminuendo in the tympani part which I don’t recognize. As far as the rest of the set goes, there is an unusual ornament in the third movement of the Seventh Symphony but otherwise most listeners won’t notice anything strikingly unusual. There are many lovely turns of articulation but it’s hard to say whether this is because of changes to the edition or just good musicianship. Tempos are not always what Beethoven called for but they are always appropriate with the exception of a rather slow third movement in the Fifth. Interestingly, this tempo gives a great sense of relief when it returns in the last movement so perhaps that was YN’S’s intent. Another surprise comes at the start of the second movement of the Eroica where the grace notes in the basses seem to arrive after the downbeat: an interpretation that is, well, puzzling.

The playing of the orchestra is wonderful: tight ensemble in the strings, characterful woodwind solos, discreet brass and incisive tympani playing. My main concern is with the way the orchestra has been recorded. Producer Andrew Mellor seems to prefer a mix that locates the listener very close to the first violin section often making the firsts too present and the rest of the orchestra too vague. This is particularly true of the lower woodwinds and the horns, making many of the chorale passages sound unblended and rendering more than one duet as more of a solo with only a hint of the second line. And before you dismiss me as being partisan, I can assure you that many other recordings sound, to my ears, much more homogenous and portray the winds and strings as more equal teams. Ultimately, the buck stops with YN-S, but I’m more inclined to question the engineering.

If you can listen past the balance issues, or if it sounds just fine to you on your system, you will be rewarded with much grace and humour and some thrilling moments: the whole First Symphony is a delight and the first movement of the Seventh is pure joy. The funeral march of the Eroica seems to have a special depth to it, as you might expect, and the singing in the Ninth is first-rate, possibly because of details added in this edition. I particularly love the qualities of Florian Boesch’s baritone voice which give an almost tenor-ish spring to his solo and I have never heard a more nuanced and articulate version of the Ninth’s celli/bassi recitative.

Fraser Jackson

The Year That Never Was
Matei Varga
Sono Luminus DSL-93358
(sonominus.com)

► An eclectic, highly personal recording from Romanian pianist Matei Varga is intended “to bring joy when we really need it... to take [the] mind away from current realities.” As such, Varga offers an attractively curated disc of miniature delights, from Gershwin to Chopin to Scarlatti. The contemporary content on this disc is sourced from the salon-styled pen of Cuban master, Ernesto Lecuona and Romanian composer, Andrei Tudor, whose Ronda alla Crazy is featured as a quirky micro-highlight. This three-minute swinging track encapsulates a veritable brand of crazy, born of pandemic freneticism. (It was even delivered to Matei by the composer via Facebook Messenger!)

Ernesto Lecuona’s music was a new (pandemic) discovery for Varga, and one that centres the vision for the record. Varga is at home in this off-beat repertoire, imputing characteristic charm and improvisatorial ease to Lecuona’s 19th Century Cuban Dances. Here, interwoven with Chopin’s “salon” music, the pairing of both composers brings credibility to Lecuona. It is a clever juxtaposition, framing Chopin less seriously and Lecuona more so. Varga reminds us that much of Chopin’s art originated from smaller stages and gentile spaces, sporadically populated by aristocrats who desired to be amused, not feverously stirred.

Varga’s signature pianism is apt in arguing for seemingly disparate musical threads.

More of a recital program than a thematically directed album, The Year That Never Was nonetheless achieves satisfaction, executed with much joy and a tasteful, rollicking fondness for this personalized set list.

Adam Sherkin

Musical Remembrances Neave Trio
Chandos CHAN 20167 (chandos.net/products/catalogue/CHAN%2020167)

► Recorded in 2021 at Potton Hall, England and released on Chandos Records, their fourth for the label, Musical Remembrances by the Neave Trio (Anna Williams, violin; Mikhail Veselov, cello; and Erik Nakamura, piano) captures the trio in a reflective mood. The album is inspired by remembrance, both in terms of repertoire selection (Ravel’s Piano Trio in A Minor, Op.67 captures the French composer “remembranding” his native Basque musical tradition) and in terms of remembering what a pre-pandemic world of touring and concertizing was like for musicians of the calibre and renown of the Neave Trio. While speculative as this recording may be, it is anything but maudlin or melancholic – the dynamic chosen repertoire pops from the stereo speakers with the same clarity, purpose and confidence of delivery that earned their previous recording, Her Voice, a best recording of the year designation by both The New York Times and BBC Radio 3.

Although the entire recording is excellent, it is the Brahms Piano Trio No. 1 In B Major, Op.8 where the chamber group, to my ears, shines brightest, bringing out a range of musical emotions and drawing listener ears towards new musical ideas over four movements that always centre around excellence, but leave room for new discoveries. On the faculty now at the Longy School of Music of Bard College, let us hope that this terrific trio continues to find the time to mine the depths of the great chamber music repertoire of Western Art Music and make recordings such as this that both delight and surprise.

Andrew Scott
Virtuosa Project
Infusion Baroque
Leaf Music LM246 (leaf-music.ca)

» The piquant new release by Virtuosa, a period ensemble from Quebec, is part of their notable Virtuosa Project, a series of concerts, lectures and web videos dedicated to women musicians prior to the 20th century. In itself, this is an impressive undertaking featuring 14 compositions, stylistic interpretations and tons of heartfelt energy. Almost all of the female composers on this album remained in the shadows of their male counterparts but brought just as much knowledge, skill and talent to the European courts and concert stages. Many were courageous and imaginative performers and composers who led financially independent lives and acquired noble reputations. This album features an all-star list of powerful and talented women composers, some of whom remain relatively unknown to audiences today: Anna Bon, Anna Amalia of Prussia, Wilhelmine von Bayreuth, Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen, Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre, Leopoldine Blahetka, Teresa Milanollo, Helene Liebmann and the better-known Clara Schumann.

Ensemble Virtuosa is daring in both their programming and performance. The beauty of structure and phrasing is emphasized through a fantastic array of colours; the ensemble and their guest artists perform with a great sensitivity to each of the individual compositional languages. The inclusion of the contemporary piece Versailles written for Baroque instruments by Canadian Linda Catlin Smith is perhaps a surprising inclusion, but it works well as it binds together and astoundingly perfect technique. Typical Liszt, those grace notes, rapid decorative passages that are cascading up and down the keyboard, paced perfectly evenly and light as a feather. The Liebestraum No.3 is played with loving tenderness and ardent passion and the big guns come out at the end in the Spanish Rhapsody that will lift you out of your seat.

Janos Gardonyi

Stravinsky – L’Oiseau de feu; Apollon Musagète
Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra;
Gustavo Gimeno
Harmonia Mundi HMM905303 (store.harmoniamundi.com/release/318387)

» In June of 2019, Gustavo Gimeno conducted the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in a powerful performance of Stravinsky’s 1945 suite from The Firebird. Last May, he led them in an even more memorable Firebird. This time, he took the podium as music director of the orchestra. And the version he chose was the less frequently programmed original that Stravinsky wrote in 1910 for Diaghilev’s legendary Ballets Russes. It’s more than twice the length of any of the three concert suites Stravinsky later made. But this performance left me with no doubt – more was better.

On his standout new recording of The Firebird with the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg (where he is also music director), Gimeno again opts for the original full-length ballet score. Every moment speaks persuasively. Stravinsky’s tapestry of evocative Russian folk melodies, angular textures and infectious rhythms becomes an edge-of-the-seat experience. Colourful solos, like the rhapsodic flute welcoming the 13 captive princesses, and the volcanic timpani driving the frenzied dance of the evil sorcerer
Koschei’s subjects, enhance the drama. The pairing with Stravinsky’s equally groundbreaking ballet Apollon Musagète, written 18 years later, works brilliantly. Like The Firebird, it draws on ancient tales. But these tales are from Greek mythology. In The Firebird, goodness must overcome evil to triumph. Here, goodness prevails unchallenged. Instead of conflict there’s serenity. Instead of mystery, there’s clarity. It’s all conjured up luminously by Gimeno and the exquisite strings of the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg in gorgeous, sweeping brushstrokes.

Pamela Margles

Nazarenó – Bernstein; Stravinsky; Golijov
Chris Richards; Katia and Marielle Labèque; London Symphony Orchestra; Sir Simon Rattle
LSO Live LSO 0836 (lsoc.co.uk)

The flute has had a long and illustrious history as far back as prehistoric times and its appeal is again showcased on this attractive ATMA recording featuring transcriptions of compositions performed by flutist Ariane Brisson and pianist Olivier Hébert-Bouchard. Brison was selected as “Découverte de l’année” at the Prix Opus 2019–2020 Gala and Grand Prize winner of the Prix d’Europe competition in 2013, while award-winning pianist Hébert-Bouchard is a founding member of Trio Émerillon and Prisma. As the title implies, the disc partly pays homage to the worlds of fantasy and magic as seen through the eyes of five composers. It opens with Ralph Vaughan Williams’ haunting The Lark Ascending, music inspired by George Meredith’s 1881 poem of the same name. Here, the listener is immediately struck by Brison’s warm and sonorous tone with Hébert-Bouchard providing a solid and sensitive partnership.

Ravel’s Sonatine was completed around 1905, and although originally scored for solo piano, the combination of flute and piano is an appealing one, particularly in the vivacious finale animé. Both Janáček’s Pohádka (A Tale) from 1912 and Debussy’s renowned Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune clearly prove that skillful arrangements can be as convincing as the originals.

The three-movement Mityt (Myths) by Karol Szymaowski was inspired by Greek mythology and was originally scored for violin and piano. Here, Narcissus, Pan and the dryads all make an appearance in this highly impressionistic score. Once again, Brisson and Hébert-Bouchard prove a formidable pairing.

These are challenging times, so Mythes just might be a perfect means of briefly escaping into a better place – a welcome addition to the catalogue.

