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and Listening Room

Trio Arkel
GERALD FINLEY  CHARLOTTE HELLEKANT

BLUEBEARD’S CASTLE
BÉLA BARTÓK

A radical retelling of Bartok’s thrilling opera, featuring a new English libretto and orchestral arrangement.

MARCH 29 & 31 // APRIL 1
FLECK DANCE THEATRE, TORONTO ON
SCAN THE QR CODE FOR INFO & TICKETS
Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

March 28, 2023
7:30pm
Koerner Hall

BACH

MASS IN B MINOR

Jean-Sébastien Vallée, Conductor
Toronto Mendelssohn Choir
Baroque Orchestra

tmchoir.org
ESPRIT ORCHESTRA
NEW WAVE FESTIVAL 2023
Wed April 12th & Sun April 16th
7:00PM | TD Music Hall

Music by Claude Vivier, Julius Eastman, Jessie Montgomery, Steve Reich, Sophie Dupuis, Roydon Tse, Stephanie Orlando, John Rea, Akira Nishimura, Mark Duggan, Julia Mermelstein, Misato Mochizuki, Chris Paul Harman

SEASON FINALE
Sun April 23rd
8:00PM | Koerner Hall

Andrew Norman (USA) — Unstuck (2008)
Chris Paul Harman (CA) — Clementi sottosopra* (2023)
Eugene Astapov (CA) — Burial Rites** (2023)
John Corigliano (USA) — Symphony No. 1 (1988)

*BBO World Premiere  **World Premiere and Esprit Commission

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The time of photographing the Arkel Trio was a blast! Their infectious energy and positive attitude made some fantastic shots. The dynamic between the three was electric and I couldn’t help but smile behind the lens. The shoot was as inspiring and exciting as the music they created together. Their ability to bring the creative vision to life was simply remarkable, and it was an honour to be a part of the process. I had such a great time capturing the personalities of these talented and dedicated individuals.

Chung Ling Lo

ATMA Classique is proud to present Chopin Recital 4, featuring the celebrated pianist Janina Fialkowska

The newest album in this series gathers some of Chopin’s most beautiful pieces: Polonaises, Preludes, Nocturnes, Ballades, Waltzes and Scherzos.

Release date - February 10, 2023

Choral music by J. S. Bach and late baroque composers including Johann Ludwig Bach, Jan Dismas Zelanka and Antonio Lotti. Directed by Matthias Maute.

Release date - February 17, 2023

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 7:30PM & FRIDAY, MARCH 17, 2023 7:30PM
KOERNER HALL  TICKETS START AT ONLY $25.

Students from The Glenn Gould School's vocal program present their fully staged annual opera in Koerner Hall, conducted by Gordon Gerrard and directed by Anna Theodosakis.

This modern-day *Marriage of Figaro* is an operatic comedy with more serious moments as the story of the refugee who lives in the airport – inspired by the true-life story of an Iranian refugee who lived at Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris – unfolds around the different characters who find themselves delayed in the terminal.

Part of the Price Opera Program

**TICKETS ON SALE NOW! 416.408.0208  RCMUSIC.COM/PERFORMANCE**
Some Things That Caught My Eye

But first, a couple of definitions, and a hypothesis

Food desert: an area or community lacking adequate access to affordable, healthy, fresh food, due to factors such as lack of available options for both purchase and transportation, economic “redlining”, monoculture, etc.

Arts desert: an area or community lacking adequate access to affordable space (to live and to work) and to resources for live performance, exhibition, rehearsal, artistic education, cultural enrichment, and/or community participation in the arts.

Hypothesis: These two areas are related through systemic practices that allow, and even encourage, large scale for-profit consolidations of “public goods” (from food to real estate), over long term sustainability. In both cases, “desertification” is irreversible without addressing the root causes.

Looking across a big lake or two

Sometimes to see our own city (and what ails us) a bit more clearly, it helps to start by looking across a big lake (or two). This next quote caught my eye when I was googling desert definitions.

“The term ‘arts desert’ makes me just a little bit crazy. It’s not about areas where art does not exist. It’s about areas where art does exist, but it’s underfunded, it’s under-resourced, it’s under-organized. And those reasons have to do with poverty, they have to do with racism.”

The speaker is Jennifer Coleman (senior program officer for the Cleveland-based Gund Foundation), and I found the quote in a story on Ideastream Public Media – a website which aims, among other things, to connect with Northeast Ohio’s vibrant arts and culture scene, via news and storytelling on TV, radio and digital platforms.” In turn, that story led me to the website of another Northern Ohio organization, Heights Arts, (based in the city of Cleveland Heights).

Heights Arts seeded itself during a city-wide visioning process in the very early 2000s. “A group of Cleveland Heights residents became deeply involved in the visioning meetings,” the Heights Arts website explains. “Heights Arts was founded on the premise that capitalizing on our community’s rich artistic resources could positively impact all aspects of community life: community-building, economic development, education, and public spaces … as we began to tap into the creative spirit of our community.”

Food for thought.

CALLS FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

DESERIFICATION: causes, impacts, and remedies

Beginning in April 2023, The WholeNote is launching an exploration in all of our media of ways to increase the visibility and viability of the arts in so-called “arts deserts” across Ontario.

If you, as an individual or community organizer, are interested in participating or would like more information about the initiative, please contact David Perlman, publisher@thewholenote.com or 416-323-2232 x28
Collaborative life on the choral scene
Choirs were the first music sector to be choked off during the pandemic, and for the same reasons have been the slowest to re-emerge – but, from the things I see, they are doing so more energetically and more collaboratively than ever before. Which is good news when one considers that choral music is the bedrock of community participation in music life – bridging audience and performance in a way no other form of music can. Here’s a taste:

Toronto Mendelssohn Choir’s Exchange: Community Singing Festival. On February 4, the TMChoir hosted three high school choirs, plus their friends and families, for a one-day non-competitive singing festival and showcase presentation at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, the TMChoir’s home base “to celebrate our ability to sing together again, in a day of collaboration, learning, and community connection.” The invited schools reflect the sweep of the outreach they are doing: Agincourt Collegiate Institute (Scarborough); O’Neill Collegiate and Vocational Institute (Oshawa); and Mayfield Secondary School in Caledon East (one of two Arts Schools serving Peel Region).

Add to that the recent reinstatement of the Toronto Mendelssohn Singers as the TMChoir’s 24-voice paid professional core, and the organization’s capacity for tackling chamber choir repertoire takes them far beyond the large-scale oratorios and Masses that were the raison d’être for its founding in 1894.

And speaking of non-competitive one day singing festivals, this year’s Ontario Senior Treble Festival, (the first since 2020!) is titled “Sending You Light” and is hosted by Young Voices Toronto, bringing together choristers in the senior ensembles of the Bach Children’s Chorus, Chorus Niagara, the Hamilton Children’s Chorus, Mississauga Children’s Choir, Oakville Choir for Children & Youth, the Toronto Beaches Children’s and Youth Chorus, the Toronto Children’s Chorus and Young Voices Toronto. Guest conductor this year is Kellie Walsh.

Walk Together Children, at Christ Church Deer Park on March 4, may sound familiar. It is the second iteration of a concert curated in 2018 by Antiguan-born soprano Denise Williams, with the aim of bringing together the music of Toronto’s African, Jewish and Muslim diasporas. “Most of the artists – representative of the three diasporas – and the choir (the Jubilate Singers conducted by Isabel Bernaus) are the same as in 2018,” Williams told me. “We have incorporated a lot of the repertoire from 2018. This one will have more selections by the choir, more that integrate the soloists with the choir, many more contemporary selections that are by Toronto composers, and we are especially pleased to welcome multi-instrumentalist Waleed Abdulhamid, who represents both African and Muslim heritage.”

Her sense of what constitutes “diaspora” has shifted, though, more than the construct for the event: “I see things more and more as involving cultural migration and integration as well. Toronto’s already multicultural mosaic continues to diversify but also to blend cultural identities as well. As I see it, two most recent historical globally impactful events – George Floyd and the pandemic – have increased understanding, unity, and cooperation among cultures, further dissolving the walls of division.”

The related events that will take place are, from a community arts perspective, as important as the concert: on February 19, a community forum with the choir, Williams, and some of the other featured soloists, at the Neighbourhood Unitarian Universalist Congregation (NUUC); and, as part of Black History Month, a workshop-presentation for students at Rosedale Heights School of the Arts on February 10.
Three Tours

Billed as a “two act opera” the Nathaniel Dett Chorale’s Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom makes a three-city tour (Toronto, St. Catharines and Kingston) on February 17, 18 and 24, respectively. While Tubman, the legendary Underground Railway conductor, is the towering backdrop to the story, the storyline, based on recent Tubman biographies, is more intimate – two sisters vowing never to let slavery tear them apart.

Founded in 1998, and still under the direction of its founder, Brainerd Blyden-Taylor, the Chorale was, and remains, Canada’s first professional choral group dedicated to Afrocentric music of all styles, with a mission “to build bridges of understanding, appreciation, and acceptance … through the medium of music, seeking to dissolve the barriers of stereotype, and to empower humans in general, and those of African descent in particular.”

The Nagamo Project Concert Tour:

Toronto, London, St. John’s, Winnipeg, Edmonton is the coast-to-coast and back again path that Vancouver-based choir Musica Intima and Andrew Balfour will take, featuring music from their recording, NAGAMO (reviewed on page 51).

Revolving around Elizabethan choral music by Byrd, Tallis, and Gibbons, NAGAMO features the unique musical perspective of Balfour's reimagining of these motets into Cree and Ojibway.

“NAGAMO (Sings) reimagines history and the concept of nation to nation respect and musical dialogue” Balfour says. “During the beginning of the 17th century, several Chiefs and esteemed Indigenous leaders journeyed to Europe in the hope of forging alliances. NAGAMO explores the fantastic idea of what might have happened if the sharing of music, and the respect of culture had contrived, and how a different history might have played out.”

The Nagamo Project Concert is at Eglinton St. George’s United Church in Toronto on March 4, 2023, with the Toronto Youth Choir, and in London, March 7, at Western University, with choirs from the Don Wright Faculty of Music.

Welcome Tuskegee Golden Voices

“There are few choirs anywhere with a history as illustrious as the Golden Voices,” writes Tom Mawhinney. “Booker T. Washington, a liberated slave, founded Tuskegee University in 1881 in rural Alabama, about 40 kilometres east of Montgomery, eventually becoming the primary spokesperson for the Black community in the United Stated for more than two decades. He founded the Golden Voices choir in 1886; since then, the choir has won acclaim at national and international levels, and has sung command performances for Presidents Wilson, Roosevelt, Kennedy and Carter. The songs the Golden Voices sing have a special significance; many are the first choral arrangements, created between 1931 and 1955 by Tuskegee choir director William Levi Dawson, of songs that were anchored in the years of slavery: songs like ‘Follow the Drinking Gourd’, ‘Deep River’, ‘I Want to be Ready’, ‘Wade in the Water’ and ‘Every Time I Feel the Spirit’.”

Crossing a big lake or two in the opposite direction to get here, what promises to be a memorable Golden Voices Ontario tour starts on March 8 in London and travels east from there to Toronto, Kingston, and Ottawa, on March 9, 11, and 12.

David Perlman can be reached at publisher@thewholenote.com

STEVE REICH: Now & Then

MARCH 25

GEOGE WESTON RECITAL HALL

Celebrate composer Steve Reich’s 86th birthday. Program to include the iconic Drumming, featuring NEXUS and TorQ Percussion Quartet. NEXUS lauded by the New York Times as “the most acclaimed percussion group on earth” and TorQ, described as “outstanding—no, make that astonishing!” (Ottawa Citizen)

Presented in partnership with TO Live.

Visit soundstreams.ca for more details
Emily D’Angelo
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 8PM KOERNER HALL
TICKETS START AT ONLY $35
Canadian mezzo-soprano Emily D’Angelo will perform works by Hildegard von Bingen, Missy Mazzoli, Arnold Schönberg, Aaron Copland, and others.
 Supported by The Michael and Sonja Koerner Fund for Classical Programming

Mingus Dynasty Band and John Beasley’s MONK’extra Quartet
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 8PM KOERNER HALL
TICKETS START AT ONLY $45
Mingus Dynasty features musicians Mingus recorded or played with. MONK’extra is a six-time Grammy Award nominated band led by John Beasley.

Imogen Cooper
SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 3PM KOERNER HALL
TICKETS START AT ONLY $45
Sir Simon Rattle has said that Imogen Cooper is “one of the greatest musicians England has produced.” Program includes Liszt, Beethoven and Schubert.
 Supported by The Michael and Sonja Koerner Fund for Classical Programming

KOERNER HALL
2022.23 Concert Season

"Rhapsody and the Blues"
An Evening with Jens Lindemann, Jon Kimura Parker, and the Yamaha All Star Big Band
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 8PM KOERNER HALL TICKETS START AT ONLY $75
Rhapsody in Blue is the focal point in this special gala concert of big band jazz by composers such as Oscar Peterson, Nat King Cole, Tommy Dorsey, and more.
 Celebration Sponsor: Heather Edwards

The King’s Singers: Finding Harmony
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 8PM KOERNER HALL TICKETS START AT ONLY $45
An evening of iconic anthems of struggle and revolution through history, commissioned by and for The King’s Singers.
Supported by The Michael and Sonja Koerner Fund for Classical Programming

Anton Nel and Friends
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2PM MAZZOLENI CONCERT HALL
TICKETS ARE ONLY $25
Anton Nel, “an uncommonly elegant pianist,” (The New York Times) will perform Brahms with James Anagnoson, Erika Raum (violin), Barry Shiffman (viola), and Alexandra Koerner Yeo Chair in Cello, Andrés Diaz.
Supported by The Michael and Sonja Koerner Fund for Classical Programming

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The Royal Conservatory
BMO
The finest instrument is the mind.
Continuum’s Show Room and Soundstreams’ Reich

WENDALYN BARTLEY

A fascinating yet seemingly ordinary scenario forms the basis for a tension-filled new opera by composer Rodney Sharman and librettist Atom Egoyan. The last time these two creators collaborated was for their opera Elsewhereless in 1998, which received over 35 performances both across Canada and the Netherlands. The new work, commissioned by Continuum, is titled Show Room, and a concert presentation will be performed at the Music Gallery on March 18 and 19. The story reveals a complex relationship between a mother, her son, the mother’s clothing, and a woman who runs a haute couture business. The instrumentation consists of soprano, mezzo-soprano, baritone, two soprano recorders, alto and tenor recorders, an alto and tenor sackbut (a Renaissance- and Baroque-era trombone), percussion, piano, toy piano, violin, cello and double bass.