Richard Haskell

Souvenirs d’Auguste Descarries
Isabelle David
Leaf Music LM250 (leaf-music.ca)

The name Auguste Descarries is probably not a familiar one to Canadian music lovers outside Quebec, but during his lifetime he enjoyed a considerable reputation as a conductor, composer and pedagogue. Born in Lachine in 1896, he studied piano and organ in his youth and began studying law at the Université de Montréal. Yet upon winning the Prix d’Europe from the Académie de musique du Québec in 1921, he set off to study music in Paris where he remained until 1926. Upon his return, he established himself in the local music scene, his endeavours included private teaching, choral conducting at the Église Ste. Viateur and helping to create the music faculty at the Université de Montréal in 1950. This recording on the Leaf Music label features 14 of his compositions written between 1918 and 1956 performed by Isabelle David whose grandfather had the good fortune of being one of his pupils. And who better to address this unfamiliar repertoire? David has devoted four years to the study of Descarries’ piano works.

These are musical gems, very much in the manner of late-19th-century French piano music. Do I hear echoes of Fauré and a nod to César Franck? What strikes the listener almost immediately is the wide range of contrasting moods among them, from the introspection of Au gré de l’onde and the pathos of Nostalgie to the buoyancy of Étude en sol majeur. Throughout, David displays a natural affinity for this music, her performance poised and elegant. Her formidable technique is evident in such pieces as the virtuosic Rhapsodie canadienne (transcribed by David herself) – clearly, many of these compositions were not intended for amateurs. Souvenirs is a delight – a grand merci to David, not only for a fine performance, but for bringing to light a composer whose music most certainly deserves greater recognition.

Richard Haskell

Personal Noise
Sarah Plum
Blue Griffin BGR619 (bluegriffin.com)

This fantastic new release by an ardent proponent of the contemporary violin repertoire, violinist Sarah Plum, is a must-have for everyone who loves meaningful sonic adventures. Personal Noise features works for violin and electronics, delivered via the imagination and composing pen of Kyong Mee Choi, Jeff Herriott, Mari Kimura, Eric Lyon, Eric Moe, Charles Nichols and Mari Takano.

Works on this album came as a result of a personal connection between Plum and each composer and were either written for or commissioned by her. The exciting mixture of electronically processed sounds and extended contemporary violin techniques is further
recommends these records because the unison string coordination, these timbral contrasts rise into shimmering upward features of the layered strings. The timbre reappears frequently, other sequences have a gentler exposition. While this softening motif can crackle like electronics or vibrate like a single long string. This serves as a perfect backdrop to the initial indeterminate but repeated introductory passage confirms both the underlying malleability of what could be a static form and the urbanity of the musicians’ improvisation and linkage to a more contemporary composition.

**Calques:** Morton Feldman; Karl Naegelen

**Quatuor Umlaut; Joris Rühl**

**Umlaut Records UMFR-CD 37**

(umlautrecords.com)

**Connecting the common threads between French composer Karl Naegelen’s *Calques* and US composer Morton Feldman’s *Clarinet and string quartet*, Paris-based Quatuor Umlaut and clarinetist Joris Rühl emphasize indeterminacy but add enough variations to counter shifts towards the soporific. Together violinists Amaryllis Billet and Anna Jalving, violist Fanny Paccoud and cellist Sarah Ledoux project a unison sound. Yet with shaded glissandi plus expanding and compressing textures, their harmonies can crackle like electronics or vibrate like a single long string. This serves as a perfect counterpoint to the split tones, near inaudible whistles, hollow puffs and clarion peeps from Rühl, who is equally involved with improvisation. The resulting shaded drone adds a warmer thrust to Naegelen’s composition, especially when it’s completed with a concentrated pipe-organ-like throb from all five.

Feldman’s piece wears its musicality on a thin piece of cloth. His new work is usually tuneful, sometimes probing. Each composition features the explorative element of some kind, be it the notion of serendipity in music (Herriot’s *after time: a resolution*), paraphrasing of the melody from Bach’s *Violin Sonata in B-Minor* (Choi’s *Flowering Dandelion*), or articulation of the musical cryptogram spelling Sarah’s name (Lyon’s *Personal Noise with Accelerants*). Interactive electronics in Kimura’s *Sarafah*, along with violin trills, pizzicatos, arpeggiations and harmonics, create colours to die for and a full sonorous sound.

Sarah Plum offers complex yet conceptually clear interpretations of these works. Her distinct style of playing allows for passion and lyricism in one bow stroke, a perfect personal noise.

**Ivana Popovic**

**William Bolcom – Trio for Horn; Solo Violin**

**Suite No.2**

**Steven Gross; Philip Ficsor; Constantine Finehouse**

**Naxos 8.579102**

(amazon.de/dp/B071XV6M6V)

**William Bolcom – The Complete Rags**

**Marc-André Hamelin**

**Hyperion CDA68391/2**

(hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D_CDA68391%2F2F2)

> William Bolcom is a renowned American composer whose works are wide-ranging, genre-bending and utterly fascinating. While Bolcom’s compositions from around 1960 employed a modified serial technique, under the influence of Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Luciano Berio whose music he particularly admired, in the 1960s he gradually began to embrace an eclectic use of a wider variety of musical styles. In addition to four large-scale operas and numerous concertos, Bolcom has also written nine symphonies, twelve string quartets, four violin sonatas, numerous piano rags, four volumes of gospel preludes for organ, four volumes of cabaret songs, three musical theatre works and a one-act chamber opera.

**Chamber Works** features two pieces, the *Trio for Horn, Violin and Piano* (2017) and the *Suite No. 2 for Solo Violin* (2011). The *Trio* showcases each instrument to its fullest in both soloistic and ensemble capacities and, while mostly atonal, the work incorporates brief moments of tonality that reorient the listener’s ears and provide a grounding element, especially in the more tumultuous movements. The *Suite*, conversely, is exquisitely tuneful and is clearly structured around the dance forms of Baroque solo violin suites, especially those of J.S. Bach. Rhythmic vitality and instrumental virtuosity reign supreme here, and the performance given by violinist Philip Ficsor is both admirable and noteworthy.

The piano rag, (i.e. ragtime), is a musical style that reached its peak popularity between 1895 and 1919. A precursor to the development of jazz, ragtime is characterized by its syncopated or “ragged” rhythm and was popularized during the early 20th century by composer Scott Joplin and his school of classical ragtime. Although it fell out of favour in the 1920s, composers and performers alike have revived the styles and forms of the genre in the decades since, including Bolcom. His collection of rags is among the finest adaptations of ragtime within contemporary music, achieving a blend of stylistic familiarity and artistic creativity that is unique while avoiding appearing derivative or gauche.

And who better to handle Bolcom’s ingenious rags than Marc-André Hamelin, perhaps Canada’s premier interpreter of contemporary music? As someone who successfully handled the seemingly insurmountable piano works of Kaikhosru Sorabji and Charles-Valentin Alkan, Hamelin’s name is synonymous with “unplayable” scores that transcend the conventional understanding of virtuosity. Here, however, he lends his deft touch to material that is considerably less demanding from a technical perspective yet has certain stylistic requirements, the challenges of which he meets with precision and sensitivity.

For those familiar with the music of Bolcom, both of these recordings are guaranteed to be a delight; they also serve as fine starting points for those who are unfamiliar. The *Complete Rags* adapts an old yet familiar style through a master performer’s touch, while *Chamber Works* provides a glimpse into Bolcom’s more modern approach, a perfect pairing for anyone interested in this icon of American modernism.

**Matthew Whitfield**

**Concert Note:** Marc-André Hamelin gives a recital in Koerner Hall on October 16 (3pm)

**Derek Bermel – Intonations – Music for Clarinet and Strings**

**Derek Bermel; Christopher Otto; Wiek Hijmans; JACK Quartet**

**Naxos 8.559912**

(amazon.de/dp/B071XV6M6V)

> Derek Bermel, who has written nine symphonies, twelve string quartets, four violin sonatas, numerous piano rags, four volumes of gospel preludes for organ, four volumes of cabaret songs, three musical theatre works and a one-act chamber opera, is all bending pitches and dissonances from this mittful of influences. From farther afield (South American, African, folk and wrenching blues, adding elements of virtuosity . Here, however, he lends his deft touch to material that is considerably less demanding from a technical perspective yet has certain stylistic requirements, the challenges of which he meets with precision and sensitivity.

**What amazing art evolves from decaying empires!** Consider this new release by Derek Bermel. Widely travelled, juxtaposing American styles like twangy folk and wrenching blues, adding elements from farther afield (South American, African, Thracian), Bermel fashions wonderful curiosities from this mittful of influences. *Intonations*, played with surly strut by the JACK Quartet, is all bending pitches and grinding gears, although the second movement, *Hymn/Homily* is poignant and sweet. 
Ritornello is a single-movement work for string quartet and electric guitar (played by Wiek Huijmans). After the ear-stretching dissonance of the prior tracks, this at first sounds pop, even a bit like Classical Gas. Briefly. Then it’s Death and the Maiden meets RzDz, and into the multiverse we go.

Composer turns clarinetist on Thracian Sketches. A deep and mellow low register melody emerges, exploring the world of octave-plus-tritones, and eventually becoming tired of that limited space. As the melody careens upward, Bermel vocalizes while playing, adding a menacing buzz to the line. Sure enough, once the upper register is breached, all heck breaks loose. It’s one of those pieces that will take all the player’s endurances. Doubtless circular breathing is a featured asset, so when does the sound actually stop? It’s a brilliant piece for solo clarinet, ending with a fantastic race down and back up the range of the horn, the explorer thrilled with the view.

Five brief Violin Études haunt the ear thanks to excellent renditions by Christopher Otto. To close the disc, Bermel and the JACKs perform A Short History of the Universe. Its second movement, Heart of Space, could be a parody of the theme from Love Story. Balkan dance and Lutheran chorale jockey for position in the good fun of Twistor Scattering, and then refer back to the atonal pointillism of Multiverse, the first movement.

Excellent liner notes enhance the many pleasures of Bermel’s music.