I recently spoke with Jennifer Tung, conductor of the production, to find out what to expect from Show Room. She explained that in this opera, unlike many where a lot of action takes place quickly, the dramatic aspects of the story are stretched out slowly over time. Musically, Sharman makes use of microtonality in the score to create textures that also shift very slowly. “Text is repeated many times, which helps create the tension,” she explained. “In the libretto, as the relationships between the characters build, you think the story is going in one direction, but then it doesn’t end up there. Because Rodney knows the singers, he was able to write vocal lines specifically harnessed for the strengths of each individual voice.”

Tung also commented on the unique way Sharman combines early instruments with contemporary harmonies and the specific way he writes out the degrees of the microtonal shifts. “For example, he indicates how many steps or changes the player needs to take to go from B to B-flat, which on the piano is only one step, but with the recorder, sackbut, or a string instrument, it’s possible to make four or six steps between these two notes.”

In a video interview available in Continuum’s web series Press Play, Sharman says: “I’m able to move from major to minor keys in a strange and twisted way that reflects the twisted situation in this opera. There are places in the text where I simply stop and dwell on a word, on the beauty of the voices, or on the unusual timbres that are created.” In the same interview, Egoyan explains that the “characters are pushed to extremes and react in a perversely twisted way, perversions that are rooted in emotion that creates a sense of need, fear, desire and yearning.”

Tung comes to the project after extensive training, initially receiving degrees from the Eastman School of Music in singing performance and collaborative piano or vocal coaching. Over time, she has revived an earlier passion she had for conducting, even though when younger she was discouraged from pursuing that route because of the difficulty women had in developing conducting careers.

She initially received mentoring from Maestro Denis Mastromonaco, conductor of the Mississauga Symphony Orchestra, learning “on the job.” She took on the role of conductor of the Mississauga Youth Symphony and was subsequently selected to be a participant in Tapestry Opera’s Women in Musical Leadership (WML) three-year program, designed to help women and non-binary conductors and music directors develop their skills. After conducting Brian Current’s Gould’s Wall this past summer, she was invited by Continuum’s artistic director Ryan Scott to take on this project. After a few years of COVID delays, the project is now ready to be rehearsed and premiered under Tung’s expert musical direction.

Soundstreams Presents the Music of Steve Reich

Soundstreams is celebrating the 86th birthday of American composer Steve Reich (b. October 3, 1936) with a concert in the George Weston Recital Hall on March 25 that will include a performance of Reich’s iconic work Drumming and the Canadian premiere of Reich’s more recent piece Reich/Richter. The latter was written to be performed with German visual artist Gerhard Richter and Corinna Belz’s film Moving Picture (946-3) and received more than one hundred performances at The Shed in New York in 2019.

It has been close to seven years since Soundstreams last presented the music of Reich, when Music for 18 Musicians and Tehillim were performed at Massey Hall. Drumming, dating from 1970-71, goes back even further than that, being first performed in Toronto at a New Music Concerts event in February of 1976. Composed for nine percussionists, two female singers, whistle and piccolo, the percussion players begin on four pairs of tuned bongo drums in Part One, change to marimbas with the addition of the singers in Part Two, move to glockenspiels in Part Three (with the whistle and piccolo), and finally in Part Four, a full ensemble. The piece is continuous without any pause or break, and takes 38 minutes to perform.
Drumming is known for its use of repeating melodic patterns that shift into becoming one or more beats out of phase with each other that over time build up a hypnotic spell of sound. I remember well that 1976 performance in U of T’s Walter Hall with the members of the Nexus percussion ensemble performing. When the piece finished, the audience spontaneously rose to its feet with one singular movement in a standing ovation, a rarity in those days at new music events.

For this 2023 performance, Nexus will once again be on hand to spin the audience through this mesmerizing world of musical bliss along with TorQ Percussion Quartet. Nexus members Bob Becker and Russell Hartenberger were key participants in the original composing and performing of the piece as members of the Steve Reich Ensemble and have created the website drumming@50.com. Full of videos, articles, conversations and historical documentation, this site is a treasure trove of all things Drumming.

As Hartenberger states on the website: “For me, the gradual process of learning about Drumming was also the beginning of the gradual process of learning about rhythm.” He recounts the story of how Reich composed the piece while working interactively with the percussionists of his ensemble. Learning by rote was an essential part of the process, one that Hartenberger claims is essential for learning how to play this demanding piece. I’m sure that the piece will sound as fresh, adventurous and spellbinding as it did when it was initially performed.

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

Hear! Hear!
Remembering John Beckwith
March, 1927 - December, 2022

Friends, colleagues and family pay tribute in music and words

A distinctly original and vital voice in all aspects of music in Canada, John Beckwith contributed over 160 compositions and a large number of books and articles over the course of his 75-year career.

Tuesday, February 28, 7:30pm at University of Toronto, Walter Hall

Performers include:
Soundstreams’ Choir 21, New Music Concerts Ensemble, Opus 8, Robert Aitken, Dianne Aitken, Monica Whicher, Peter Stoll and others.

presented by
The University of Toronto, Faculty of Music
Friends & Family of John Beckwith

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VESPERs

April 2nd, 2023
4:00 pm
St. Anne’s Anglican
Toronto

www.amadeuschoir.com
Of the many things that music audiences have regained in the 2022/2023 concert season, the most valuable may be the very concept of a “season” in and of itself. No longer must we sit, nails bitten to the quick, waiting for the inevitable notification that the concert – that very special concert to which we’ve looked forward for so long – has been suddenly and unceremoniously cancelled in the wake of the latest round of lockdown regulations.

Now, well on the other side of our first post-COVID holiday season, we can confidently purchase tickets, mark dates in our calendars and rest assured that nothing will come between us and an evening of beautiful music (except the usual calamities: snowstorms, professional turmoil and the grim realization that we’ve become our parents).

Terri Lyne Carrington in town

One of the unexpected joys of this year has been the return of the post-secondary music-program concert as a major event. Toronto’s major classical and jazz programs have a full itinerary of events on the books, taking place both at the schools themselves and at many of the city’s main art-music venues. Students from the University of Toronto’s jazz program perform regularly on Monday nights at The Rex as part of their small-ensemble credit, students of all ages regularly perform in small and large ensembles at U of T and free masterclasses happen most weeks, featuring local and international musicians coaching students and performing. Each year, however, U of T also brings in a visiting artist for a week, a musician of some international renown to work with students, host masterclasses, and perform in a culminating concert. This year, that artist is drummer Terri Lyne Carrington.

A Berklee professor; a veteran of bands led by the likes of Dizzy Gillespie, Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock; the recipient of multiple Grammy awards and nominations (including two separate entries in the Best Jazz Instrumental Album category at this year’s upcoming ceremony); Carrington has consistently worked at the centre of the jazz world since the beginning of her decades-long career. At this stage in her career, she is as invested in mentoring the next generation of jazz musicians as she is in performing; she is the founder and artistic director of the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice, the artistic director for Berklee Summer Session’s Women’s Performance Program, and she plays as regularly with young musicians like esperanza spalding, Matthew Stevens and Kris Davis.

After two days of masterclasses – both of which, in the late afternoon on March 6 and 7, appear to be open to the public – the even better news is that you can check out Carrington in concert with the U of T Jazz Orchestra at 7:30pm on March 8 at U of T’s Walter Hall. What to expect: an evening of exceptional drumming; a band that will likely be inspired, driven and enthusiastic about playing with a rhythm-section luminary; and a lot of undergraduate whooping.

Cécile McLorin Salvant

On the subject of award winners: at 8pm on March 30, Cécile McLorin Salvant performs at the Royal Conservatory’s Koerner Hall on the heels of her 2022 Nonesuch records release, Ghost Song. Selected by Glenn Gould Foundation Prize-winner Jessye Norman in 2019, to receive the Protégé Prize that goes with the Glenn Gould Prize, Salvant – a composer, singer and visual artist – has been in the concert-hall spotlight since winning the Thelonious Monk Vocal Competition in 2010. (Though still pretty much universally called the Monk Competition, the award is now known as the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz’s International Competition.) Amongst Salvant’s other accolades: three Grammy awards, DownBeat Critics’ Poll Awards and a 2020 MacArthur Foundation Fellowship. Salvant’s extraordinary technique works in

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art + culture exhibitions.

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estonianmusicweek.ca
support of a deep sense of musicality, with an emphasis on reframing and re-examining the rich history of jazz and blues.

**TD Music Hall**

On the subject of soft-seater theatres: TD Music Hall, a brand-new venue from the Corporation of Massey Hall and Roy Thomson Hall, has its grand opening on February 10. A self-described “state-of-the-art 500-capacity performance space,” TD Music Hall is located in Allied Music Centre, a new performance hub attached to Massey Hall on Victoria Street. Allied Music Centre also includes several other notable rooms: the Basement Bar, a “magnetic and intimate performance space”; the seventh-floor Deane Cameron Recording Studio, conceptualized both “as a classroom for music education” and as “a professionally appointed recording studio”; the 6th Floor Theatre, a black-box affair for smaller shows; and a variety of small bars and other community-minded spaces.

Marketed as something of a stepping-stone to the Massey Hall stage (official nomenclature: the Allan Slaight Stage at Massey Hall), TD Music Hall has an impressive range of acts booked throughout 2023. The inaugural show will take place on Friday, February 10, with The Halluci Nation, formerly known as A Tribe Called Red, whose combination of electronic music, hip-hop and Indigenous music has been a mainstay on concert stages since the group’s inception in 2007. Some other highlights: Canadian blues singer Shakura S’Aida, on Saturday, March 18; experimental American indie group Deerhoof, on Friday, March 31; and the Motown-inflected stylings of Canadian singer Elise LeGrow, on Saturday, April 22.

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.

**THE ROSE ORCHESTRA**

**MAGIC OF THE MOVIES**

The excitement of lights dimming, theme music filling the theatre in “surround sound”, who can deny that feeling of exhilaration we’ve all enjoyed as we wait to watch our favourite actors come alive on the big screen? The Rose Orchestra welcomes you to re-live some of those moments as they present a collection of movie melodies sure to spark that excitement all over again.

**FEBRUARY 11, 2023**

**7:30PM**

**THE MARC JORDAN SHOW**

**JAZZ @ LBP HOSTED BY JAYMZ BEE**

Join Performing Arts Brampton for another performance of Jazz @ LBP hosted by Jaymz Bee. This performance is an intimate one featuring Marc Jordan as he plays songs from all facets of his long career — from the early Yatch Rock to jazz recorded with producer Lou Pomanti. Other familiar hits will feature songs from artists such as Joe Cocker, Cher, Bonnie Raitt, Amanda Marshall, Bette Midler, Josh Groban and more!

**FEBRUARY 14, 2023**

**8:00PM**
New Canadian plays, musicals and music theatre works are popping up everywhere across the country this season. Three shows coming up this spring caught my eye in particular for how they are using music to explore and highlight various facets of our multicultural Canadian identity.

**Fall On Your Knees**

In Toronto the world premiere of the theatrical adaptation of *Fall on Your Knees*, the internationally acclaimed 1996 novel by Canadian author and playwright Ann-Marie MacDonald, which I previewed in my previous column, has just opened to standing ovations at the Bluma Appel Theatre and will travel after an all-too-short Toronto run to Neptune Theatre in Halifax, the National Arts Centre in Ottawa and the Grand Theatre in London.

One of the most exciting things about this new adaptation is how it uses music not just as an element of the production, nor even just as a character in the story, but as the essential material weaving together the many disparate elements of a multigenerational tale, compared by some watchers to the *House of Atreus* plays in classic Greek drama.

Beginning in the early 20th century and ending in the 1960s, FoYK traces the emotional saga of the Piper family in Cape Breton Island, a location famously characterized by its Celtic heritage and lilting folk music. This is just the first note, as it were, in a kaleidoscope of musical styles. One of the first characters we meet, the eventual patriarch of the Piper clan, James Piper, is a young piano tuner whom we know from the novel has been taught piano by his mother as part of a strategy to keep him out of the coal mine. As he tunes the piano in the home of the Mahmoud family in Sydney, he meets and soon falls in love with their 13-year-old daughter, Materia. His musical theme will be early piano exercise phrases marked by the single plangent note of tuning, while hers will develop from traditional Lebanese vocals and dance music to the rollicking sound of the music hall where she will work later to help support the family.

When their first daughter, Kathleen, shows an early aptitude for singing and is encouraged to study seriously, opera is introduced as a significant leitmotif that will grow in importance as the play progresses. Interwoven is a minor theme of religious music, the leitmotif for the middle sister, Mercedes, whose twisted religiosity is symbolically caught at one point by a disturbing plot placement of *Ave Maria*. An even more rebellious strand in the weave is made up of such World War One-era songs as *Mademoiselle from Armentières* and *My Heart Belongs to Daddy* sung by younger sister Frances in her Lebanese uncle’s speakeasy. Finally and notably in the second half of the six-hour show is the wonderfully smoky and contrasting exotic sound of the blues, sung by Janelle Cooper as Harlem star Sweet Jessie Hogan.

In Part Two where the story focuses primarily on Kathleen’s sojourn studying opera in New York, the Harlem music scene is contrasted...
brilliantly with the strictly classical arias she sings in the studio – and yet, the richness of the interwoven opera and blues also comes to symbolise Kathleen’s growing artistry as her friendship with her accompanist Rose ripens into a deeper relationship. Samantha Hill as Kathleen has a clear classically trained voice which is a joy to listen to and a wonderful contrast to the jazzy richness of Janelle Cooper’s club turns. All the musicians, though usually hidden away upstage, do a superb job, easily trading instruments and contributing vocals – Maryem Toller’s vocals were a standout in Part One.

One thing that I had expected from early rehearsal photos of the production and missed seeing onstage was a more experimental or expressionistic movement style – except in one instance when a line of uniformed soldiers tumbles up to, over and around the upright piano as Materia plays a song of the period, giving us an unforgettable image of James at war in the trenches of World War One.

Under the symbolic giant piano strings strung above the stage from the flies to the wings like the sails of a ship, and under the careful music direction of Sean Mayes, music weaves together the acting and physical elements of this production making a whole that is deeper, richer, more evocative of the colours, depths, dark secrets and eventual redemption within the story of this family and all those who touch their lives.


RUBABOO

A second world premiere at the Grand Theatre in London, with the intriguing name of Rubaboo, explores and celebrates another facet of our Canadian mosaic, the Métis heritage of the prairies. Commissioned by the Grand from the well-known Métis actor, singer and activist, Andrea Menard, Rubaboo promises to be a delightful evening of song and story combined, according to the Manitoba-born Menard, into a truly theatrical whole that she prefers to term a “cabaret,” but a cabaret with a purpose.

In a promotional video Menard says that when the Grand’s artistic director, Dennis Garnhum, asked her about possibly creating a show, she was not interested “unless I was using the platform to further reconciliation,” and that she “wanted to be somebody who was furthering education [about Indigenous people and their history] and expanding compassion.” While this sounds very serious the name of the cabaret indicates that the evening will also be a lot of fun. Derived from the Michif word for “leftovers stew” or “big pot” Rubaboo promises to be a feast of music and masterful storytelling with the sound of drums and guitar adding grace notes to stories and songs of reconciliation, unity, love, frustration and resilience, to “help people fall in love with the Métis people.”

At the Grand Theatre from March 7-25.

Catch a glimpse of show and creator in a video here: https://grandtheatre.com/event/ rubaboo

RETOLD

From the East Coast to the Prairies and back east to Quebec: Back in Toronto, also in March, the Musical Stage Company and Yonge Street Theatricals are joining forces for the second edition of Retold via Launch Pad, their musical development program that gives three

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THE ROSE ORCHESTRA
teams of writers and composers in-depth support and mentoring while they create new 30-minute musicals. For the first edition of *Retold* in 2019 the new musicals were inspired by articles published in *The Globe and Mail*, and performed in that newspaper’s headquarters. This new edition is inspired by three short stories by lauded Canadian writer Mavis Gallant (1922-2014) and will be performed at the Toronto Reference Library. While much of in Paris, Gallant is famous for her depiction of Acadian history and life in Quebec. One of the chosen stories, *The Carrette Sisters*, displays in particular what *The New York Times* called Gallant’s “Joycean evocations of a mundane haunting Montreal.” All three shows will be directed by Kaylee Harwood and will feature a cast of four talented actor/singers: Eric Craig, Emily Lukasik, Tracy Michailidis and Starr Domingue. Retold March 21-26. Tickets are free but need to be booked ahead of time. www.musicalstagecompany.com

**CLASSICAL AND BEYOND**

**Instant Kinships**

**TRIO ARKEL in Conversation**

**PAUL ENNIS**

**T**rio Arkel – Marie Bérard (concertmaster of the COC Orchestra), Rémi Pelletier (associate principal violist of the TSO) and Winona Zelenka (assistant cello of the TSO) – are celebrating the tenth season of their concert series and we at The WholeNote were curious about how a string trio could thrive despite obstacles ranging from COVID-19 to the departure of founding member, violinist Teng Li. The following email conversation with cellist Zelenka and violinist Bérard, took place in mid-January.

**WN:** What was the origin of Trio Arkel? What brought you two together originally with violinist Teng Li?

**Winona Zelenka:** It was a kind of synergy that was surprising when we played our first concert back in 2008 at the same venue we play in now – Trinity-St. Paul’s – before Jeanne Lamon Hall was built. Our combination was an experiment, but we found that our three points of musical expression combined in an interesting way, and I think we were intrigued.

**Marie Bérard:** Gradually we came to realize that we wanted to spend more time playing together but also collaborating with other musicians and the idea of having our own series was born. In 2013, ten years ago, we started out in the Church of the Holy Trinity next to the Eaton Centre, in the heart of the city, and we were there for a few years before switching to St. Paul’s Centre.

**When did Teng Li leave the group? Please describe the search for her replacement.**

**MB:** Teng won the extremely coveted position of principal viola in the Los Angeles Philharmonic and although she had such strong ties to the Toronto music community, she couldn’t pass on such an opportunity.

**WZ:** Yes, it was in 2018, and it was a difficult thing for us, much as we were thrilled for her to win such an important post. The delicate balance and ease we had achieved was special, we felt. We played with many great musicians while we worried about finding that ease again. But then…

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**MB:** Teng came to the Toronto Symphony from the New York Philharmonic; for him it was a return to his Canadian roots. We read trios with him soon after, feeling an instant kinship, and we hadn’t looked back. Our rehearsals are filled with good cheer and mutual support and we are all aware of how special a gift that is.

**WZ:** There is a unique warmth to our sound, we feel, and lots of joking around and talking about adventures, especially his. He has many interests – he’s a sushi chef and an enthusiastic traveller – he gives a lot as a person and as a musician.

**How did you cope during COVID? What was the experience of pivoting to an online video format for two years like for you?**

**MB:** The first casualty of COVID was the cancellation of our...
May 2020 concert, which was such a disappointment. We quickly rallied and realized that since we had been recording all our concerts, streaming them on demand was a logical solution during the lockdown. At first, we found that playing with masks and without an audience was a strange experience but being able to play music at all was a blessing in those days so we just charged ahead and felt that recorded concerts were better than no concerts at all.

**WZ:** We put on our bravest smiles; a concert I’ll never forget is the one in the spring of 2021 with Russell Braun, recorded with no audience and plexiglass shields separating him from us and us from Carolyn, his wife who is his pianist: but it was still amazing and I don’t really know how we all did it. Music is that powerful – but it was very strange.

**MB:** The return to live concerts was very emotional and we all realized how much energy we get from an audience, something the pandemic taught us never to take for granted.

**How do you compensate for the fact that the string trio repertoire is less well known than the string quartet repertoire?**

**WZ:** Marie is the programming genius, and she’s discovered many unknown and lesser-known gems in the repertoire.

**MB:** A lot of the trio repertoire has been wonderful to discover specifically because it is not as well known as the quartet repertoire. We found some lovely jewels, music that is very satisfying to explore and that our audiences seem to be excited to discover; some examples are Taneyev, Françaix, Guðjónsdóttir, Schoenberg…

**Please describe the eclectic and collaborative nature of your programming. You often begin a concert with a string trio before pivoting to larger chamber music works.**

**MB:** There are a few different ways in which our programs come together. Sometimes it is our guests who propose a particular piece and we build around that, sometimes with a theme which could be music of a particular country or we find that sometimes a set of two very contrasting pieces can inform each other, providing a reflection for each other in a sense. On other occasions it is just a particular desire to play a much-loved piece that sends us looking for a guest.
who we feel would bring the right flavour to the piece.

WZ: Being such an expert on the operatic repertoire and knowing so many wonderful singers, Marie has found some amazing vocal works to showcase as well, such as Jake Heggie’s Into the Fire or Respighi’s Il Tramonto; I’ve also loved some of the crazy things like Black Angels by George Crumb where I got to hit a gong.

MB: That was a specific idea that came suggested by a colleague; one of the great things about the collaborative nature of chamber music is the excitement we can give each other in the planning of what journey to take on each program.

How were your upcoming concerts of March 12 and May 28 designed? The May 28 concert is filled with unusual repertoire. How did you select it?

MB: We’ve long wanted to perform Oliver Knussen’s Cantata as it has at its core a string trio and the composer was a dear friend. The Mozart Oboe Quartet, such a superb example of Mozart’s genius, was a natural companion. We then will complete our March 12 program with trios by Taneyev and Sibelius.

The meat of the May 28 program, the Strauss Metamorphosen, is this great reduction for seven players and since we have a bass player among us we looked for a somewhat less-perennially played piece than the Dvořák or Trout quintets, introducing [composer George] Onslow to most of our audience.

WZ: We want to always program from our own repertoire of course, so this seemed like a good occasion to include three wonderful smaller pieces that are almost more like encores, but with this program will showcase the eclectic nature of music for string trio.

Trio Arkel’s website: trioarkel.com
Trio Arkel’s youtube channel: www.youtube.com/channel/UC4dvVDRh_Rz1WTbWefYIQvg

Paul Ennis is the managing editor of The WholeNote.
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THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 8PM KOERNER HALL  TICKETS START AT ONLY $50
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Benedetti Elschenbroich Grynyuk Trio
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Monumental trios by Schubert and Tchaikovsky will be performed by this supergroup featuring violinist Nicola Benedetti, cellist Leonard Elschenbroich, and pianist Alexei Grynyuk.
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ARC Ensemble:
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SUNDAY, APRIL 2, 2PM MAZZOLENI CONCERT HALL  TICKETS ARE ONLY $25
ARC’s concert of works by the Sephardic composer Alberto Hemsi follows the ensemble’s highly-praised Chandos release devoted to premieres of his chamber music.
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To Everything there is a Season ... or Four

STEPhANIE CONN

Like the “O Fortuna” chorus from Orff’s Carmina Burana and the first bars of Rossini’s William Tell Overture, Vivaldi’s Le quattro stagioni (The Four Seasons) has a ubiquitous presence in the soundtrack of our lives via films, television commercials, malls and elevators. Thanks to the desire of audiences to experience these concerti repeatedly, and the ambition of many virtuoso violinists to play them, there are many thousands of recordings to date and countless yearly performances of symphonies all over North America and Europe. In fact, Toronto audiences who were quick enough off the mark will have their next opportunity to hear this classic work revisited on February 7 when Anne-Sophie Mutter and Mutter Virtuosi perform it at Roy Thomson Hall. I will be among them.

Our endless fascination with this set of four violin concerti from Vivaldi’s Opus 8 suggests that, rather than being overplayed as some suggest, perhaps they contain layers of nuance and meaning that are worth unpacking again and again almost 300 years after their creation. First published in Amsterdam in 1725 as part of Vivaldi’s Op.8 Il cimento dell’armonia e dell’invenzione (The Contest between Harmony and Invention), the four concerti known as Le Quattro Stagioni (The Four Seasons) had been composed years before and their manuscripts were already circulating. Vivaldi brought them together for Il cimento, Op.8 and added descriptive sonnets to accompany each of the movements, meant to suggest the characteristic of each season that Vivaldi illustrates in music; these are of unknown authorship but thought to be the
work of Vivaldi himself – unlike his music, they are considered to be derivative and not of the highest quality.

The poems refer to not only bucolic details like the murmuring breezes of spring or the songs and dances of fall festivals, but also the shooting of guns and the barking of dogs. (As I sit writing this, the lines in “Winter” (L’inverno) describing “nevi algenti” (freezing snow) and “orrido vento” (horrible wind) speak to me most directly.) Vivaldi himself was, of course, a highly skilled violinist and he had already forged many elements of the style we hear here in his previous violin concerti published as Opus 3, but even in Vivaldi’s time and place the first concerto, “Spring” (La Primavera) was particularly admired, and it became a popular showpiece throughout the 18th century and all over Europe.

On the record
As with all classic works, opinions are divided on which recording of The Four Seasons is best, but with so many to choose from there really is something for everyone — and who dares say which one is more authentic, if I may use that loaded term, or comes closest to expressing Vivaldi’s vision. The historical-performance movement of the last few decades has been divisive for both players and listeners with some claiming it has freed us, others suggesting it fetters. It has, however, reminded us more forcefully of the merely contingent authority held by any score (as Henry Kingsbury put it) and the role that oral tradition plays in the performance of music from any period.

After all, in the 17th century this was new music; meant to “move the affects,” to provoke, excite and challenge its listeners. The performer was a partner with the composer as is the case in all music with an improvisatory element. Playing this music still “takes an act of imagination because the scores leave so many choices open to the players,” as Giovanni Antonini of Il Giardino Armonico has pointed out. His ensemble’s 1993 recording with Enrico Onofri caused a stir when it was released, and I still remember the excitement we all felt at hearing the liberties he took with tempi and the way they attacked some sections almost with abandon. Its verve and physicality offered a very different interpretation than some of the more sedate performances we had heard from larger, modern-instrument symphony orchestras, prompting Alex Ross to write a New Yorker review titled “Violent Vivaldi.”

Some performances experimented even more: in their 2013 London concert, The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment had their orchestral musicians interact with dancers on stage in an attempt to bring the sonnets’ poetic images to life even more tangibly; and on his recording Recomposed by Max Richter: Vivaldi – The Four Seasons, Richter responded to the original Vivaldi concerti with his own...
interpretations, going far beyond the partnership inherent in improvisation to create some completely new music.

**A Cycle of the Sun**

Perhaps one of the most audacious and effective interpretations of the piece was Tafelmusik’s 2003 production “The Four Seasons: A Cycle of the Sun,” later documented in the film, The Four Seasons Mosaic. It was conceived by Tafelmusik’s Alison Mackay, who played double bass and violone with the ensemble from 1979 to 2019, and was the springboard to almost two decades’ worth of thought-provoking, challenging and creative productions placing beloved works in the period-music canon into what she called “a new historical and cultural context.” Her Four Seasons, revolving around 1725 when Vivaldi’s Il Cimento was published, brought Tafelmusik’s European-style orchestra on period instruments together with players of the Chinese pipa and Indian sarangi, and Inuit throat singers. The fourth movement, Winter, was newly recomposed by Mychael Danna, an Oscar-winning Canadian composer.