Max Christie

Victor Herbiet – Airs & Dances

Victor Herbiet; Jean-François Guay; Marc Djokic; Julian Armour; Jean Desmarais

Centrediscs CMCCD 29822 (cmccanada.org/website-search/?q=CMCCD29822)

Looking back to the era when the saxophone was elbowing its bluster way to the front of composers’ to-do lists, Victor Herbiet offers a diet of 20th-century stylings for a variety of chamber settings all featuring his instrument. Airs & Dances is exactly what it says it is, and the writing is every bit as capable as the playing. It seems a good strategy for saxophonists to provide themselves with fresh repertoire, should they feel so inclined. Herbiet does, in a way that is both pleasant and certainly challenging to the player, and fun for the listener.

The opening track, Troika, purports to reference the more jazzy side of Shostakovich, but I hear a good deal of Debussy or Poulenc as well. Wherever it hails from, it’s a romp. Much of the disc is lighthearted and fun, veering into uncloaked Romanticism in track seven, Pas de Deux for soprano and alto dance-aphonists. Herbiet is ably abetted on several tracks by fellow saxist Jean-François Guay, and aided ably on others by the very fine pianist Jean Desmarais. The other collaborators are fellow Ottawans Marc Djokic on violin and cellist Julian Armour.

Herbiet touches down somewhere closer to the current century in Paris Rush, a sparkling duo again featuring Guay, again for soprano and alto saxes. Imagine the Beatles’ tune from Sergeant Pepper’s, A Day in the Life, but mimed out by two saxes in a French accent. Trois Valse-caprices are solo etudes in the style of an early 20th century composer/dentist, Dr. Gilles Amidt. Herbiet’s solid technique is on full display, and perhaps he’ll consider filling (get it?) a whole study book with these types of pieces.

Max Christie

Weill – Symphony No.2; Shostakovich: Symphony No.5

Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra; Lahav Shani

Warner Classics (warnerclassics.com/artist/rotterdam-philharmonic-orchestra)

“Weill’s Second Symphony (1933) is presented in a clever pairing with the well-known Fifth Symphony (1937) by the Russian titan, comparing the work of the older man who was forced from his home by the rising Nazi peril to the younger one who stayed put in Stalinist Russia. It’s a shame Weill’s symphony is sidelined by most orchestras. His was a mature, original voice; early criticism missed the mark, calling him a melodic hack.”

Max Christie

British Piano Concertos: Addison; Bush; Maconchy; Searle; Rubbra; Benjamin

Lyrita SRCD.407 (wyastone.co.uk/british-piano-concertos-addison-bush-maconchysearle-rubbra-benjamin.html)

“Be forewarned: there aren’t any actual piano concertos here and one composer isn’t British, but don’t let that deter you from this disc’s pleasures. Oscar-winning film composer John Addison’s 17-minute, five-movement Wellington Suite for two horns, piano, percussion and strings was written for the 1959 centenary of Wellington College. Addison’s alma mater. Occasional “wrong notes” add humour to the jaunty, vaudeville-inflected set of dances.”

Max Christie

The Well-Tempered Clavichord

British Piano Concertos

British Piano Concertos

Oscar-winning film composer John Addison’s 17-minute, five-movement Wellington Suite for two horns, piano, percussion and strings was written for the 1959 centenary of Wellington College. Addison’s alma mater. Occasional “wrong notes” add humour to the jaunty, vaudeville-inflected set of dances.

The non-Brit, Australian Arthur Benjamin, modelled his 15-minute, one-movement Concertino for Piano and Orchestra (1927) after Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue. It’s genial and jazzy, featuring prominent parts for trumpet and alto saxophone. In Elizabeth Maconchy’s sharply etched, 12-minute Concertino for Piano and String Orchestra (1949), two syncopated, neoclassical Allegros surround a haunting, reflective Lento. It’s a real gem!

INTENDED FOR STUDENTS, HUMPHREY SEARLE’S DODECAHAPSORELIC Concertante for Piano, Percussion and Strings (1954) packs lots of drama — portentous chords and pounding percussion — into its mere four minutes. Edmund Rubbra’s nine-minute Nature’s Song (1920), subtitled Tone Poem for Orchestra, Organ and Pianoforte, was composed during Rubbra’s studies with Gustav Holst. I found it much more martial than pastoral. Geoffrey Bush’s ten-minute, four-movement A Little Concerto on Themes of Thomas Arne for Pianoforte and Strings (1930) is an affectionate pastiche of charming melodies by the 18th-century composer of Rule, Britannia.

Pianist Simon Callaghan and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales conducted by...
works, all, except for Benjamin’s Concertino, here receiving their first-ever recordings.  

**Michael Schulman**

Carl Vine – Complete Piano Sonatas  
XiaoYa Liu  
Dynamic CDS78931 (xiaoyaliupiano.com/press)

> Australian Carl Vine (b.1954) has written at least eight symphonies, nine concertos, six string quartets and 40 scores for dance, theatre, film and TV, but “only” four piano sonatas, ranging from 15 to 19 minutes in duration.

Vine’s two-movement Piano Sonata No.1 (1990) was commissioned and choreographed by the Sydney Dance Company, where Vine was resident composer and pianist. Beginning gloomily, it soon erupts with driving, irregular rhythms, repeated rapid phrases over syncopated thumping, glittering sonorities, headlong accelerandos and booming climaxes.

Distant echoes of Debussy and Rachmaninoff inhabit the first movement of No.2 (1997). Propulsive, jazzy syncopations fill the concluding second movement until a slow, suspenseful interlude leads to an enraged plunge to the sonata’s final, brutal explosion. No.3 (2007) is in four movements: Fantasia opens with slow drips over dark chords, followed by distorted Chopinesque passages; in Rondo, meditative passages separate surging, percussive rhythms; Variation presents elaborations of Fantasia’s drips and chords; Presto begins and ends violently, interrupted by a gentle, disquieted ambulation.


Pianist XiaoYa Liu, top-prize-winner of several major piano competitions, brilliantly surmounts all the extreme virtuosic challenges of these intense, turbulent works – gripping music that definitely deserves your attention.

**Michael Schulman**

Trios from Contemporary Chicago  
Lincoln Trio  
Cedille CDR 90000 211 (cedillerecords.org)

> My November 2021 WholeNote review of a CD containing trios by two Chicago composers praised “the vivid colours, dramatic expressivity and sensational virtuosity” of the Lincoln Trio, here returning with compositions by five living Chicagoans.

Sensual passion fills Shulamit Ran’s eight-minute Solloquy, derived from an aria in her opera Between Two Worlds, in which the tenor (here, the violin), yearns for his beloved. Less satisfying is Augusta Read Thomas’ …a circle around the sun…, five minutes of enigmatic fragmentation.

Three works written for the ensemble receive their first recordings. Shawn E. Okpehbole’s 11-minute city beautiful celebrates three Chicago architectural icons. Dribbling, undulating melodies evoke the 82-storey Aqua Tower’s wave-like exterior. Long-lined, pastoral lyricism reflects the horizontal planes of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Robie House. Okpehbole calls Union Station “an amalgam of neoclassicism and modernism;” his similarly styled music expresses, he says, the terminal’s “century-old hustle and bustle.”

Mischa Zupko’s three-minute Fanfare 80, honouring the Music Institute of Chicago’s 80th year, exists in versions for orchestra, woodwind quintet and the Lincoln Trio. Rambunctious seven- and 11-beat measures create, writes Zupko, “a savage celebration.” One wonders why.

The best comes last. Sanctuary is Stacy Garrop’s two-movement, 23-minute, emotion-wrenching memorial to her father. In Without, brooding anguish, urgent desperation and a “pseudo-Jewish folksong” describe, she writes, a girl “searching for her lost parent.” Within’s hymn-like solemnity and gentle piano wind-chiming represent the girl (violin) finally reuniting with her father (cello) “within the sanctuary of her own heart.”

**Michael Schulman**

When Dark Sounds Collide: New Music for Percussion and Piano  
Pathos Trio  
Panoramic Recordings PAN24 (newfocusrecordings.com)

> These specially commissioned works are so unusual and remarkable that they demand an equal share in the limelight of this debut album, When Dark Sounds Collide by the Pathos Trio. The stunning music expertly interlaces a wide world of time and space, and musical traditions, into extraordinary repertoire for percussion and piano.

In each work, the Pathos Trio have closely collaborated with the composers – Alyssa Weinberg, Alison Yan-Fei Jiang, Finola Merivale, Evan Chapman and Alan Hankers, who is, of course, also the pianist of the trio.

This has resulted in some truly inspired performances by the members of the trio, who demonstrate – in soil as well as in ensemble – each composer’s heightened skill at conjuring a spectrum of sonic worlds. The collision of metallic, wooden and electronic percussion instruments – performed by Felix Reyes and Marcelina Suchocka – alternate, blend and often enter into outright battle with the plucked, strummed strings stretched taut across the brass frame of the concert grand piano, which is also softly hammered and variously pedalled by Hankers.

The music veers from delicate washes of sound in Jiang’s Prayer Variations and Hankers’ Distance Between Places to some what cataclysmic eruptions such as those that inform the mysterious strains of Merivale’s oblivious, often punctuated by prescient and even foreboding silences.

Meanwhile, the musicians also revel in the passagework – both delicate and fierce – of Chapman’s fiction of light and Weinberg’s Delirious Phenomena.

**Raúl da Gama**

Allison Cameron – Somatic Refrain  
Apartment House  
Another Timbre at196 (anothertimbre.com)

> Somatic Refrain is another in the English label Another Timbre’s extensive series of recordings of contemporary Canadian composers’ works performed by Apartment House, a distinguished British ensemble dedicated to performing contemporary music. The works here, composed between 1996 and 2008, spring from different creative impulses but share a certain probing calm, a deliberate tone of sensitive inquiry, as if the pieces were already there and Cameron was examining why and revealing their graces.