The production went far beyond the token inclusion of instruments from other cultures; instead, it showcases different kinds of virtuosity and different responses to the seasons in a way that respects both Vivaldi’s original and the guest musicians.

**Fresh ears**

As someone who has long been involved with historically informed performance, singing with Baroque violinist David Greenberg in the ensemble Puirt a Baroque and in choirs such as Tafelmusik and La Chapelle de Quebec among others, I can’t help but favour recordings which strive to approximate the kinds of performances that might possibly be dull that inspires musicians to recreate it over and over times over.” What he failed to note, however, is that no piece could possibly be dull which inspires musicians to recreate it over and over in new and innovative ways, and which listeners are always ready to hear. In a recent interview with Mark Wigmore of 96.3FM, Mutter said of The Four Seasons that “you can never get tired of it” and that when she plays it with smaller ensembles like her 14-piece Mutter Virtuosi, “it’s really like a conversation between friends and a lot of spontaneity is possible.”

Stephanie Conn is an ethnomusicologist, writer and editor, and former producer for CBC Radio Music. As a member of the ensemble Puirt a Baroque she sang on the Juno-nominated recording Return of the Wanderer. She has also sung with Tafelmusik, La Chapelle de Québec, Aradia and Sine Nomine, and is active as a traditional Gaelic singer and piano accompanist in Cape Breton.

**2023 Bach Walk**

Celebrate Bach’s 338th Birthday!

**SATURDAY, MARCH 25**

- **1:00pm:** Christ Church Deer Park
  1570 Yonge Street
  Organ Recital with Patrick Dewell

- **2:00pm:** Calvin Presbyterian Church
  26 Delisle Avenue
  Instrumental Recital with Daniel Bickel and Friends

- **3:00pm:** Yorkminster Park Baptist Church - 1585 Yonge Street
  Organ Recital with William Maddox
  Birthday Cake reception at the end of the day
  Free Admission (donations welcome) to rcco.enotice@gmail.com

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7:30 p.m. concert
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QUICK PICKS

FEB 12, 2PM: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Opera at Western: Scenes Gala With Early Music Studio. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University (London).


FEB 23, 7PM: Vesuvius Ensemble. Ninna Ninna: Lullabies from Popular Tradition. Lullabies from Southern Italy. Francesco Pellegrino, voice; Romina Di Gasbarro, storyteller; Lucas Harris, lute & guitar; Louis Simão, accordion & colascione. Heliconian Hall.

FEB 26, 2PM: Toronto Beach Choral. Vivaldi and the Italian Baroque. Jennifer Krabbe, soprano; Rachel Miller, mezzo; Chamber Orchestra. Beaches Presbyterian Church.

MAR 3, 8PM; MAR 4, 2PM; MAR 5, 3PM: Tafelmusik. Bach’s Library. Francesco Corti, harpsichord & guest director. Jeanne Lamon Hall, Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre.

MAR 4, 7:30PM: Kingston Road Village Concert Series. Side by Side Winter Bach #2. Musicians of Toronto Symphony Orchestra; University of Toronto students; Mark Fewer, violin & leader. Kingston Road United Church.

MAR 5, 8PM: Toronto Chamber Choir. The Return of Rosenmuller. Toronto Chamber Choir; Lucas Harris, artistic director. Calvin Presbyterian Church.

MAR 10 & 11, 8PM: Toronto Consort. Canticum Canticorum. Canticorum Trombonorum, performing ensemble. Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, Jeanne Lamon Hall.


MAR 26, 3:30PM: Rezonance Baroque Ensemble. Crossing Borders. Rezan Onen-Lapointe & Kailey Richards, baroque violins; Erika Nielsen, baroque cello; Benjamin Stein, lute & theorbo; David Podgorski, harpsichord. St. David’s Anglican Church.


APR 6 & APR 7, 7:30PM: Opera Atelier. Handel: The Resurrection. Carla Huhtanen, soprano (Archangel); Meghan Lindsay, soprano (Mary Magdalene); Alyson McHardy, mezzo (Cleophas); Colin Ainsworth, tenor (St. John); Douglas Williams, bass-baritone (Lucifer) and others. Koerner Hall.

APR 7, 8PM: Georgetown Bach Chorale. The Passion According to St. Matthew. Michael Taylor, tenor (Evangelist); Georgetown Bach Chorale Chamber Choir, Soloists, and Baroque Orchestra. Knox Presbyterian Church (Georgetown).
Probably the most melancholy production of *The Marriage of Figaro* around, the Claus Guth-conceived Salzburg production first seen in Toronto in 2016, is back at the Canadian Opera Company for another run (January 27 - February 18), with a different set of principals, other than its Cherubino, Emily Fons, an American mezzo-soprano best known for Handel and Mozart trouser roles.

**At a crossroads**

When I reviewed the original, it was impossible not to highlight Fons’ athletic Cherubino as a case of perfect casting. Over coffee in a Queen East cafe earlier in January, she tells me that every mezzo excelling in boy and youth roles comes to a point when she needs to decide whether to graduate into singing the grown men of the repertoire (Giulio Cesare, Ariodante, Serse) or proceed to the other, more traditionally clad mezzo repertoire. What is needed for a successful career in trouser roles, I ask her. Voice type, physique?

“These days companies are casting more women who don’t have the body type you would expect in a trouser role,” she says. “I think it’s good to push the boundaries, but there’s always going to be those of us who walk into a rehearsal room and people go, You must be singing Cherubino. Definitely the colour of voice, the Fach, but also personality plays a big part. If you enjoy a certain type of role, you tend to do well in it, and people will cast you more in it.”

This is Fons’ seventh Cherubino; she has also sung Ariodante, Faramondo, Orlando, Hansel, l’Enfant, Prince Orlofsky, Nicklausse. But do North American opera houses generate enough opportunities, trousered and otherwise, for a mezzo-soprano operatic career? Or does every singer need to move to Berlin or Paris, and should they?

“I have a lot of thoughts on this,” she says. “When I first started, about 13 years ago, I told my manager that I wanted an American career. I had a family that I cared about, I had my dog that I love to have with me and that shouldn’t fly on the plane. People thought that was highly unusual - an American opera singer who wanted to stay in America. It wasn’t that I didn’t want jobs in Europe, it’s that I didn’t want to be away for six months at a time.” (For the current gig at the COC, she drove from home in Wisconsin with her dog, Lupita, in the back seat.)

The regional houses in America, she continues, have maybe three productions a year, and only two shows per each production. “That is a lot of work you have to string together to keep yourself afloat. And there’s a kinda push in America to consider opera companies as community service organizations, hiring an entirely different cast every season.” This is problematic.

“As an artist, you are hired for many different community building and music education programs - in cities far away from where you live. If you’re on the road all the time, what [community] are you serving? And a lot of artists want a life, a family, and not to travel 11 months of the year.”

What would work better both for the regional houses and the artists themselves, Fons argues, is the ensemble model: hiring a group of singers for a specific number of years and casting from that pool of talent for all productions. “If companies really want a community service model and are not saying that just to get the grant money, then the model to adopt would be to keep the performers in the city where they are from … People who attend opera would get to know you. It’s hard to make an impact if you fly in and out constantly.”
The high-risk soloist’s life
I ask her if she’s read the Alan Clayton interview in the Times of London in which he says that life of an opera singer is a life of loneliness in hotels, not being paid for rehearsals, and not getting a dime if you get sick and cancel. That interview re-started the conversation around the issue of singers not being paid for rehearsals. (Directors get part of their fee from day one of work, for instance.)

“I’m on the board of governors for the American Guild of Musical Artists, and we’re pushing for principal artists’ rehearsal time to be respected and paid. We still bear the most financial risk in this industry and it is not sustainable. Months ahead of rehearsal start time you’re looking for a place and booking and have airbnbs on your credit card. Then you arrive in a new city and start working and work for no money, and it’s only two months later that you get paid.”

Musicians in the pit are paid for every hour that they work in rehearsals, I remind her. “And in the States, not sure if it’s the same in Canada, choristers and dancers are paid either weekly or hourly,” she responds. “We shouldn’t make those working in principal roles risk so much. Coming out of the pandemic and seeing that there is still no willingness to change, that is pretty shocking but, at least in the States, we are making strides in getting companies to pay a percentage upfront.”

Is she still worried about COVID? “I think that the pandemic and the long shutdown of performing arts were tragic. For so many people. And the fact that even now people are having a hard time coming back out of the crisis and the never-going-out mindset.”

The latest reports out of the UK have it that ticket sales in a lot of artistic disciplines are not going back to the 2019 levels, I offer. Fons is not surprised, and wonders if it’s possible to reverse the trend. “I don’t know what the answer is … The bigger companies are gonna suffer the most because they have the biggest costs: huge theatres, office spaces, they’re often downtown and employ a lot of people. They’re probably the most affected and the least nimble.”

Looking after number one!
Meanwhile Fons has just completed a book specifically geared towards singers on how to manage money as a freelance artist (co-authored with finance educator Rebecca Eve Selkowe). “I wish this book existed when I was starting out,” she says. “As a young artist you sometimes watch some of your colleagues take off to superstar status and you watch the same people burn every penny they earn and complain constantly that they’re broke. Meanwhile there are people in the trenches piecing it together and making it work. And you think, how does this happen? I wanted the people who took off to be able to manage that and to benefit long term from that boom. Simultaneously, the people who are piecing it together, I wish that they can enjoy a safe financial life and not always feel on the brink of collapse.”

The book is written in two parallel tracks: the financial counsellor providing financial education; and the artist sharing her own experience. “One of the most challenging things for performers is we get these massive dumps of money on our accounts and I think it’s a confusing way to receive money. It leads you to sometimes spend the money in the way that you receive it. You get a chunk, you spend a chunk. Whereas people who are getting smaller amounts can’t really spend in large chunks. What we are saying is, you should spread your chunks into a nice layer.”

They are currently searching for a publisher, she says, but would be fine with doing a print-on-demand book which universities and Young Artist programs could supply to their singers. “When I was in my YA program in Chicago we were earning around $50,000 a year, which is pretty decent for a young singer, and you have health insurance! I would have approached it differently, had I had this book.”

Such as? “I would have paid off my student loans first. In YA programs you have the impression that you are still in school and that there’s no urgency to pay off the student debt yet. It was more fun to spend the money by, I don’t know, shopping at Whole Foods. “What we’re trying to impress on people with this book is that financial freedom is really artistic freedom, in a lot of ways. You give yourself more options when you set yourself up better financially.”
Remembering Michael Snow (1928–2023)
Music as Shared Experience

ANDREW TIMAR

Michael Snow, artist-at-large

Sorry, but I’m going to have to skip over much of Toronto-born artist Michael Snow’s vast and diverse body of work, including milestone experimental films, sculptures, paintings, prints, photographs, holographs, slide projections, videos, books and recordings (78, LP, cassette, CD, streaming), among other media. While primarily highlighting his lesser-known career in live music, I’d be remiss if I didn’t first mention a few of his large scale Toronto public artworks.

Perhaps like countless thousands you’ve walked past Michael Snow’s 1989 confrontational gold-painted fibreglass sculpture suite The Audience mounted on the brutalist concrete face of Toronto’s Rogers Centre.

Or you’ve gazed up at Flight Stop, the 1979 site-specific sculptural-photographic work hanging from the ceiling in the Eaton Centre shopping mall. Appearing to depict a flock of some 60 Canada geese whiffling in for a landing, each Styrofoam and fibreglass goose is actually enrobed in a photographic sheet, the image taken from a single goose. This dynamic work evocatively freezes indoors an iconic outdoor Canadian aerial migratory event, while also confronting viewers’ preconceptions of photographic illusion.

Then there was the controversy around his Walking Woman, first exhibited in 1962 at Toronto’s Isaacs Gallery. This iconic stylized female silhouette appeared in many guises and in many locations afterwards. A multiple highly reflective stainless steel version was featured in the Ontario Pavilion at Montreal’s Expo 67. The figure could be perceived variably as a presence to be looked at, or an absence to be looked through, manifesting the sort of duality that was a guiding principle in Snow’s work.

Michael Snow, jazz pianist

But before any of these public projects, came music. A self-taught pianist, the teenage Snow began by improvising on blues and jazz standards. In 1948 he cut several 78RPM recordings of them. (There’s a covert jazz connection even in Snow’s Walking Woman, supposedly modelled on his friend and fellow jazz musician Carla Bley.)

Snow graduated to gigging as a pianist in downtown Toronto’s first smoky jazz clubs, a scene Don Owen evocatively captured in his 1963 NFB film Toronto Jazz. We see Snow in action on the piano bench, in his artist studio and on the street carrying his Walking Woman.

Right to the end, Snow’s enthusiasm for Jelly Roll Morton, Earl Hines, boogie and Thelonious Monk bubbled just under his fingers, though it had long since evolved into an elegant, richly multilayered idiosyncratic pianism. “Of course I always wanted to have my own style,” he acknowledged in a 2019 interview, “Free playing makes that more achievable than playing tunes and variations on them.”

Moving to the Big Apple for the better part of the 60s, his film New York Eye and Ear Control (1964) was an important document of free jazz’s formative stage. On his return to Toronto, Snow brought that musical approach with him, sharing it with his jazz and artist colleagues here. In 1976 it was manifested in the foundation of the ensemble CCMC, which opened The Music Gallery the same year.