Somatic Refrain (1996) is a solo piece for bass clarinet. Originally commissioned by Torontonian Ronda Rindone it’s played here by Heather Roche of Apartment House. The instrument’s extraordinary timbral possibilities have been more extensively examined in improvised music than in composition, and the intrepid Cameron explores the range of Rindone’s mastery of multiphonics, creating a piece that demonstrates the instrument’s...
richly expressive possibilities. H (2008) comes from a period when Cameron was exploring folk music and assembled an Alison Cameron Band in Toronto for those ends. Here she plays banjo, bass harmonica and toy piano with Eric Chenaux and Stephen Parkinson, on acoustic and electric guitars respectively, forging a folk-like lament that’s at once somber, resilient and distinctly homespun.

Similar qualities infuse the longer works performed by Apartment House. Pliny (2005) and the three-movement Retablo (1998) reflect a sensibility as much formed by the deliberate calm of medieval music as by contemporary works. The former, inspired by Jorge Luis Borges’ tale Funes, the Memorius, initially invokes a serene clarity that is gradually permeated by a spreading dissonance; the latter suggests both order and mystery in a three-movement work inspired in part by Tarot cards.

An interview with Cameron discussing these pieces on Another Timbre’s website provides enriching insights into her work and the playful dimension of her creativity. - Stuart Broomer

Finola Merivale – Tús
Desdemona
New Focus Recordings FCR327
(newfocusrecordings.com)

► Finola Merivale is an Irish composer currently living in New York. Her works have been performed around the world including at the Bang on a Can festival in NYC and Vox Feminae in Tel Aviv by groups as diverse as Talea Ensemble, PRISM Saxophone Quartet and Bearthoven. Tús, which is the Irish word for “start” and the album’s five works represent ten years of Merivale’s compositions. They are performed with rigour and compassion by the Desdemona ensemble.

My favourite piece is the opening Do You Hear Me Now? The liner notes describe this as «a direct riposte to the entrenched malaise of academic music institutions.» I love the aggressive opening; with its loud and looping lines it possesses an electric and frenetic exuberance. The 17-minute work goes through many phases, is always intense and ends with a fearless finish. In contrast, The Silent Sweep as You Stand Still was composed just prior to the COVID lockdown and contains softly dissonant sections that are almost silent and louder sections that are more angular and provocative. It builds a tonal landscape which walks the listener through spaces of anxiety and unease. Merivale is an innovative composer who continues to work on her craft and Tús is an engaging collection of her work.

- Ted Parkinson

Daniel Janke – Body in Motion
Various Artists
Centrediscs CMCCD 29522 (cmccanada.org/shop/cd-cmccd-29522)

► Canadian composer/musician/filmmaker/media artist Daniel Janke is a respected musical creator in various artistic environs/genres. Edmonton-born, he grew up in Ontario and is now based in Whitehorse. Yukon spending time in Montreal and Berlin. Some compositions from his albums/choreographer collaborations are featured here.

Janke perfectly balances rhythms and musical sounds in his storytelling dance works. Opening Martha Black’s Reel (1996), commissioned by Dancers With Latitude, is a fast Celtic-influenced work featuring violinist Adele Armin’s exciting legato “fiddle” lines, jumping intervals, string plucks and slight atonality above Janke’s grounding, at times low drone, prepared piano. The four-movement String Quartet No. 2 “River” (2011) is amply performed by violinists Mark Fewer and Aaron Schwebel, violist Ryo McLeod and cellist Amahl Arulanandam. Part 1 low- and high-pitched held notes create a meditative sound. Part 2 has tension building slightly melancholic atonal sounds and plucks. Part 3 features fast legato turning lines reminiscent of a river current. Part 4, which accompanies the short film River, is slow, dark and moody yet comforting with simultaneous low and high strings, and subtle grooves. In the Badu Dance commission Yúa Asanteuwa — Part 1 (1995), Adele and cellist brother Richard Armin play dancer friendly close, at times fragmented, conversational lines against Alan Hetherington’s ringing percussion, in another memorable recording by the late violinist, who died in June 2022 after a long battle with cancer. Virtuosic The Bells (1987) has Janke playing solo piano, wide-pitched melodies/effects to closing ringing bell-like pitches.

It’s wonderful listening to dance music from Janke’s decades-long illustrious output. - Tiina Kik

American avant-garde pianist turned electronic composer. David Tudor’s masterwork Rainforest had a long gestation. Beginning in 1968 Tudor created four distinct versions culminating in 1974 when he gathered a group of eager young composers, musicians, circuit benders and maverick solderers to form a “family” of collaborators. They called themselves Composers Inside Electronics (CIE).

Tudor’s initial concept was deceptively simple: a collection of mostly everyday objects are suspended in space and set into audible vibration by small electromagnetic transducers. Each object responds to input audio signals in idiosyncratically non-linear, unpredictable, changing ways. Serving as acoustic filters, the objects modify the sounds electronically fed into them.

As a visitor to Rainforest IV’s Canadian

David Tudor – Rainforest IV
Composers Inside Electronics
Neuma 158 (neumarecords.org)

► Internationally renowned Canadian accordionist Joseph Petric is a respected solo/chamber performer. In his first full-length release since 2010, Petric performs his five commissions spanning his decades-long career, and one other work. It is illuminating to hear him here play solo accordion, and also accordion paired with electroacoustic sounds.

Petric shares compositional credit with composer David Jaeger in the opening track Spirit Cloud (2021) for accordion and electronics, a reworking of an earlier Jaeger solo cello work. An energetic wide-pitched full-reed, solo accordion beginning with fast trills and lines leads to the addition of electro-acoustic soundscape effects like echoing, held tones and washes, in an equal-partner duet.

Composer Norbert Palej writes with precise instrumental understanding and purpose in the spiritually themed three-movement title work SEEN (2019). Petric’s amazing bellows control shines in legato single-note melodies, and challenging high/low pitched contrasts. Robert May’s Fadensonn en (1994) is another exploration of varying accordion colour and meditative dynamics. Peter Hatch’s Pneuma (1986) is an interesting blend of accordion and electronics, from faint electronic high tones, rock-groove-like accents and held tones matching the acoustic accordion sound.

There’s more traditional electronic washes, rumbles and echoing with driving accordion repeated detached chords in Erik Ross’ Leviathan (2008).

The closer, Torbjorn Lundquist’s Metamorphoses (1964), is the only work not commissioned by Petric. A classic virtuosic solo accordion piece from the past, Petric plays many fast runs, accented chords, accelerating and short, almost-film-music sections with colourful ease.

All in all, great accordion sounds! - Tiina Kik
premiere at York University in February 1975. I recall walking into the installation. The exhibition space was populated by transformed sculptural loudspeakers, the acoustic environment eerily evoking Tudor’s descriptive title.

The CIE performance of Rainforest IV on this album was taped in 1977 at the Center for Music Experiment in San Diego. We’re greeted by a dense aural ecosystem of twittering, squawking and chattering sounds reminiscent perhaps of nighttime insects, amphibians, bird calls and choruses. Clanging, clicking, whistling, sustained underwater and alien sounds slowly crossfade during the record’s almost 60 minutes.

The scene was vividly captured by two musicians, who traversed slowly through the space, wearing binaural microphones on their heads. While not a definitive documentation of the work, listened to with headphones this evocative binaural recording is as close as you can get without being in the space. There’s something magical in Tudor’s synthetic forest of sight and sound.

**Andrew Timar**

**JAZZ AND IMPROVISED**

**Tactile Stories**

Colin Fisher; Mike Gennaro

Cacophonous Revival Recordings CRR-015
(cacophonousrevivalrecordings.bandcamp.com)

*Following their first release, Sine Qua Non, guitarist and saxophonist Colin Fisher and drummer Mike Gennaro—a two of Canada’s most visible improvising experimental musicians—have recorded their second album, Tactile Stories, an exhilarating four-track collection of free-improvised pieces. Fisher and Gennaro play off of one another with impressive musicality and effusive bravura. Their combined sound is lavish but never sylan and the delivery of ideas is as brilliant as it is ravenous—the two musicians truly connected in their improvisatory impetuses.*

The first track, Ex Nihilo is a powerful example of why Fisher and Gennaro have become some of the most in demand improvising experimental musicians in Canada. The music is virtuosity set free in the wild while making room for more contemplative interludes. Dynamic and driving explorations continue in the tracks Ekstasis and Epitonia while the track Esse offers a more sensitive atmosphere.

Fisher’s guitar playing is a stunning combination of swells, prickly quirks and dramatic runs. Gennaro draws from an endless cache of stylistic realms that makes for a propulsive energy. Tactile Stories is exactly that—a collection of sonic narratives revealing why these two musicians are at the fore of free-improvised music.

**Adam Scime**

**The Lighting of the Lamps**

Grant Stewart Quartet w/Bruce Harris

Cellar Music CM110521 (cellarlive.com)

*Picture the city at dusk, a shroud of darkness blanketing the bustling life within, bringing a certain air of mystery and veil. The collection of tunes on famed tenor saxophonist Grant Stewart’s newest release calls forth images just like that in the listener’s mind. The tenorist himself mentions that listening back on this session, he was “reminded not of daybreak but rather, dusk... as the city becomes a buzz of activity once more.” Stewart has gathered a group of top tier musicians to bring these pieces to life; Bruce Harris on the trumpet, David Wong on bass, Tardo Hammer on piano and Phil Stewart on drums. The songs are mostly original compositions, arranged by the likes of Elmo Hope and Thad Jones. For the jazz lover looking to add a little pizzazz to their collection, this is a record to get your hands on.

For musicians, the nightlife is when things really start moving, when the magic truly starts happening. This album is filled with a sense of new beginnings, teetering on that border of exciting tension just waiting to spill over into passionate energy; just as the approach of dusk brings a “second awakening” to the city. Tunes like Little Spain and Mo Is On are spectacular examples of the quickness and vigour of city life whereas Ghost of a Chance is a representation of the other side of nightlife, the mellowness and suppressed desires.