Yet when asked in 2014 who his favourite composer/musician was, his (perhaps not so) surprising reply was “J.S. Bach.”
Meet Mr. Snow

Those who met Michael (Mike to some) can attest to his witty, affable, down-to-earth nature, an unlikely set of attributes for such an iconoclastic artist. Michael was invariably collegial with me. And the more I got to know him, the more I appreciated his insatiable artistic curiosity and musical creativity. The latter was on full display both in abstract musical thinking and in practical musicianship which often sparked into virtuosity in his piano playing.

Michael Snow Memorial

To celebrate the man and his career The Music Gallery and Array Music presented Michael Snow Memorial on January 26 at Toronto’s 918 Bathurst Street Centre. I arrived on a crisp ice-glazed night to find an expectant full house, abuzz with all the earmarks of a community celebration.

It proved to be an evening full of smiles, fistbumps, handshakes, hugs and “How are you?” greetings of friends I hadn’t seen in years. Snow’s long and deep genre-leaping career had the power few others can boast: to bring Toronto’s disparate arts communities together under one roof. Snow – who when questioned in 2014 about the meaning of art, responded “shared experience” – would have loved it.

Music critic/author Robert Everett-Green set the tone for the evening. Addressing the audience, he cited Snow’s vast interdisciplinary career in its biographical context, reminding us that when it came to his musical art Snow believed “musical improvisation was composition in real time.” Rather than working from a prepared score like most composers do, he chose early on to work musically outside the box, through improvisation.

An insightful eight-minute tribute video In Memory of Michael Snow followed. Made by Laurie Kwanisk, it featured a montage of excerpts of Snow’s brilliant piano performances going back to the 50s and 60s, capped by later scenes spanning some four decades of him with CCMC. Judging from those clips, few can doubt his awesome keyboard skills and decisive real-time musical thinking.

At one point in the film the senior Snow gingerly walks down the stairs. Cracking a modest smile he says softly, “This is a variation of Duchamp’s painting Nude Descending a Staircase, in this case Clothed Man Descending a Staircase.” His wry reference to Marcel Duchamp’s once-scandalous 1912 modernist painting appears to be an adlib.

The brief scene underlines how central humour was to his approach to life and art. This likeable quality was amply reflected in Snow’s responses to the Marcel Proust questionnaire posed by the National Art Gallery of Canada in 2014. Best quality? “Funny” was Snow’s reply.

CCMC takes the stage

It wouldn’t be much of a Snow celebration without a performance by CCMC, the Toronto group he cofounded and loyally championed for 46 years. It began with an impressive solo by CCMC co-founding musician Nobuo Kubota, featuring his flexible voice which he grew from the same fertile musical soil as say, Glenn Gould. To me, one was the ever-questioning improvising musical iconoclast and maker of cheeky public art, the other the very model of an academic composer.

By the 1990s I began to develop my Indonesian suling playing in free improv directions and Michael invited me to play with CCMC a couple of times. He mailed a cassette dub of the first concert, along with a handwritten letter encouraging me to keep playing. It was an unexpected, characteristically generous gesture.

Legacies

I last met Michael and his partner Peggy Gale in November 2019, sitting beside Toronto composer John Beckwith at Array Music’s Udo Kasemets @ 100 concert. I was invited to play suling in SUINGFLOWER, a work Udo wrote for me. They sat in the front row, paying tribute with their presence to their older friend who’d fearlessly blazed Toronto’s mid-century avant-garde music scene.

Snow’s and Beckwith’s careers, while taking markedly different paths, both emerged from Toronto’s percolating mid-century cultural scene, growing from the same fertile musical soil as say, Glenn Gould. To me, one was the ever-questioning improvising musical iconoclast and maker of cheeky public art, the other the very model of an academic composer.

Was “Michael Snow … the most important artist Canada has produced,” as filmmaker Bruce Elder boldly averred in 2009? Well, I, for one, find it impossible to overestimate his work.

Snow’s art investigated the endless wonder of seeing and hearing, and often found the inherent humour within its frustrations and joys. Often it came down to savouring beauty and wonder in the simplest things around us, like the repeated snapping of a window curtain in the breeze in a recent Snow video.

I ran into him at Toronto openings and concerts, well into his 90s – there because he was genuinely interested. “Art is shared experience,” he might remind us still.

Andrew Timar is a Toronto musician, composer and music journalist. He can be contacted at worldmusic@thewholenote.com.
HIGH NOTES GALA FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Monday March 27th, 2023  8:00 pm
Flato Markham Theatre

Join HIGH NOTES AVANTE as we showcase some exquisite artists who will dazzle you with their music and dance performances while touching your heart with their stories.

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905.305.7469

Proceeds support High Notes Avante’s efforts to raise the image of mental illness, give hope and inspire. Proceeds will also support our FREE music lessons, choir and other activities.

#WEALLHAVEASTORY

February 14 - it’s Clubs and Hearts

COLIN STORY

This month, a rosy cherub will emerge from the snow, cock its heart-shaped bow and let loose its velvet arrows somewhere in our general direction. Not everyone enjoys Valentine’s Day, of course. For those not in relationships, it can be a grim reminder – at such a cold time of the year – of the bleak overwhelm of enduring solitude (this writer’s advice: the Internet is vast). For those whose love boat is floundering on stormy seas, February 14 can be a tricky obstacle to navigate. (Helpful hint: it is probably not, as one might assume, a propitious time to send one’s partner that article about trying an open relationship.) For the lucky number of you, however, who are looking to hit the town and celebrate your love by listening to some live music, possibilities abound.
At **jazz Bistro**, impress your date with all of the conventional trappings of date-night romance (chandeliers! champagne! a red piano!) while being serenaded by vocalist Michael Dunston. Performing songs from the R&B/Motown songbook, Dunston is joined by the enviable rhythm section of Matt Horner on piano, Roberto Occhipinti on bass and Mark Kebo on drums (cost, including prix fixe menu: $80).

At the venerable **El Mocambo**, vocalists Ori Dagan and John Alcorn take the stage with guitarist Nathan Hiltz, bassist Lauren Falls, saxophonist Jesse Ryan and special guest vocalist Joanne Morra. This particular evening, like that at Jazz Bistro, is a prix fixe event; $120 gets you the music, wine from Niagara on the Lake’s Two Sisters Vineyards, dinner from Mark McEwan and the knowledge that you – just like Mick Jagger – have gotten romantic at the El Mocambo.

**TRANZAC**: the most musical event of the night may well be **Thom Gill’s Eat The Wind album release**, taking place at the Tranzac. Though he is the sole performer credited on the album, Gill – singer, songwriter, guitarist, pianist, and first-call collaborator for some of North America’s most interesting and talented musicians – has assembled an incredible band to bring the project to life, with Todd Pentney, Edwin de Goeij, Phil Melanson, Bram Gielen, Robin Dann, Luka Kuplowsky, and Alex Samaras, as well as an opening set by the Ryan Driver Trio. The show starts at 8pm, with limited-edition tapes for sale (at $10, it is also surely Valentine’s Day’s most accessible outing).

**The Rex**: Romance aside, the coming weeks still have a lot to offer. Notably, a new group takes the stage in February: BaruBaru, saxophonist Allison Au’s latest venture, with her longtime collaborator and partner Todd Pentney on synths, Chris Pruden (also on synths), and Ian Wright on drums. With Au’s athletic, expressive saxophone playing, two times the keyboards, and Wright’s propulsive, rhythmically sophisticated drumming, check out the group’s exciting, exploratory, fusion-tinged jazz every Friday at 5:30pm in February. Also at The Rex: “The Rhythm Method,” a project conceived by pianist Brian Dickinson in 2015. With saxophonists Kelly Jefferson and Luis Deniz, Neil Swainson on bass and Ted Warren on drums, expect top-notch straightahead modern jazz played with lusty abandon.

At **Lula Lounge** on February 23: The **Lula Reggae & Blues Revue** presented by Lula Music and Arts Centre and the Toronto Blues Society. Kenny “Blues Boss” Wayne plays on a bill with Jay Douglas and Quincy Bullen during an evening of classic blues and reggae celebrating Black History Month, the evening is sure to be memorable. Born in Spokane, Washington in 1944, before eventually moving to California, where he was based in the 1960s and 70s, Wayne moved to Vancouver in the 1980s, and has been a stalwart of the Canadian music scene ever since. (In 2006, Wayne won a Juno Award for Blues Album of the Year.)

Like Wayne, Douglas has also enjoyed a storied career; equally comfortable with reggae, blues, soul and funk, he has been the recipient of three Juno nominations, has had major performances with international reggae stars such as Beres Hammond, Ziggy Marley and Ernest Ranglin and released many albums as both performer and producer. The youngest on the bill, Quincy Bullen is a name that will be familiar to many in Toronto – a multi-instrumentalist, singer and producer, Bullen performs regularly in Canada and abroad, and is at home in a wide range of styles, playing funk, rock, R&B, and soul with equal aplomb. ▶

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.
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 two weeks into the future on an ongoing basis.

Print: Our next print issue, Volume 28 no.5 covers April and May 2023. The print submission deadline for that issue will be Tuesday March 14.

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
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N.
London
lege, Western University, 1151 Richmond St.
Also broadcast live on Zoom.

or www.alz.to/event/xenia-concert-ladom-
percussion; Pouya Hamidi, piano & composer .

Dance of the Knights from Romeo and Juliet;
Over Hand
This concert is ener
519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717 . $14;
Jung Tsai, violin. Conrad Centre
events. Free. Pre-concert talk at 9pm. LIVE &
519-661-3767 or www.music.uwo.ca/
don
Von Kuster Hall, Music Building,
rot Lunaire
Also Feb 11(2pm), 12(3pm).
Jeanne Lamon Hall, Trinity-St. Paul's Centre,
temporaries. Rachel Podger , violin/director .
From $25.

Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-
Centre, Artscape Youngplace, 180 Shaw St.
and Carson T eal
Wailers
171 T own Centre Blvd.,

Mood! Zoltan Kalman, clarinet; Jeffrey Pol-
lock, guest conductor. Partridge Hall, FirstOn-
tario Performing Arts Centre, 250 St. Paul St.,
St. Catharines. 905-887-4993. $86; $60(art;
$99(arts worker with valid ID); $15(stu-
dent/university or college with valid ID); $15(youth-
and under with valid ID). Also Feb 12(3pm).

7:30: Rose Theatre. The Rose Orchestra: Magic of the Movies. 1 Theatre Ln., Brampt-
on. 905-874-2800 or www.therosetheatre.
cay. 815-834.

music and art songs composed by Artistic
Director Maria Case. Melanie Conly and Tina
Torlone, sopranos; Meghan Symm, mezzo;
Joshua Clemenger, tenor; Ivan Jovanovic,
piano; Anna Singers; Annex Chamber Choir.
Grace Church on-the-Hill, 300 Lonsdale Rd.
www.annexsingners.com. $15-$20. LIVE &
STANDARD
 poor

8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Sea-
on. Schubert: Missa堆积物; Margaret Cormier , narrator; Denis
mississaugasymphony.ca or 905-306-6000.


180 Shaw St. www.eventbrite.ca/e/lullaby-
sisters; and instrumental musicians. Small
Nankunda, Leen Hamo, and Rosary Spence,
Ewelina Fer-

8:00: Cathedral Bluffs Symphons Orchestra-
A Nordic Affair: Grieg. Pern Gyte Suite
No1 Op.45. Nielsen: Clarinet Concerto;
Sibelius: Symphony No.2 in D Op.43. Gra-
ham Lord, clarinet; Martin Macdonald, con-
ductor. P.C. Ho Theatre, Chinese Cultural
Centre of Greater Toronto, 5183 Sheppard Ave. E., Scarborough. 416-879-5566. From
$25. For free children under 12. Pre-concert
talk: 7:15pm.

8:00: Kidned Spirits Orchestra. The Sport of Music. Honegger: Rugby; Stravin-
sky: Violin Concerto; Shostakovich: Sym-
phony No.4. Flato Markham Markham, 171 Town
Centre Blvd., Markham. 905-604-8339.
$20-$40. 7:10pm: Prelude: pre-concert recital. 7:20pm: Pre-concert talk. Intermis-
ion discussion and Q&A with Emmanuelle
Sievers and Daniel Vukovski. Post-concert
reception with a complimentary glass of
wine.

8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. La
traviata in Concert. Verdi. La traviata. Mi
Jeannotte and Carson T eal

Saturday February 11

• 10:30am: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Peer Gynt. Jung Taik Kim, principal
conductor. The Performance Arts, 36 King St. W., Kitch-
ener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717. $14; $12(child). Also Feb 4(Sork Family YMCA).
• 11:00am: Xenia Concerts/T0 Live/Hand
Over Hand. Ladom Ensemble. This concert is designed to be autism- and neurodiversity-
friendly. All listeners are welcome. Prokofiev: Dance of the Knights from Romeo and Juliet;
Brahms: Hungarian Dance No.5, Chopin:
Tristes; Canadian East Coast folkongs; and Argentongate tangos. Michael Bridge, accor-
dion; Beth Silver, cello; Adam Campbell, hand percussion; Pouya Hamidi, piano & composer.
Meridian Hall, 1 Front St. E. 416-896-8295 or
www.alz.to/event/xenia-concert-ladom-
ensemble/. Also broadcast live on Zoom.

• 2:00: Tafelmusik. La Passione: Haydn &
Mozart. Haydn: Symphony No.49 (“La
Passione”; Program of symphonies and
concertos by Mozart, Haydn and their con-
temporaries. Rachel Podger, violin/director.
Jeanne Lamon Hall, Trinity-St. Paul's Centre,
427 Bloor St. W. 1-833-864-6337. From $25. Also Feb 10(8pm), 12(3pm).

• 3:00: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Sym-
phonic Band Concert: Modern Signatures. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College,
Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., Lon-
don. 519-661-3767 or www.musico.uwo.ca/
events. Free.

• 4:00: Confluence Concerts. Tafabati - Coper-
Box: Music Is Good Medicine. Curated by
Deanna Edmunds and conceived by Mar-
ian Newman. Original music performed by
Deanna Edmunds, Nicola Joyce Fraser, and Cris
Derksen. Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave.
www.eventbrite.ca/e/tafabati-copper-box-
tickets-480053191017. From $10.

• 4:30: Toronto Opera Spectra Theatre. Caba-
ret: A Fair Ladies Valentine. Edgar Jackman
Centre, 947 Queen St. E., 2nd floor. 416-
366-7723 or 1-800-708-6754 or www.tolive.
can. $45.

• 6:00: Vocal Music. Lullaby Mosaic: Lullabies
From Around the World. A family-friendly
cert featuring singers, artists and musicis of
different backgrounds and traditions fromive continents, exploring the univer-
salism and artistry of lullabies. Ewelina Fer-
cz, Alena Kuzma, Aline Morales, Gloria Gift
Nankunda, Leon Hamo, and Rosary Spence,
singers; and instrumental musicians. Small
World Music Centre, Artscape Youngplace,
180 Shaw St. www.eventbrite.ca/e/lullaby-
mosaic-lullabies-from-around-the-world-
tickets-54161626857 or w.e.fereencing@gmail.
can. 416-771-5155. $10-$25.

• 6:30: Calvin Presbyterian Church. Love
and Life: A Valentine’s Day Special. Music by
Jonathan Kravtchenko and others. 26 Delisle
Ave. 416-778-4826 or www.eventbrite.ca/
love-and-life-classical-music-like-never-
before-tickets-46788091117. From $20;
Free(children under 12 accompanied by a
ticket holder).

• 7:15: Toronto Revue. Debauchery at The
Dakota. Strauss: Meine Lippen; Weil: Youkali;
Satie: Je te Pence; Bizet: Tosareor Song, Danie
Friesen, soprano; Alexander Hajek, bari-
tone; Elaine Ellis Harris, piano. The Dakota,
240 Ossington Ave. 416-837-7419 or www.
operaone.com. Reservations: rese@erbar.
can. From $20.

• 7:30: Canadian Opera Company. Salome.
See Feb 9. Also Feb 17, 19(2pm), 24. At 7:45pm
unless otherwise noted.

• 7:30: Toronto Concerts at Scarborough Bluffs. Rising
Stars Concert. Students in voice, piano and
strings from the Taylor Academy of the
Royal Conservatory of Music. Scarborough Bluffs United Church, 3739 Kingston Rd.,
Scarborough. 416-779-6356. $20. Proceeds to
Springboard to Music, a not-for-profit
music school for young people 6-18.

• 7:30: Cuckoo’s Nest Folk Club. Paul Langille
& Paul Simms. Chaucer’s Pub, 122 Carling St.,
London. www.ticketscene.ca. $25.

• 7:30 Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra. Come
Together: HPO Performs The Beatles.
Darcy Hipern, guest conductor. FirstOntario
Concert Hall, 1 Summers Ln., Hamilton. 905-
529-7750. $20-$80.

• 7:30 Niagara Symphony Orchestra. In The
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**Tuesday February 14**


6:00: El Mocambo. A Valentine’s Serenade: John Alcorn & Ori Dagan. Romantic classics by Gershwin, Porter, Rodgers & Hart, Ellington and others. John Alcorn, vocals; Ori Dagan, vocals; Nathan Hilz, guitar; Lauren Falls, bass; Jesse Ryan, sax. Guest: Joanne Morra, vocals. 464 Spadina Ave. 416-509-3137. $120. Includes entertainment, dinner and wine. Also at 6pm.

8:00: Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts. National Arts Centre Orchestra. Shostakovich: Symphony No.5; Prokofiev: Romeo and Juliet. Von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 151 Richmond St. N. 519-661-3767 or www.music.uwo.ca/events. Free.

**Wednesday February 15**

12:30: ORGANX Concerts. Imre Oláh, Organ. Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church, 3055 Bloor St W. 416-571-3680 or organconcerts.ca. Freewill offering ($20 suggested).


7:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Choral Concert: Les Choristes & St. Cecilia Singers. Von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 151 Richmond St. N. 519-661-3767 or www.music.uwo.ca/events. Free.

**Thursday February 16**


7:30: Canadian Opera Company. The Marriage of Figaro. See Feb 6, also Feb 18/14:30pm. At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.

8:00: Hart House Orchestra. Winter Concert. Shostakovich: Symphony No.5; Prokofiev: Romeo and Juliet. Walter Hall, Hart House, Great Hall, 7 Hart House Circle. 416-978-2452 or www.harthouse.on.ca. $35 (ad), $45 (after Feb 3).

**Friday February 17**


7:00: Music at St. Andrew’s. Mardi Gras 2023. Traditional New Orleans music including When the Saints Go Marchin’ In, Jambalaya, and other works. Patrick Tevlin, trumpet, Jordan Klmapan, piano; and guests. St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, 73 Simcoe St. 416-593-5600 X231 or www.standrewswo ronto.org. $20.

7:30: Canadian Opera Company. Salome. See Feb 5, also Feb 19/21pm, 24. At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.

**Saturday February 18**

2:00: Five at the First. Hospern-Mercer Park: Music for Flute Trio. Philippe Gaubert; Cheikh Ibra Fam (Orchestra Baobab).

5:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. The Magic World of Harry Potter. Mike Nadaje kwski, host; Grand Philharmonic Youth Choir; Martin MacDonald, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St., Kitchener. 519-745-4771 or 1-888-247-4177. $29-87. Also Feb 18.


**Saturday, February 18**

2:00: Five at the First. Hospern-Mercer Park: Music for Flute Trio. Philippe Gaubert; Cheikh Ibra Fam (Orchestra Baobab).

5:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. The Magic World of Harry Potter. Mike Nadaje kwski, host; Grand Philharmonic Youth Choir; Martin MacDonald, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St., Kitchener. 519-745-4771 or 1-888-247-4177. $29-87. Also Feb 18.


2:30: VOICEBOX: Opera in Concert Mèdée. Music by Luigi Cherubini. Natalya Gennadi, soprano (Mèdée); Julie Resnallah, mezzo (Néris); Scott Rumble, tenor (Lisias); Danie Ré Acbequio, baritone (King Orion); Amy Moodie, soprano (Dirèc); Voicebox: Opera in Concert; Robert Cooper, chorus director; Noramina Amandeeya, music director and pianist. Jane Mallette Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. www.operaconcerton.com or 416-386-7723 or 1-800-708-6754. $38-$50.

3:00: Music at Met. Trinity Bach Project. Bach: Cantata 25; Bach: Singet dem Herren (Motet); and works by Brahms and Sibelius. Performed and Instrument Ensemble. Metropolitan United Church, 56 Queen St. E. www.metunited.ca. Free. LIVE & STREAMED.


Monday February 20


Tuesday February 21

10:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. The Magic World of Harry Potter. Mike Nadajewski, host; Grand Philharmonic Youth Choir; Martin MacDondald, conductor. Cen- tre in the Square, 101 Queen St. W., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717. $29-$87. Also Feb 17.

Sunday Sunday February 19


2:00: Canadian Opera Company. Salome. See Feb 9. Also Feb 24 at 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.


Tuesday February 22


Wednesday February 23


8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Vocal Ensemble: Fjóla Evans. Featuring students from the Glenn School of Music at the Royal Conservatory of Music. www.nathanieldettchorale.org. Cumbrian, Voices of the Water. 519-745-4717 or 1-888-745-4717. From $25. Also Feb 24 (Fri), 25pm.

10:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Vocal Ensemble: Fjóla Evans. Featuring students from the Glenn School of Music at the Royal Conservatory of Music. www.nathanieldettchorale.org. Cumbrian, Voices of the Water. 519-745-4717 or 1-888-745-4717. From $25. Also Feb 24 (Fri), 25pm.

Saturday February 5

2:00: Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto. Celtic Kitchen Party. Featuring a foot- stomping Celtic band, a silent auction, deli- cious food, a cash bar, and a variety of fundraising games and activities. Jubilee United Church, 40 Underhill Dr. www.amadeuschor.com/celtic. From $25. Also 3:30pm.

February 28 at 8 pm

ANGELA CHENG

music-toronto.com

LIVE OR ONLINE

Music Toronto

Saturday, February 25, 2023
2pm & 7:30pm
North Atlantic Drift

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Saturday March 4

• 4:00 - Pax Christi Chorale. Paths to Hope. Matthew Emery: On the Beach at Night; Emily Green: I Will Fly Again; Tracy Wong; Sehati; Mark Sirrett: May You Heal; Katerina Gimon: A Path to Hope; and other works. Pax Christi Chorale; University of Toronto Vocal Ensemble, conductor; Joshua Tamayo, piano. Holy Blossom Temple, 510 Bathurst St. www.paxchristichorale.org. $35; $15(young adult); $10(st). (under 18).

• 7:00 - Grand River Opera. Suor Angelica. Music by Giacomo Puccini; Jennifer Carter, soprano; Angela Ciaras, mezzo; Josephine Clarke, tenor; Ghana Nkrumah, bass. First United Church, 151 Lakeshore Rd. W. 416-530-4428. $45; $25(st/sr); Free(under 12). (under 18).


• 7:30 - Burlington Performing Arts Centre. Kevin Hearn: Dreaming of the 80s. Burlington Performing Arts Centre, Community Studio Theatre, 440 Locust St., Burlington. 905-631-8444. Early Bird until Feb 10: $25; $17(st/sr); General: $30; $20(st/sr); Free(under 13). Also Mar 3(7pm), 5(2pm).

• 7:30 - Jubilate Singers/Denis Williams. Roots and Intersections. The Musical Intersections of the Black, Jewish, and Muslim Diasporas. Dennis Williams, soprano; Walied Abdahmid, voice & multiple instruments; Daniel Barnes & Sam Donkoh, percussion; Brahim Goldhamer, Babak Nasiri and Darryl Joseph-Dennie, pianos; Ben MacDonald, reeds; Abdulhamid, voice & multiple instruments; Denise Williams, soprano; Waleed Hanano, soprano (Magda Sorel); Sebastien Belcourt, baritone (John Sorel/Assan); Karina Bray, mezzo (Mother); Maddy Cooper, mezzo (Secretary); Gregory Finney, baritone (Secret Police Agent/Mr. Kolner); and other soloists. William Schoof, piano & music director. College St. United Church, 452 College St. 416-455-2365. $20.


• 8:00 - Opera York. The Magic Flute. Magic by W.A. Mozart. With chorus, orchestra, and supertitles. Geoffrey Butler, music director; Penny Acker, stage director. Richard Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, 10268 Yonge St., Richmond Hill. www.tickets.rncenca.ca. From $34. Also Mar 3(7:30pm).

• 8:30 - OperOttawa. Handel’s Alcina. Erinne Colleen Laurin, soprano; Kathleen Radke, soprano; Carole Portelance, ????; Alexander Cappella, and other soloists; OperOttawa Orchestra and Chorus; Frédéric Lacroix, conductor. First Baptist Church Ottawa, 140 Laurier Ave. W., Ottawa. www.eventbrite.ca. $40; $20(st/sr); Free(under 18).


• 2:00 - Grand River Opera. Suor Angelica. Music by Giacomo Puccini. Jennifer Carter, soprano (Angela); Laura Pavudwell, mezzo (Principessa); Rachel Cledand, conductor; Renee Saleswski, stage director; Susan Black, piano. First United Church, 16 William St. W., Waterloo. 519-591-7464. Early Bird until Feb 10: $25; $17(st/sr); General: $30; $20(st/sr); Free(under 13). Also Mar 3(7pm), 4(2pm).

March 3, 2023  2:00 pm


March 5, 2023  2:00 pm


Tuesday March 7
- 8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Wind- borne’s The Music of Queen. MIG Ayees, vocalist; Brent Havens, conductor. Roy Thom- son Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-588-3375. Also Mar 8(1)& 9(1), 9(7pm), 9.

Wednesday March 8
- 2:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Wind- borne’s The Music of Queen. MIG Ayees, vocalist; Brent Havens, conductor. Roy Thom- son Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-588-3375. Also Mar 7(8pm), 8(8pm), 9(8pm).
- 8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Wind- borne’s The Music of Queen. MIG Ayees, vocalist; Brent Havens, conductor. Roy Thom- son Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-588-3375. TBA. Also Mar 7, 8(2pm), 9.

Thursday March 9
- 12:00 noon: Music at Met. Thursday Noon at Met Concert Series. Peter Niki- furuk, organ. Metropolitan United Church, 58 Queen St. E. www.metunited.ca. Free. LIVE & STREAMED.
- 7:30: Isabel Bader Centre for the Per- forming Arts. Trio Fibonacci: Slavic Romance. Dvořák: Trio No.3 in Op.65; Smet- ana: Trio in g Op.15. Trio Fibonacci (Julie-Anne Derome, violin; Gabriely Prynn, cello; Meagan Milatz, piano). Jennifer Velma Benjamin Performance Hall, Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, 390 King St. W., Kingston. 613-530-2050 or www.queensu.ca/theisabel. $45-$66; $41-$60(faculty/staff); $30-$41(st).
- 8:00: Burlington Performing Arts Cen- tre. Classic Albums Live: The Beatles – Let it Be. 440 Locust St., Burlington. 905-881- 6000 or www.burlingtonpac.ca/events/ classic-albums-live-let-it-be/. $69.50; $64.50(Members).
- 8:00: Flato Markham Theatre. Forever Seger: The Silver Bullet Experience. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. www.flatomarkhamtheatre.ca or 905-305-7469 or boxof- fice@markham.ca. $60-$85.
- 8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Wind- borne’s The Music of Queen. MIG Ayees, vocalist; Brent Havens, conductor. Roy Thom- son Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-588-3375. TBA. Also Mar 7, 8(2pm), 9.