**Kati Kiilaspea**

**Orbit of Sound**

Max Johnson Trio

Unbroken Sounds U01 (maxjohnsonmusic.com)

*The pandemic was a hard hit on the music industry, with the absence of live music and limited use of physical studio spaces. But it also ended up being a chance for several musicians to produce “COVID albums,” many of which are excellent examples of how music can be a voice and outlet during the toughest of times.*

**Kati Kiilaspea**

**Just the Contrafacts**

Adam Shulman; Jeremy Pelt; Cory Weeds; Grant Stewart; Peter Washington; Billy Drummond

Cellar Music CM110321 (cellarlive.com)

*Equally proficient as composer and double bassist, New York’s Max Johnson has the invaluable help of Canadian tenor saxophonist/flutist Anna Webber and local drummer Michael Sarin to interpret five of his intricate but easygoing tunes. That’s easygoing not easy, for Johnson’s bass thumps or sul tasto strokes, Weber’s reed cries and gurgles and Sarin’s power pops and rim shots are anything but elementary. Instead, the sometime slippery and often buoyant tunes evolve with defined and emphasized heads and narratives that usually involve double or triple counterpoint and brief solos. Johnson’s touch can be stentorian but on an extended piece like Over/Under his timbral digging involves high-pitched scraps to contrast with low-pitched body tube murmurs and mid-range blowing from Webber. After reed split-tone yelps stand out over other-directed percussion strokes, measured bass thumps relax the exposition back to the initial theme. Nearly continuous string drones provide an effective balance, scene-setting on The Professor, then joined to student reed bites and drum ruffs. Webber’s reed-bitng whores and arabesques advance to irregular tongue stops and percussive smears, but the reassuring narrative, anchored by bass strokes, preserves the flow and holds the exposition to defined swing elaborations.*
The one flute track is dryly balladic and Sarin’s riffs and rebounds add advanced percussiveness elsewhere. But all in all the harmonic balance expressed among writing, narratives and singular expression make this one orbit of sound in which a listener would want to circle.

**Ken Waxman**

Red List – music dedicated to the preservation of our endangered species
Brian Landrus; Various Artists
Palmetto Records PM2023 (brianlandrus.com)

With the release of his 11th recording as a leader, highly respected multi-reed player, arranger and composer, Brian Landrus, has not only created something of incredible musical beauty, but is simultaneously highlighting the looming global crisis of species extinction. There are 13 compositions here written by Landrus, representing 13 endangered species on the Red List that could be lost forever. Landrus is collaborating with the organization Save the Elephants and is joined here by half a dozen horns and a stellar rhythm section.

First up is Canopy of Trees – a percussive journey through the majesty of an ancient forest or jungle, made all the more mystical by Landrus’ complex solo and the superb arrangement. The title track reflects chaotic energies and also the brave push back against obliteration, while Geoffrey Keezer’s intriguing synth patches elicit ancient sensations...a connection with Mother Earth. The ensemble is in complete symmetry, punctuated by Landrus’ dynamic soloing. Giant Panda features a well-constructed baritone solo by Landrus, which effortlessly segues into Nocturnal Flight, which is defined by eloquent, elegant guitar work from Nir Felder and parenthesized by sumptuously arranged horns as well as a spellbinding piano solo from Keezer.

Save the Elephants is a standout, and with an irresistible regga-ish motif, Felder’s rhythmic guitar, Keezer’s Hammond B3 and potent percussion and drumming from John Hadfield and Rudy Royston as well as well-placed vocals, one can almost envision the beautiful elephants strolling regally through the African Savanna. Of special beauty is Only Eight, which begins with a resonant and complex bass solo from the iconic Lonnie Plaxico and morphs into a spacious, etheric expression – a shared vision of a better, more caring world.

**Lesley Mitchell-Clarke**

El Tinajon
Luis Deniz; Rafaela Zaldívar; Roberto Occhipinti; Amhed Mitchel; Jorge Luis Papiosco; Adis Rodríguez Galindo
Modica Music (modicamusica.com)

Since his arrival from Cuba, saxophonist and composer Luis Deniz has placed his distinctive mark on both the Canadian and international jazz scenes. His warm, distinctive and technically skilled sound on alto and soprano saxophones is celebrated here with the release of his new recording – which embraces his emotional journey from a young Cuban émigré to a highly respected jazz stalwart. Deniz’s gifted compadres here include pianist/keyboards Rafael Zaldívar, bassist Roberto Occhipinti, drummer and vocalist Ahmed Mitchel, vocalist Adis Galindo and percussionist Jose
Luis (“Papiosco”) Torres. All nine evocative and powerful compositions on this superb collection were composed by Deniz and deftly produced by noted pianist Teri Parker.

The title refers to a type of clay pot, brought to Cuba by the Spanish, which eventually became the trademark of the province of Camaguey - Deniz’s culturally rich and soulful place of origin. The opening salvo, Reflexiones is rife with languid, riveting tones from Deniz’s horn that drive the ancient rhythmic modalities with inspired and emotional improvisational sequences channelling the very pulse of Mother Earth herself. This seamlessly segues into La Ceiba de Mayuya, a swinging contemporary jazz exploration featuring a dynamic acoustic bass solo by Occhipinti.

Of particular note is Rumba para Camaguey/Equality – a sumptuous, lyrical duet performed by Deniz and Zaldivar. Bolero is almost unbearably beautiful, plummeting the depths of sensuality and Gesture adapts the mood by generating pure joy, enhanced by the unison piano/vocal line, masterful piano work and Deniz’s dazzling compositional style. Also of special note is the thoroughly unison piano/vocal line, masterful piano work and Deniz’s dazzling compositional style. Also of special note is the thoroughly unison piano/vocal line, masterful piano work and Deniz’s dazzling compositional style.

Throughout this expressive music, Tzur’s lead tenor saxophone voice exquisitely intones his aural emotions glazed with evocative Phrygian modes. The rest of the ensemble follows suit as if they were written into Tzur’s music too. Each of the artists shows immense sensitivity for the composer’s feelings. Thus the repertoire on the album Isabela unfolds with warm and sweeping beauty.

In Noom and especially in Isabela (the song), for instance, every phrase is vibrantly sculpted and placed within the context of eloquent conversations among piano, bass and drums. Countering the moist tenor of Tzur’s saxophone and the cascades of Hershkovits’ piano is the low rumble of Klampanis’ contrabass and the hiss and sizzle of Blake’s cymbals. This makes for some of the most sensitive performances on the album.

On Love Song for the Rainy Season Tzur reveals uncommon depth of thought and musical ingenuity as he weaves disparate Middle Eastern and Asian influences into the music. The other musicians remain alert to nuance and dynamic contrasts, providing requisite quotas of passion.

Raul da Gama

**When I Get Low**

Tia Brazda

Flatcar Records FCR022 (tiabrazda.com)

- Going out on a limb it is not so risqué to proclaim that you won’t find another singer who vocalizes music – including this classic music – quite like Tia Brazda. While Brazda may owe much to both Billie Holiday and Amy Winehouse, she has a fully formed style that is wholly her own. Her wide-open articulation, characterized by the sultry, aspirated “ah” when she uses the first person pronoun “I” is as unique as it is beckoning, and it is something you are not likely to tire of as she glides through these nine songs on her fifth disc When I Get Low.

Brazda traverses the mezzo-soprano tonal range with ease. But her intonation is uniquely smoky. Moreover, she has a singing style that is made for the pathos of songs such as Lullaby of Leaves, When I Get Low, I Get High and Smile. She can catch both pathos and agitation with tenderly softened tones, made for the graceful love repertoire on this disc (such as the spectacularly evocative I’ll Be Seeing You).

The members of the ensemble that back Brazda prove themselves to be both subtle and idiomatic interpreters of these songs which they illuminate (as if) with dim gaslight on the darkened alleys off Broadway. Soloists Mike Freedman (guitar), Joel Visentin (piano), Alexis Baro (trumpet) and Drew Jurecka (violin, bandoneon) create an atmospheric setting for Brazda’s gorgeously sullen, long-limbed narratives and floating and spinning lines to unfold with bewitching beauty.

Raul da Gama

**Dream Dancing**

Melissa Stylianou; Gene Bertoncini; Ike Sturm

Anzic Records ANZ-0080 (melissastylianou.bandcamp.com)

- This writer purchased Melissa Stylianou’s 2006 release Sliding Down after hearing her perform in Toronto, which was my introduction to the vocalist’s tasteful singing and composing. It was also my introduction to guitarist Kim Ratcliffe whom I knew of but hadn’t heard, and a chance to hear Kevin Breit who I had just gotten to know. When offered the chance to review Dream Dancing, I delighted in the opportunity to revisit Stylianou’s music over 15 years later, accompanied by yet another great guitarist, Gene Bertoncini.

## First Move

Aaron Seeber; Warren Wolf; Sullivan Fortner; Ugonna Okegwo

Cellar Music CM103121 (cellarlive.com)

- Most jazz musicians – no matter what instrument they play – agree that you feel free to go wherever the music takes you when you have a drummer who knows when to fly rhythmically and when he has to “stay in the pocket” so others can fly. It’s clear after the first song on First Move that Aaron Seeber is exactly that kind of drummer.

He shows the elegantly raucous side to his musicianship, with great artistry and flamboyance right from the get go. The pinnacle of the disc comes on the drummer’s First Move, a fast piece that shows not only his ability to play inside the beat and around it but also to run circles and spirals around the burgeoning music.

This program is also spiced with many classics played in the (so-called) bebop style. During this daring music, Seeber evokes the ghost of Billy Higgins with the melodic chatter of the drums and the incessant hiss of cymbals. Seeber shows uncommon maturity in his playing of Charles Mingus’ classic ballad, Duke Ellington’s Sound of Love, (and later with molten rhythms on Mal Waldron’s Fire Waltz) with slow and quietly balletic drumming that seems to sing. For long sequences in the pocket, listen to Seber on Charlie Parker’s Klaatschecidedem.

Being accompanied by altoist Tim Green, pianist Sullivan Fortner, vibraphonist Warren Wolf and bassist Ugonna Okegwo also helps make this a fiery debut disc by a truly fine drummer.