Friday March 10
- 7:30 Confluence Concerts. A Woman’s Voice. Works by Alice Ping Ye Ho, in collabor- ation with Canadian composers Marjorie Chan, Madeleine Thien, Carole Languille, Phoebe Tsang, Tong Wang, Thomas Mur, Anna Camara, and Michael O’Brien; David Braid: Dark Rituals; Carolin- cia O’Callaghan. Patricia O’Callaghan, soprano; Gregynio Thomas; Ryan Davis, vocalist; Vania Chan, soprano; Alex Hetherington, mezzo; Katy Clark, soprano; Julia Zhu, piano. Heli- conian Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave. $25. Also Mar 11.
- 7:30: Isabel Bader Centre for the Per- forming Arts. Kris and Dee. Jennifer Velma Benjamin Performance Hall, Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, 390 King St. W., Kingston. 613-530-2050 or www.queensu.ca/theisabel. $50-$43; $26-$39(fac- ulty/staff); $10-$21(st).
- 8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Bohemian Rhapsodies. Schubert; German Dances; Čekovská: Shadow Scale; Vaughan: Symphony in D; Suk: Serenade for Strings. First United Church – Waterloo, 18 William St. W., Waterloo. 519-745- 4711 or 1-888-745-4717. $37. Also Mar 10(Marchwood Memorial United, Guelph), 11(Central Presbyterian Church, Cambridge).
- 8:00: Massey Hall. Judy Talk. 178 Victoria St. www.ticketmaster.ca. From $48. Also Mar 11.
- 8:00: Rose Theatre. This Is Brampton: Ris- ing Vibes. TCspades, I Theatre Ln., Bram- pton. 905-874-2800 or www.therosetheatre.ca. $10.
- 8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Mur- doch Mysteries: Murder in F Major. Music by Robert Carli. Exclusive screening of the all-new never-before-seen episode “Mur- der in F Major” accompanied by a live orches- tal performance of Robert Carli’s epic score. Includes a sneak peek behind the scenes as you learn how the music for your favour- ite series is created. Special guests including Vannick Bissont; Lucas Waldin, vocalist. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-588-3375. From $55. Also Mar 11.
- 8:00: Toronto Consort. Canticum Canti- cum. Spoken excerpts and motets set by late-Renaissance and early-baroque Italian composers, instrumental interludes exploring the different possible combinations of two trombones, organ, and a high voice.
Saturday March 11

- **11:00am:** Xenia Concerts/Phoenix the Fire. Seeing the Music: A family-friendly concert that embraces neurodiversity and disability. Designed to adapt to the diverse needs and interests of audience members who identify as neurodivergent or having a disability. All listeners are welcome. Works by Canadian musical icons including Leonard Cohen paired with artwork from the AGO Collection and musical ASL interpretation. Kyla Chatter, vocalist; Gaiet Killems, musical ASL interpretation. Art Gallery of Ontario, 317 Dundas St. W. $47-98-8259 or www.ago.ca/events/xenia-concerts-Phoenix-fire-and-kyla-ASL-interpreting-music. $5.

- **6:00:** Rose Theatre. This is Brampton: Crape Clash. 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton, 905-874-2800 or www.therosetheatre.ca. $10.

- **7:30:** Confluence Concerts. A Woman’s Voice. Works by Alice Ping Ye Ho, in collaboration with Canadian writers Marjorie Chan, Madeleine Thien, Carole Langille, Phoebe Tsang, Tong Wang, Thomas Muir, Anna Camara, and Michael O’Brien; David Braik: Dark Butterflies, with text by Patri- cia O’Callaghan. Patricia O’Callaghan, sopra- no; Gryphon Trio; Ryan Davis, vocalist; Vania Braid: Dark Butterflies, with text by Patri- cia O’Callaghan, Madeleine Thien, Carole Langille, and musical ASL interpretation. Kyla Charter, soprano; Vincent Lauder, conductor; Jennifer Velka Benjamin Performance Hall, Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, 390 King St. W., Kingston, 613-530-2050 or www. queensgu.ca/theisabel. $45-$64: $41-$60(faculty/staff), $10-$30(d). 8:00, 9:30.


Sunday March 12

- **2:30:** Niagara Symphony Orchestra. Invisible Cities. Wijeratne: Invisible Cities; Rach- maninoff: Symphony No. 2; Torq Percussion Quartet; Bradley Thachuk, conductor; Par- tridge Hall, FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines, 905- 687-4993. 8:00, 2:30 (adults); $39 (adults with valid ID); $15 (student-university or college with valid ID; $10 (youth-18 and under with valid ID).

- **2:30:** University of Toronto Faculty of Music. U of T Opera: A Tale of Two Cities. Music by Arthur Benjamin. Kelly Robinson, stage director; Sandra Horst, conductor. MacMillan Theatre, Edward Johnson Building, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3759. From $10. Also Mar 9(7:30pm), 10(7:30pm), 11(7:30pm).

- **3:00:** Trio Arkel. Chamber Music Concert. Mozart: Oboe and String Trio; Taneyev: String Trio. Nicholas Wanstall, conductor; Hall of St. Andrew’s, 1585 Yonge St. 416-733-5070 or www.therosetheatre.ca. $15-$49.


Wednesday March 15

- **12:30:** ORGANIX Concerts. Alexander Straus-Fausts, Organ. Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church, 3055 Bloor St. W. 416-571- 3680 or organconcerts.ca. Freemily ticket ($20 suggested).


- **12:30:** Isadella Bader Centre for the Performing Arts. Arion Baroque Orchestra; Vivad’s Ital- ian Friends. Vivad’s “Alma oppressa” from La finta ninfa; RV64; Laudaet puert RV601; A solis orta Gloria pati e filio; “Armatae face et angibus” from Judith triumphans RV64; and other works. Mathieu Lussier, direction; Samantha Lewis-Jean, soprano; Vincent Lauder, conductor; Jennifer Velka Benjamin Performance Hall, Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, 390 King St. W., Kingston, 613-530-2050 or www. queensgu.ca/theisabel. $45-$64: $41-$60(faculty/staff), $10-$30(d). 8:00.


Thursday March 16

- **12:00 noon:** Music at Met. Thursday Noon at Met Concert Series. Luis Medina and Dan- nel Turner, guitarists. Metropolitan United Church, 58 Queen St. E. www.metunited.ca. Free. LIVE & STREAMED.

Friday March 17


Saturday March 18


The whole note
Vegetarian, children’s meals, and special dietary needs are available upon request. 

- 7:30: Barrie Concerts Association. A Night at the Opera. Toronto Concert Orchestra; Sara Papini, soprano; Romulo Delgado, tenor; Marcus Scholtz, conductor. Hixay Penticostal Church, 50 Anne St. N. Barrie. www.barriecorncerts.org.
- 7:30: Flato Markham Theatre. The Music of the Night: The Tour Concert. Selections from Phantom of the Opera. Eva, Cats, Jesus Christ Superstar. Sunset Boulevard, and other productions. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. www.flatomarkhamtheatre.ca or 905-305-7469 or boxoffice@markham.ca or www.musicofthenightlive.com. $60-$65.

Jennifer Veilu Benjamin Performance Hall, Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, 390 King St. W., Kingston. 615-530-2050 or www.queensu.ca/the Isabel. $45-$84.; $41-$560(facility/staff). $10-$31(st).


Tuesday, March 21


- 8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Gimeno Conducts Beethoven. S. Harman: Celebration Prelude (World Premiere/TSO Commission); Schumann: Cello Concerto; Ligeti: Cello Concerto; Habibi: Jeder Baum spricht; Beethoven: Symphony No. 5. Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello; Gustavo Gimeno, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-519-5000 X231 or www.standrewsro.to. Free.

- 7:30: Teatro Musica. Bach at St. John’s Pass. Ivans Taurins, director: Jeanne Lamon Hall, Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, 427 Bloor St. W. 1-833-964-9337. From $48. Also Mar 23(7:30pm), 25(2530pm).

- 8:00: Etobicoke Philharmonic Orchestra. Inspiration of a New World. Dvořák: Symphony No. 9 in “From the New World” Op.95. Jonas, conductor. Toronto Mendelssohn College: Institute, 50 Winterton Dr., Etobicoco. www.eventbrite.com or www.EPOrchestra.ca. $30, $25(st); $15(st). $8:00: Exultate Chamber Singers. Water Forms: Immersion. Exploring our intimate connection to water in its many forms. Includes music from a variety of time periods plus three immersive works by contemporary Canadian composers Katerina Gimon, Carmen Braden, and Bruce Sied. Calvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave. 416-971-9229 or www.exultate.net/event-details/water-forms-immersion. $40 or PWYC from $5.


- 8:00: Rose Theatre. Bachman & Bachman. Randy Bachman & Tal Bachman. 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-874-2800 or www.thero-theatre.ca. $15-$47.

Saturday, March 25

10:00am: Church of St. Mary Magdalene. Procession and Solemn Mass for the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Presented in traditional language.

11:00am: Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra. Talk & Tea: Mozart in Paris. Stage Door @ FirstOntario Centre Hall, 10 MacNab St.

S. Hamilton. 905-529-7756, $10-$20. Talk with light refreshments & sneak peak at HPO rehearsal.


8:00: Exultate Chamber Singers. Water Forms: Immersion. Exploring our intimate connection to water in its many forms. Includes music from a variety of time periods plus three immersive works by contemporary Canadian composers Katerina Gimon, Carmen Braden, and Bruce Sied. Calvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave. 416-971-9229 or www.exultate.net/event-details/water-forms-immersion. $40 or PWYC from $5.


8:00: Rose Theatre. Bachman & Bachman. Randy Bachman & Tal Bachman. 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-874-2800 or www.thero-theatre.ca. $15-$47.


- 8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Gimeno Conducts Beethoven. S. Harman: Celebration Prelude (World Premiere/TSO Commission); Schumann: Cello Concerto; Ligeti: Cello Concerto; Habibi: Jeder Baum spricht; Beethoven: Symphony No. 5. Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello; Gustavo Gimeno, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-519-5000 X231 or www.standrewsro.to. Free.

- 7:30: Teatro Musica. Bach at St. John’s Pass. Ivans Taurins, director: Jeanne Lamon Hall, Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, 427 Bloor St. W. 1-833-964-9337. From $48. Also Mar 23(7:30pm), 25(2530pm).


- 8:00: Exultate Chamber Singers. Water Forms: Immersion. Exploring our intimate connection to water in its many forms. Includes music from a variety of time periods plus three immersive works by contemporary Canadian composers Katerina Gimon, Carmen Braden, and Bruce Sied. Calvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave. 416-971-9229 or www.exultate.net/event-details/water-forms-immersion. $40 or PWYC from $5.


- 8:00: Rose Theatre. Bachman & Bachman. Randy Bachman & Tal Bachman. 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-874-2800 or www.thero-theatre.ca. $15-$47.
Bébricité Plays Tchaikovsky. Kay. Fantasy Variations; Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto in D; Kalinnikov: Symphony No.1 in G. Bébricité Lauzière, violin; Andrei Fehrer, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717. $29-$87. Also Mar 25(7:30pm), Apr 1(7:30pm).


5:00: Tapestry Opera/Obisdian Theatre Company. Of the Sea. Music by Ian Cusson. Libretto by Kanika Ambrose. Philip Akin, stage director; Jennifer Tung, music director. Bluma Appel Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. 416-326-8410 or www.am.ticketmaster.com/tolive/ot/sea. From $52. Also May 29(8pm), 29(8pm), 31(8pm); Apr 14(8pm).

5:30: Guitar Society of Toronto. Cowan Ciccillitti Duo. Adam Ciccillitti and Steve Cowan, violin duo. St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, 49 Donlands Ave. 416-762-9257 or hol12jo@sympatico.ca. From $31.50. Also Mar 22, 23, 29(8pm); 29(8pm), 31(8pm); Apr 14(8pm).

6:00: Counterpoint Community Orchestra. Hello Spring. Schuman: Symphony No.1 in B-flat (“Spring”); Dustin Peters: A Stone’s Throw. (Canadian premiere). Church of St. Peter and St. Simon-the-Apostle, 525 Bloor St. E. 416-598-3375. From $35. Also Mar 31(3:00pm), Apr 1(11:00pm)

7:30: Breviary Night at the Opera. Lindsey Duggan, soprano; Danielle MacMillan, mezzo; Adam Luther, tenor; and Alexander Hajek, baritone. David Rehner, violin. 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-874-2800 or www.theroar.org. From $35. Also Mar 31(7:30pm).

8:00: Against the Grain Theatre. Blue-beard’s Castle. Music by Béla Bartók. English libretto and stage direction by Daisy Evans. Gerald Finley, baritone (Bluebeard); Charlotte Hellekant, soprano (Judit); Stephen Higgins, conductor & arranger; Fleck Dance Theatre. Harbourfront Centre, 235 Queens Quay W. www.harbourfrontcentre.com/event/bluebeards-castle. $50-$150. Also Mar 31(7:30pm). Apr 1(11:00pm)

8:00: Tapestry Opera/Obisdian Theatre Company. Of the Sea. Music by Ian Cusson. Libretto by Kanika Ambrose. Philip Akin, stage director; Jennifer Tung, music director. Bluma Appel Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. 416-326-8410 or www.am.ticketmaster.com/tolive/ot/sea. From $52. Also May 29(8pm), 29(8pm), 31(8pm); Apr 14(8pm).

8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Glima Conducts Beethoven 5. Harman. Celebration Prelude (World Premiere/TSO Commission); Schumann: Cello Concerto; Ligeti: Cello Concerto; Habibi: Jeder Baum spriht; Beethoven: Symphony No.5. Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello; Gustavo Gimeno, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $55. Also Mar 22, 23, 29(8pm); 29(8pm), 31(8pm); Apr 14(8pm).

9:00: Axis Club Theatre. Sunshine Daydream: A Live Grateful Dead Tribute with Mars Hotel. 722 College St. www.sunshinedaydream-mars-hotel.eventbrite.ca. $27/$20 (Early Bird pricing).