Raul da Gama

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**Isabela**

Oded Tzur; Nitai Hershkovits; Petros Klampanis; Johnathan Blake

ECM 2739 (otedtzur.com)

- On the questing music of his album the eloquent saxophonist Oded Tzur pours out a range of feelings possibly dedicated to his muse – Isabela – together with a quartet (featuring pianist Nitai Hershkovits, vibist Petros Klampanis, contrabassist Johnathan Blake) which interprets the music’s lyrical profundity. The five songs – or movements, perhaps – on this meditative album brood, sing, dance and soar heavenward.

Throughout this expressive music, Tzur’s lead tenor saxophone voice exquisitely intones his aural emotions glazed with evocative Phrygian modes. The rest of the ensemble follows suit as if they were written into Tzur’s music too. Each of the artists shows immense sensitivity for the composer’s feelings. Thus the repertoire on the album Isabela unfolds with warm and sweeping beauty.

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Raul da Gama

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**Dream Dancing**

Melissa Stylianou; Gene Bertoncini; Ike Sturm

Anzic Records ANZ-0080 (melissastylianou.bandcamp.com)

- This writer purchased Melissa Stylianou’s 2006 release Sliding Down after hearing her perform in Toronto, which was my introduction to the vocalist’s tasteful singing and composing. It was also my introduction to guitarist Kim Ratcliffe whom I knew of but hadn’t heard, and a chance to hear Kevin Breit who I had just gotten to know. When offered the chance to review Dream Dancing, I delighted in the opportunity to revisit Stylianou’s music over 15 years later, accompanied by yet another great guitarist, Gene Bertoncini.
Renowned New York bassist Ike Strum is the third bandmate on this recording, and does an exquisite job filling in spaces left by voice and guitar. In this chamber jazz setting devoid of drums, there is simultaneously a rhythmic responsibility to be aware of, as well as the freedom of knowing that each note and chord can be heard clearly.

Bertoncini throws an occasional harmonic curveball Stylianou’s way, as any exciting and interactive guitarist will tend to do, but each of these interesting challenges are responded to in a sensitive yet sophisticated manner. The album’s penultimate and final numbers My One and Only Love and It Might As Well Be Spring both attest to this, with the NYC-based Canadian vocalist adjusting range and phrasing to fit best with her bandmates. Dream Dancing is a great vocal album that transcends the jazz vocal realm enough to be enjoyed by instrumentalists and listeners of all genres.

Sam Dickinson

Concert Note: Melissa Stylianou performs October 8 (8pm) at Jazz Bistro, Toronto and October 9 (4pm) at The Jazz Room, Waterloo.

Epistle
Jacob Chung; Christian Antonacci; Felix Fox-Pappas; Thomas Hainbuch; Petros Anagnostakos

Three Pine Records TPR-008 (jacobchung.bandcamp.com/album/epistle)

- It is always exciting to hear a young musician sound fully formed, simultaneously recognizing the tradition that created this art form while innovating as well. Just because there is youthful energy present doesn’t mean the music has become overly futuristic or avant-garde, and saxophonist Jacob Chung does a brilliant job of bringing new ideas to the table while respecting the old guard.

Epistle stimulates the listener seconds after pressing play on a CD player or streaming platform. The recording quality and aesthetic brings to mind Verve, Blue Note and Impulse releases, but maintains a modern clarity that eludes many musicians/engineers’ attempts to achieve such a sound.

Chung has surrounded himself with a group of likeminded and capable young musicians, the oldest being just 24. Trumpeter Christian Antonacci matches Chung’s phrasing, giving the group a unified sound as they traverse several intricate melodies. Some of these melodies come in the form of lines written over pre-existing chord changes, notably Triage with chords penned by Billy Strayhorn and Bouncin’ at Bonafide which shares a progression with Charlie Parker’s classic Confirmation. These compositions are very tastefully executed by Chung and his band, and their borrowed chord progressions are in no way a cop-out. Epistle 1, 2, 3 and 4 are all unique offerings that provide us with contrasting characteristics, from gospel to swing and everything in between.

If this is how Jacob Chung is sounding in his early 20s, the future of jazz in Canada and beyond looks bright. Check out Epistle and stay tuned for what’s next!

Sam Dickinson

Nate Wooley – Ancient Songs of Burlap Heroes

Columbia Icefield

- Composer/trumpeter Nate Wooley possesses focus and drive to match his creativity, embarking on projects that shift and reappear at intervals of years, expanding exponentially. Between 2007 and 2020, his Seven Storey Mountain grew from a trio accompanied by electronic tapes to 14 musicians and a 21-member choir. Columbia Icefield, a stellar quartet launched in 2019 with guitarist Mary Halvorson, pedal steel guitarist Susan Akcorm and drummer Ryan Sawyer, is growing conceptually, Wooley sometimes quotes 19th-century American authors like Herman Melville, and this work invites terms like “epic” and “monumental.” The looming intensity, even dark energy, can suggest Moby Dick.

Wooley’s poetic invocation describes the “burlap hero” as “one who marches – consciously or not – back to the sea in hopes of making no splash, who understands and embraces the imperfection of being, and in that way, stretches the definition of sainthood to fit.” The CD booklet includes a Amron [sic] Mumson’s grimy evocative photos of an unlit village in Nunavut, one depicting a frozen whale carcass.

As a trumpeter, Wooley extends the lyric, expressive tradition of Miles Davis and Wadada Leo Smith, adding extended techniques, eerie electronics and overdubbing. Brief impressionistic inter-tracks suggest submersed struggles, while the three long movements are developed instrumental dialogues, with guest appearances on one track each by violist Mat Maneri and electric bassist Trevor Dunn. The concluding Returning to Drown Myself, Finally, based on the Swedish song, Nu är midsommar natt, is awash with sea sounds before Wooley’s unaccompanied trumpet comes to the fore, then surrenders to the guitarist’s bubbling liquid microtones.

Stuart Broome

Desert Bloom
Florian Hoefner Trio
Alma Records ACD52022 (florian-hoeferer.com/music-shop)

- Pianist/composer Florian Hoefner states that the concept behind his latest album Desert Bloom is the behaviour in certain arid locations where a huge rainstorm will occur every few years: the dormant seeds of the wildflowers “suddenly germinate” and “the colours explode.” That image resonates
throughout the evocative and tasteful works comprising Desert Bloom. The opener, Between the Lines, is beautifully hypnotic with a repeating piano line that is joined by a contrapuntal bass and when the drums enter it switches effortlessly to a funky groove. The title song begins with a bowed bass, elegant cymbal strikes and sporadic piano chords, works into a nice bass solo until a very funky ostinato theme emerges.

Hoefner’s compositions are subtle, nuanced and always moving; the album is a jazz delight because of the interplay amongst all three musicians. Andrew Downing’s bass work is precise and funky, Nick Fraser’s drumming is a masterclass in keeping the groove going while sprinkling in surprising and enlightening percussive elements; and Hoefner’s piano can be understated, driving, impressionistic or whatever else is required.

Ted Parkinson
Golden Hour
Jocelyn Gould
Independent JGDC0422 (jocelyngould.com)

Nothing can beat an album intro like this one. Beautiful rubato guitar melodies weave together overtop lush piano chords, punctuated by patient pauses. As the lead voice leans into the last note, the rest of the band hangs onto it, giving the impression of a soft exhale. The spell is eventually broken by catharsis via drum pickup, which manages to feel like a definitive statement without being overly forceful, as if to say “welcome.” This is not to overanalyze 30 seconds of music, because one could loosely apply the previous description to the entirety of Golden Hour. It flows perfectly, is extremely dynamic, and has the calming effect of a slow, deep breath. Everything fits snugly in place.

With her sophomore effort, Jocelyn Gould proves herself to yet again be a masterful curator, bandleader and improviser, refining so much of what made 2020’s Elegant Traveler so mesmerizing. From that preceding album, the energy itself is largely dialed back, to inject the overall tone with the quietude of observing a sunset. This atmosphere is aided by Gould’s approach to song, both through interpretation and composition. Her original music feels every bit as polished and timeless as the jazz standards she chooses to tackle. Serendipity evokes the meaning of its title with grace, with pleasant surprises to be found throughout its form, culminating in an outro that sums up everything the music’s about: pure, unbridled unity.

Yoshi Maclear Wall
Anatomy
Billy Mohler; Nate Wood; Chris Speed; Shane Endsley
Contagious Music CGM007 (billymohler.bandcamp.com/album/anatomy)

It is perhaps fitting that Anatomy – an album most defined by its clarity and attentiveness – is so profoundly anchored by brief, improvised passages. If the track list were to be split into three, the songs titled Abstract would open each side. As it pertains to the pristine arrangements surrounding these vignettes, these solos serve as a sobering reminder of how fruitless and unnecessary a task it can be to draw a hard line between creative processes. There is still that element of cleanliness and craftsmanship present, mainly due to the fidelity of Billy Mohler’s bass. Through the hypnotic layering and reverb of Abstract 1, one can almost hear the exact point in which fingers make impact with string. But through his diatonic explorations within a fixed range and found resolutions of phrases in real time, it is not only pure spontaneous expression but an admittance that he isn’t one to have an entire arrangement suddenly appear in his head. By bringing the listener through a process, a greater appreciation is gained for the premeditation going into a track such as Equals. The song lives in a ping-pong match between septuple metre sections for long enough that its brief forays into standard time feel like subversive interludes. Mohler understands the power of a well-intentioned bridge, serving

The End and The Beginning
RedGreenBlue
Astral Spirits AS190 (astralrgb.bandcamp.com)

The End and the Beginning defines the slow burn; establishing a drone and then, armed with nothing but patience, allowing it to grow organically into something truly profound. The whisper of synth wizard Paul Gallaranzo’s reassuringly consonant droning note both begins and ends the album. At first so subtle you almost need to squint to hear it, this initial monophonic drone in The Beginning signals the only viable musical direction to be skyward, and then in The End allows space for the rubble to clear. Charlie Kirchen comes in shortly after, creating a simple bass line that lends itself to the tranquil atmosphere while managing to add as much harmonic context to the drone as needed, not unlike what Charlie Haden provided to the music of Don Cherry.

It is on this foundation that the music begins to gather wholly satisfying momentum. Citing Terry Riley as an influence, RedGreenBlue accomplishes something staggering, managing to evenly bridge the forms of minimalism and improvisation. In this kind of music, process is key here, allowing for the sound to expand outward while also shifting imperceptibly. The end of The Beginning is an undeniable climax, but the stripped-down Gallaranzo solo passage during the next piece is every bit as evocative. In this kind of music, process is given equal emphasis as product, and RedGreenBlue embody that concept.

Yoshi Maclear Wall
Transmit Slow
E3 by Alex Lakusta (e3byalexelakusta.bandcamp.com/album/transmit-slow)

Numerous points in Transmit Slow can place a listener in a unique state between dissociation and transfixion, peacefully swaying as blissful minutes evaporate. Drawing from numerous palates of ambient and electronic sound, the trio finds their signature from the outset. Alex Lakusta’s bass playing is the definition of substance over style, only playing the notes that lay a necessary harmonic foundation for the ensemble. Drummer Keagan Eskritt and keyboardist Josh Smiley play similarly devoid of superficiality. Transmit Slow is a masterclass in what a rhythm section can achieve artistically when solely focused on grooving as hard as possible. Just as additive are the production efforts of Robert Diack, who adds the perfect amount of polish to the low end; greatly benefiting the music’s textural clarity.

Brad Eaton rounds out this cast of consummate professionals, guesting with extremely restrained trumpet playing that does nothing more than needed to further contextualize Lakusta’s arrangements.

Due to the consistency of Lakusta’s refined bandleading style, the tracks blend together almost as if they were parts of a suite, arriving at nary a single passage in contrived fashion. Quite a bit of the overall cohesion is helped by Smiley’s patience when it comes to creating drones with his organ, allowing for a profoundly hypnotic throughline. This effect is particularly present on the track All Static/Frequency Lost, which seamlessly switches metre and pulse halfway through. That’s the thing about E3, they always stick the landing.

Yoshi Maclear Wall
as a memorable detour from more prominent ideas while never being reduced to a mere conduit from point A to point B.

Yoshi Maclear Wall

Chet Baker Trio
Elemental Music 5990442 (elemental-music.com)

In 1952, near his career’s beginnings, Chet Baker became an instant star playing cool jazz with the Gerry Mulligan quartet. It was the opposite of everything that then characterized modern jazz: glacially slow, meticulously arranged, almost improvisation-free. Thirty years later, just a few years before his death, Baker was still playing a kind of cool jazz, but it was frequently fast, with extended improvisation.

Available as three LPs or two CDs, Live in Paris presents two concert recordings, each featuring Baker’s preferred instrumentation, a chamber jazz trio of trumpet, piano and acoustic bass. The first concert, from L’Esplanade De La Défense, focuses on the Great American Songbook. It’s the ballads that stand out, with stellar instrumental performances of Easy Living and Stella by Starlight, the rhapsodic accompaniment by pianist Michel Graillier (his fluid harmonic invention resembles Bill Evans’) and bassist Dominique Lamerle feeding Baker’s lyrical gift. Episodes of Baker’s scat singing, while mimicking the fluid detail of his trumpet playing, detract from two up-tempo performances.

The much longer club session from Le Petit Opportun is much more consistent, with Baker foregoing singing and popular songs to concentrate on East Coast hard bop anthems – e.g., Hank Mobley’s Funk in Deep Freeze, Horace Silver’s Strollin’, Richard Carpenter’s Walkin’ – pieces that take on new character with the chamber jazz dynamics and the more forceful bass playing of Riccardo Del Fra, further propelling Baker and Graillier. A 19-minute (the improvisations really are extended) treatment of Brazilian composer Rique Pantoja’s Arbor Way is another highlight.

Stuart Broomer

POT POURRI

Cat’s Cradle
Arnab Chakrabarty
Independent (arnabchakrabarty.bandcamp.com/releases)

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Stuart Broomer

Vessel
Gamelan Pacifica
Independent 002 (gamelanpacifica.org)

Musicians from around the globe have chosen to make Toronto home ever since the days it was colloquially tagged for hogs and muddy streets. Virtuoso sarod player Arnab Chakrabarty, a representative of the venerable Hindustani raga classical music tradition, is a relatively recent and welcome addition to the ranks of Toronto-area music professionals.

No novice, over the last two decades Chakrabarty has played hundreds of concerts on stages around the world. Indian newspaper The Hindu reported that Chakrabarty is “known both for his emotive virtuosity and cerebral approach,” believing not in “simplifying music to cater to popular tastes as much as revelling in manipulating the operational rules of the ragas to create interesting expressions.”

Chakrabarty aims to make classical raga performance accessible to today’s audiences without compromising its fundamentals. And his third full-length album Cat’s Cradle, featuring sarod renderings of five classical ragas, reflects this balanced approach. Eschewing flamboyant ornamental passage-work, he rather focuses on the core values of the raga at hand which come to life in the alap, the introductory melodic improvisation.

The gat, a melody set in a specific raga and tala (time cycle) the latter rendered on the tabla, follows. On this album the gats are Chakrabarty’s compositions. They in turn inspire improvisation, the outcome of a spirited dialogue between set rules and the musician’s imagination freed up.

Cat’s Cradle gives full scope to Chakrabarty’s in-depth understanding and imaginative exploration of each raga complex, plumbing their signature phrases and emotional tenor while never losing sight of the rich Hindustani traditions of raga performance practice.

Andrew Timar

Shanties! Live
La Nef; Chor Leoni
Leaf Music NEF0003 (chorleoni.org/product/shanties-live/)

There could be nothing more eminently singable and danceable than sea shanties – those apparently unforgettable work songs from the 19th century.

Fortuitously – perhaps even providentially
– proud Canadians (particularly of the Scottish diaspora) continue to keep the cultural flame of the shanty alive. There is much to choose from; shanties – creations of the peripatetic merchant mariner – grew out of the French “chanter” fused into boisterous barn-dancing songs, merrily sung by British mariners into a pint of lager across the ocean to North America. Many have made it to this outstanding live recording.

Two celebrated traditional music groups – Montreal’s La Nef and Vancouver’s Juno-nominated Chor Leoni, came together for a one-night-only performance of brand new arrangements of these work songs on the resplendent Shanties! Live. It would be a minor travesty to suggest that all praise for this performance accrues to members of La Nef, albeit the fact that the ensemble’s fame is owed to their iconic soundtrack for Ubisoft’s Assassin’s Creed video game. The participation of the iconic Chor Leoni has – together with arrangements by Seán Dagher and the Chor directed by Erick Lichte – turned this rare collaboration into something truly special.

Rip-roaring shanties such as Haul on the Bowline and the stomach-churning Stormalong John provide thrill-a-minute excitement. Meanwhile the profound beauty of Lowlands Away, Shallow Brown and Le 31 du mois d’aôit, and the sublime fidelity of the recording make this classic sea shanties disc truly spectacular.

Raul da Gama

Three Corners
Hypnosis Negative
(instagram.com/hypnosis.negative)

Hypnosis Negative is creating a brilliant Something in the Air
The Timeless Appeal of Large-ish Ensemble Music

KEN WAXMAN

They were supposed to have vanished when singers replaced big bands and become anachronisms once rock music combos became the de facto performance configuration. Yet large ensembles never went away. The challenge of blending multiple instrumental colours still fascinates composers and players of both notated and improvised music. Producing the proper balance between those two motifs, while taking advantage of every timbre produced by a large group of musicians is what characterizes the following CDs.

Using the 14-member Trondheim Jazz Orchestra, Norwegian bassist Ole Morton Vågan created Plastic Wave (Odin Records ODINLP 9578 odinrecords.bandcamp.com), a 2CD meditation on modern challenges and promises. Although the brief recitations by a poet are lost on non-Norwegian speakers, the compositions stand on their own. Taking advantage of the soprano tessitura of vocalist Sofia Jernberg, Vågan’s arrangements often blend her wordless lyricism with brassy fissures or placid reed tones. But groove is never sacrificed for gentleness. Throughout motifs, which suggest Charles Mingus at his bluesteas and Henry Mancini at his jazziest, are driven by Ståle Storløkken’s Hammond organ pumps, Kjetil Møster’s and Espen Reinertsen’s tenor saxophone vamps and Vågan’s own double bass stops. Tracks such as Critical Mass Distraction are notable for their unified polyphony, as the piece advances due to contributions from trumpeter Eivind Loning’s shares and triplets and violinist Ola Kernberg’s barbed glissandi. Meanwhile, drummers Gard Nilssen and Håkon Johansen’s pops and rebounds emphasize the tune’s spikiness, confirmed by a coda of heightened brassiness. Extended or briefer tracks accentuate the unforced swing that underlies the program. Two of the more notable are Pickabooogalo and the title track; moving along with double bass thumps and drum backbeats the former maintaining a funk tempo projected by contra-puntal reed and brass riffs. Soon though, a wailing plunger interlude from trombonist Øyvind Brøkke, paced by double time organ smears introduces a stop-time variant that matches portamento brass flutters and honks from the group’s four-person reed section, sliding from that dissonate interlude to a coordinated finale. Plastic Wave confirms tone construction. Gradually building up from unified voice, brass and reed expressions, Oscar Grønberg’s piano tinkles precede an arrangement that alternates intermittent drum beats, brass tongue sucking and puffs from Eirik Hegdal’s baritone saxophone with the layered harmonies of the introduction.

Another double bassist, Benjamin Duboc of Paris, composed and directed an even more ambitious project. Entitled Volumes II – Fiction Musicale et Chorégraphique – Création pour Grand Orchestre et Corps Actants (Dark Tree DT 15 darktree-records.com), Duboc’s Ensemble
Icosikaihenagone (EI) runs through a single (nearly) 45-minute arrangement that brings life to this fictitious idea. Added to the 22 instrumentalists, who also vocalize, are the voices of three actors. With the text oscillating between imagistic and sardonic comments, with voices often overlapping, it’s best to concentrate on the music. Beginning with near-silence, it’s not until after the first four minutes that a harmonized chord from seemingly every ensemble member moves in a linear fashion but without losing the exposition’s near-opaqueness. Although reed squeaks and string strokes are sometimes detached from the sonic murk, it isn’t until repeated kettle-drum-like throbs from percussionists Thierry Waziniak and Amélie Groul bring a dramatic upsurge from reed players Jean-Luc Petit and Sylvain Kassap, that follows by Émilie Arizond-Kociolek’s reflective keyboard interlude, fully define the musical program. Brassy triplets from trumpeters Jean-Luc Capozzo and Franz Hautzinger join with the seven string players for a crescendo of undifferentiated timbres amplified with expressions from two female and one male voice. These fragments emphasize the composition’s two contrapuntal currents: dissonant footfall-like tongue slaps from the reeds and romantic glissandi from violinists Mathias Naon and Patricia Bosshard. Confirming his manipulations of low pitches Duboc’s next section matches Dorian Marcel’s and Sébastien Beliali’s percussive double bass motifs to Diemo Schwarz’s electronic samples which interject mariachi-like brass, Latin dance, waltz music snatches and hooting voices. The sampled voices and electronic wave forms continue in the following sequence as they’re waltz music snatches and hooting voices. The sampled voices and electronic wave forms continue in the following sequence as they’re toughened with Christiane Bopp’s and Alexis Persigan’s portamento trombone slurs, anvil-hard percussion smashes, percussion slaps and wordless bel-canto vocalizing. Reaching another polyphonic crescendo, the voices, electronic buzzes and trumpet triplets fade to silence. Now suspended in time, one wonders how Volumes I and II sound.

Interest in large-scale improvisation appears to fascinate French musicians, since six months before the EI disc was recorded, the 24-member Le Un troupe made its album. Coincidentally organized by David Chiesa, another double bass player, Le Havre (UnRec R 21 unensemble.bandcamp.com/album/le-havre) finds the orchestra, with a similar blend of reeds, brass, strings, percussion and electronics working its way through five group compositions over 65 minutes. The performances can be low key and slow moving or aggressive and rapid. But whether a tune’s horizontal progress is spurred by, for instance, Claire Bergerault’s accordion shakes or pianist Sophie Agnel’s key clips, overblowing and circular breathing from the four reed players, or staccato stops from the eight plucked or bowed strings, group affiliations and counterpoint always supersede singular instrumental spots. Vocalized yells, electronic drones, reed yelps and brass triplets have their place but are balanced and layered. Chiesa’s preference for low pitches means that a track such as Unité Nodale 8.2 reaches a climax at mid-point as double bass pumps preface a defining sequence where every one of the instruments’ tones, pops, cries, thumps and squeaks in unison, with bell tree shakes as a respite. Unité Nodale 11.2 and Unité Nodale 3.1, the introductory and concluding salvos, express this strategy at greatest length. On the first, affiliations from tremolo accordion brush up against thick double bass stops, mooring reeds and trumpet Christian Pruvost’s half-valve expressions, reaching a crescendo of miasmatic blending. This mixture bypasses stuttering rips from the trumpeter and trombonist Patrick Charbonnier plus legno string sweeps to reach a contrapuntal climax of intermittent piano clips and thumping riffs from percussionists Camille Emaille and Benoît Kilian. That’s until spicato string shakes, brass scoops and vocalized bel canto sighs sail across the lower pitches for a finale. These alternations from complete freedom to integration are confirmed with Unité Nodale 3.1, although here the reverberating metallic pressure and vibrating sibilation from Pascal Battus’ rotating surfaces and Jérôme Noetinger and Lionel Marchetti’s electronics are more prominent. Among the concentrated timbres of drones, pops, slaps and shakes dualism is set up between pairs such as Nina García’s guitar strums and saxophonist Michel Doneda’s wailing split tones, as or multiple circular breathing abuts swift string glissandi. Ascending to a mesh of electroacoustic output, the cumulative tone ascends in pitch and loudness until it shakes away.

Unlike the massive ensembles put together by EI and Le Un, another French band, the Healing Orchestra (HO) presents its music as Free Jazz for the People! (LFDS 011 lefondeurdeson.com) with only 14 musicians. Despite the insurgent title, the two CDs combine free-form swinging with precise touch of emotional free jazz. Led by vibist/pianist Paul Wacrener, who composed all the music, the strategic arrangements take advantage of every member’s talent. Pouvoir du Dedans which introduces the three-part title suite, features...
slurping and squeezed clarion variations from Kassap who has a less prominent role with Le Un. Overall his staccato tongue-slapping floats over lumbering group work then introduces a section characterized by throbbling bass lines from Victor Aubert and Blaise Chevalier and climaxes with a dual between violinist Sarah Colomb’s stretched spiccato and flutist Fanny Ménoz’s peeping whistles. This dualism is used to striking effect on other tracks, especially when soloists pop out of concentrated orchestral motifs before integrating themselves back into the evolving themes. Confluences and L’Estaca suite’s final tracks illustrate this. The flutist’s traverse colouration; projected triplets from trumpeter Xavier Bornens; snorting and searing altissimo and vibrated split tones from saxophonists Arnaud Sacase (alto), Jean-François Petitjean (tenor) and Jon Vicuna (baritone); plus Wacreiner’s staccato vibes chiming and linear piano comping heard briefly but crucially. Personalizing the packed group improvisations, the narrative is loosened enough so that the shift to a happy dance rhythm makes the finale more freylekhs than free jazz. This same balance between freneticism and facility is expressed on Blooming In Tough Days, the extended finale of the Fraternity Suite. After exploring motifs encompassing folkloric harmonies by the three arco string players, gong-like resonations from the vibes and a touch of drone from concentrated timbres led by low-pitched piano notes, baritone sax honks and plucked bass thumps, the group settles into a groove. With portamento brass scoops, mellow violin glissandi and drummer Benoist Raffin’s press rolls, the suite and session exit with joyous vamps that are spirited, streetwise and sophisticated all at once. There are similar concepts from Vancouver’s Hard Rubber Orchestra (HRO) on Iguana (Hard Rubber DL hardrubber.com). The urbane arrangements by leader/trumpeter John Korsrud and others make it sound as if they’re being played by a larger group whereas the HRO is usually an octet. Always ready to emphasize the hard in the group’s name, the tracks often suggest how a metal band would sound playing all acoustic instruments. Instances of this are the extended Source Code, composed and featuring guitarist Harry Stafylakis and Korsrud’s Force Majeure. Built up from buzzy guitar and electric bass riffs and backbeat drumming from Eliot Doyle, the often agitation program still finds room for Mark Ferris’ Baroque-tinged mid-point violin sweeps before a polyphonic climax-crescendo with every instrument, especially the three hocketing and harmonized horns projecting at once. Based around a responsive and repeated chunky pattern by drummers Trent Otter and Kai Basanta, this background power pushes juddering and ascending chords from saxophonists Tom Keenlyside and Jon Bentley plus thickened brass portamento from Jim Hopson’s three low-pitched horns. Metal doesn’t replace melody however, since Korsrud’s From the Earth is a veritable piano concerto for Marianne Trudel. As her piano line evolves with Romantic overtones including waterfalls of notes and individual plinking, Mike Herriott adds to the Arcadian mood with overdubbed harmonized French horn, trombone, bass trombone and flugelhorn textures. Other tracks showcase everything from Vivian Houle’s alternating banshee-like or warbling vocalizing floating over electrified violin sweeps and paced by Ron Samworth’s guitar drones, to the stop-time title track that matches a Latin tinge with driving plunger brass and Samworth’s string slaps. Overall it appears the HRO has every part of the sound spectrum covered. A comparison of the sparse HRO personnel with the many players involved elsewhere shows how modern large ensemble writing and playing can take many forms if creativity is in the right hands.

What we’re listening to this month: New to the Listening Room

- **50** Robert Paterson - String Quartets 1-3
  The Indianapolis Quartet

- **51** Douze guitares à Paris
  Forestare, Pascal Germain-Berardi

- **51** Beethoven: Complete Music for Piano and Cello
  Robert deMaine and Peter Takacs

- **55** Lisztomania Vol. 2
  Hando Nahkur

- **56** Mythes
  Ariane Brisson et Olivier Hébert-Bouchard

- **56** Souvenirs D’Auguste
  Descarries
  Isabelle David

- **57** Calques
  Quatuor Umlaut

- **59** World Premiere Album: Carl Vine Complete Piano Sonatas
  Xiaoya Liu

- **59** When Dark Sounds Collide
  Pathos Trio

- **63** Dream Dancing
  Melissa Stylianou

- **66** Shanties! LIVE
  La Nef & Chor Leoni

- **67** three corners
  Hypnosis Negative

- **41** In the Brink
  Bergamot Quartet

Read the reviews here, then visit thewholenote.com/listening
Isabel Overton Bader, LLD’07, turned a lifelong passion for the arts into invaluable support for generations of students at Queen’s University at Kingston, Ontario. She and her beloved husband Alfred were known for their extraordinary generosity, notably their donations of world-class works of art, Bader College, and the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts. Through life-changing scholarships, curatorships, and research chairs, Isabel opened up the worlds of music, art, dance, theatre, and costume. She believed in the potential of young people to achieve excellence, and created opportunities to develop Canada’s gifted emerging musicians. She sought to enable children, through music, to reach their potential as individuals and citizens.

Her deep commitment has forever enriched our experience.

Thank you, Dr. Bader.
Sheku Kanneh-Mason returns with a programme spanning folk tunes, jazz melodies, and classical works — including Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Stravinsky — as well as an original pop song written by the cellist himself.
VÍKINGUR ÓLAFSSON
FROM AFAR

His most personal album to date, pianist Víkingur Ólafsson explores works by Bach, Mozart, Schumann, Brahms, Bartók, a world premiere by Thomas Adès, as well as Icelandic and Hungarian folk songs.

THE NEW ALBUM • OCTOBER 7