Tuesday March 28


6:00: Tapestry Opera/Obisdian Theatre Company. Of the Sea. Music by Ian Cusson. Libretto by Kanika Ambrose. Philip Akin, stage director; Jennifer Tung, music director. Bluma Appel Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. 416-326-8410 or www.am.ticketmaster.com/tolive/ot/sea. From $52. Also May 29(8pm), 29(8pm), 31(8pm); Apr 14(8pm).

7:30: Against the Grain Theatre. Blue-beard’s Castle. Music by Béla Bartók. English libretto and stage direction by Daisy Evans. Gerald Finley, baritone (Bluebeard); Charlotte Hellekant, soprano (Judit); Stephen Higgins, conductor & arranger; Fleck Dance Theatre. Harbourfront Centre, 235 Queens Quay W. www.harbourfrontcentre.com/event/bluebeards-castle. $50-$150. Also Mar 31(7:30pm). Apr 1(11:00pm)

7:00: Tapestry Opera/Obisdian Theatre Company. Of the Sea. Music by Ian Cusson. Libretto by Kanika Ambrose. Philip Akin, stage director; Jennifer Tung, music director. Bluma Appel Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. 416-326-8410 or www.am.ticketmaster.com/tolive/ot/sea. From $52. Also May 29(8pm), 29(8pm), 31(8pm); Apr 14(8pm).

8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Glima Conducts Beethoven 5. Harman. Celebration Prelude (World Premiere/TSO Commission); Schumann: Cello Concerto; Ligeti: Cello Concerto; Habibi: Jeder Baum spriht; Beethoven: Symphony No.5. Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello; Gustavo Gimeno, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $55. Also Mar 22, 23, 29(8pm); 29(8pm), 31(8pm); Apr 14(8pm).

8:00: Axis Club Theatre. Sunshine Daydream: A Live Grateful Dead Tribute with Mars Hotel. 722 College St. www.sunshinedaydream-mars-hotel.eventbrite.ca. $27/$20 (Early Bird pricing).
$47.50 or $52.10(d).  

**Friday March 31**


- **7:30:** Against the Grain Theatre. Bluebeard’s Castle. Music by Béla Bartók. English libretto and stage direction by Daisy Evans. Gerald Finley, baritone (Bluebeard); Charlotte Hellekant, soprano (Judith); Stephen Higgins, conductor & arranger. Fleck Dance Theatre, Harbourfront Centre, 255 Queens Quay W. www.harbourfrontcentre.com/event/bluebeards-castle. $50-$150. Also Mar 30(3:00pm); Apr 1(1:30pm).

- **7:30:** Rose Theatre. Brampton Music Theatre: Kinky Boots. Music by Cyndi Lauper. Book & Lyrics by Harvey Ferstein. 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-456-6800 or www.therosetheatre.ca. $20-$89. Also Mar 30(3:00pm), Apr 1(1:30pm) & 7:30(3:00pm), 21(3:00pm).


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**Saturday April 1**

- **1:00:** Rose Theatre. Brampton Music Theatre: Kinky Boots. Music by Cyndi Lauper. Book & Lyrics by Harvey Ferstein. 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-674-2800 or www.thero setheatre.ca. $20-$39. Also Mar 30(7:00pm), 31(7:30pm), Apr 1(7:30pm), 2(1:00pm).

- **2:00:** Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Symphonic Fairy Tales. Troupe Vertigo, circus performers; Andrei Fehér, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717. $18; $11(Child).  

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**Sunday April 2**


- **2:00:** Hamilton Conservatory for the Arts. Performing Arts Sunday Series: Dance a Mile in My Shoes/Bells. Exploring the connections between Flamenco and traditional Indian Kathak dance. Carmen Romero and Bageshree Vaze, dancers; Vinet Vyas, tabla drums; Nicolas Hernandez, guitar; 519-745-745-745. St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. 437-326-9410 or www.am.ticketmaster.com/tolive/otofthearts. From $52. Also Mar 25(8pm); 26(8pm); 29(8pm); 2(11:30pm).

- **4:00:** Tapasetry Opera/Obisdian Theatre Company. Of the Sea. Music by Iancuson. Libretto by Kanika Ambrose. Philip Akin, stage director; Jennifer Tung, music director. Bluma Appel Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 1100 Queen St. E. 437-326-9410 or www.am.ticketmaster.com/tolive/otofthearts. From $52. Also Mar 26(8pm); 27(8pm); 29(8pm); 2(1:00pm).


- **7:30:** Northumberland Orchestra/Oriana Singers of Northumberland. In the Moment. A collaborative concert of quiet reflection. Fauré: Requiem; Vaughan Williams: The Lark Ascending. Emily Rocha, soprano; Joseph Song Chi, baritone; Victoria Yeh, concertmaster & solo violin; Robert Grandy, organ. Trinity United Church (Cobourg), 284 Division St., Cobourg. www.nocomusic.ca and www.orianasingers.com. $25. Also Apr 2(3:00pm).

- **7:30:** Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-922-3714 X103 or 647-988-2102 (eve & weekends) or www.moordaleconcerts.com. $20.
MAINLY CLUBS

3030 Dundas West
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A large, airy space that plays hosts to concerts, events, and more. 3030 Dundas is home to a wide range of music and a top-notch Trinidadian-Canadian food menu.

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burdocktos.com
A sleek music hall with exceptional sound and ambiance, featuring a draft list of house-made brews.

BSMT 254
254 Landsdowne Ave. 416-801-6325
bsmt254.com
A cozy music venue with an underground vibe. BSMT 254 has a wide variety of shows, from jazz to hip-hop to DJ nights.

Cameron House
408 Queen St. W. 416-703-0811
thecameron.com
An intimate, bohemian bar with ceiling murals & nightly performances from local roots acts on 2 stages.

Capone’s Cocktail Lounge
1573 Bloor St. W. 416-534-7911
caponestronto.com
A self-described perfect marriage of an intimate cocktail den and comfortable neighbourhood bar, with live music Wednesday through Sunday.

Castro’s Lounge
2116 Queen St. E. 416-699-8272
castrolounge.ca
Featuring an ever-changing selection of specialty beers, Castro’s hosts a variety of local live music acts, including bluegrass, jazz, rockabilly, and all-country.

C’est What
67 Front St. E. 416-867-8499
cestwhat.com
A haven for those who appreciate real cask ale, draught beer from local Ontario breweries, and live music.

Drom Taberna
458 Queen St. W. 647-746-2099
dromtaberna.com
A heartfelt homage to the lands that stretch from the Baltic to the Balkans to the Black Sea, with a wide variety of music.

Emmet Ray, The
924 College St. 416-792-4497
thememetray.com
A whisky bar with a great food menu, an ever-changing draft list, and live jazz, funk, folk and more in the back room.

Grossman’s Tavern
379 Spadina Ave. 416-677-7000
grossmantavern.com
One of the city’s longest-running live music venues, and Toronto’s self-described “Home of the Blues.”

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
Hugh’s Room
296 Broadway Ave. 416-533-5483
hughsrroom.com
A dedicated listening room with an intimate performance space, great acoustics, and an attentive audience.

Jazz Bistro, The
251 Victoria St. 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 Hecter Hotel, 59 King St. N., Waterloo. 226-476-1565
kw jazzroom.com
A welcoming music venue dedicated to the best in jazz music presentations, and home to the Grand River Jazz Society, which presents regular series throughout the year.

Lula Lounge
1565 Dundas St. W. 416-588-0307
lul.ca
Toronto’s mecca for salsa, jazz, afro-Cuban, and world music, with Latin dance classes and excellent food and drinks.

Manhattans Pizza Bistro & Music Club
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. Claire Ave. W. 416-658-5687
mezzettarestaurant.com
With a cozy atmosphere and a menu of Middle-Eastern cuisine, Mezzetta hosts music on Wednesday evenings.

Monarch Tavern
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Old Mill, The
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oldmilltoronto.com
The Home Smith Bar:
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Oud and the Fuzz, The
21 Kensington Ave. 647-283-9136
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An Armenian bar and live music venue, The Oud and the Fuzz offers an excellent menu of Armenian food, inventive cocktails, and a rotating cast of top-notch musicians.

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22 Cumberland Ave. 416-923-5716
thepilot.ca
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Poetry Jazz Café
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poetryjazzcafe.com
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136 Ossington Ave. 416-532-6474
posposablebar.com
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Revel Hotel Jazz & Blues Bar, The
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therec.ca
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Sauce on Danforth
1376 Danforth Ave. 647-748-1376
sauceondanforth.com
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1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-674-2800 or www.therosetheatre.ca. $20-$39. Also Mar 30(7:30pm), 31(7:30pm), Apr 1(1pm) & 3(7:30pm).

Tuesday April 4
8:00 Rose Theatre. Big Wreck: Bombs Away. Fields, High. 1Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-674-2800 or www.therosetheatre.ca. $15-$54.
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**LIVE REHEARSAL OPPORTUNITIES**

- **Feb 05 1:30:** Toronto Early Music Players Organization (TEMPO). Franco-Flemish Delights. Music from the 15th and 16th century. Fenike Bergsma, recorder & instructor. Grace Church on-the-Hill, 300 Lonsdale Rd. www.tempotoronto.net or info@tempotoronto.net.
- **Feb 12 2:00:** CAMMAC Toronto Region. Bach's Cantata No. 131. Reading for singers and instrumentalists. Mervin Fiek, conductor. Christ Church Deer Park, 1570 Yonge St. smmoboe@gmail.com or www.cammac.ca. $15; $10 (members).
- **May 20 2:00:** CAMMAC Toronto Region. Beethoven’s Mass in C. Reading for singers and instrumentalists. Robert Cooper, conductor. Christ Church Deer Park, 1570 Yonge St. 416-482-6562 or www.cammac.ca/toronto. $15; $10 (members).

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digital: Friday March 24
print: Tuesday March 28

Summer 2023 (June/July/August)
Vol 28 No 6
digital: Friday May 26
print: Tuesday May 30

Halftones (our mid-cycle e-letter)
Tues Feb 28
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Our 2023-2024 publication schedule will be available August 1.

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WHO’S WHO

Our online directories

Under the Who’s Who tab on our home page you can find
• our 2022-23 Blue Pages annual directory of music makers, with detailed profiles
  of presenters and organisations;
• our 2023 Summer Music Education directory. Starting February 15 we’ll be
  uploading this summer’s profiles, with weekly updates as more arrive

Starting in spring of 2023 we’ll begin updating
• our Canary Pages choral directory online, followed by
• our Green Pages Summer Music Festivals directory, in late spring, updating into
  the summer.

WHO’S WHO in print!
In the April-May print magazine, we’ll include indexes for the Summer Education
and Choral directories with “teaser” information to guide online reading.
In the combined Summer edition the WHO’S WHO index will also include
Summer Festivals
For information on how to join any of our directories, please contact Karen Ages
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There’s a wealth of content on our website that doesn’t appear in the print magazine.

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Updated weekly, these are searchable in a variety of ways (date, gene, location etc)
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LISTINGS tab

Our blog
Offers additional articles and concert reports
I received the sad news shortly before Christmas that my friend, iconic Canadian composer John Beckwith, had died at the age of 95 from complications of a fall. I had seen him some ten days earlier when I dropped by to have him autograph my copy of his latest book – his 17th! – MUSIC ANNALS: Research and Critical Writings by a Canadian Composer 1974-2014 (Institute for Music in Canada 2022) which you likely read about in last September’s issue of The WholeNote. You may also have read the many insightful CD reviews John contributed to this magazine between 2001 and 2016, running the gamut from early Canadiana (the gamut from early Canadiana (1753 – Livre de Montreal) and period performance practices (Haydn – Five Sonatas on Fortepiano performed by Malcolm Bilson), through Beethoven Late String Quartets (Takács Quartet), Schubert’s Winterreise (Russell Braun) and Chopin Nocturnes and Impromptus (Angela Hewitt) to 20th-century American composers (Toch, Persichetti, Bolcom) and his Canadian contemporaries Harry Somers, Henry Brant and Eldon Rathburn to name but a few. These can all be found on thethewholenote.com website. Of course, numerous recordings of his own music were also reviewed in these pages.

John’s career was many faceted, encompassing a range of fields from music critic, composer, teacher, writer, historian, administrator – he served as Dean of the Faculty of Music at U of T and Director of the Institute for Music in Canada – and performer, but he preferred to refer to himself simply as a musician. His knowledge and breadth of interest was vast, and his own compositions tended to incorporate and synthesize several of these at a time. His oeuvre spanned virtually all genres of art music from folk-song arrangements to art songs, choral works and operas, symphonic works, chamber music, duets and solo pieces. Although his stage works are strikingly underrepresented, recordings of a good cross section of his other works can be presented, recordings of a good cross section of his other works can be found at the Canadian Music Centre (cmccanada.org). Also available from the CMC is his moving personal autobiography, Unheard Of: Memoirs of a Canadian Composer, which I highly recommend.

One work that I have particularly enjoyed revisiting in recent days is Quartet as recorded by the Orford String Quartet (John Beckwith Centrediscs CMC-CD 5897). Back in 1986 I had the pleasure of interviewing John on my radio program, Transfigured Night at CKLN-FM. When speaking about Quartet John mentioned that, like Bartók, who had drawn on his Hungarian heritage and had the string instruments mimic the sounds of cimbaloms and hurdy-gurdies, he wanted to reflect the traditional music of Canada in his string quartet. Although John was not particularly well versed in popular music, his father had played the mandolin and his oldest son played guitar, so he had a bit of a head start and as usual was willing to do some homework. He began researching fiddling styles and attended the finals of the Canadian Open Fiddle Championship in Shelburne, Ontario. The resulting work, while not sounding like fiddle music per se, draws on gestures and nuances of fiddle technique and adds a surprising innovation. The two violinists share a third instrument in an alternate tuning enabling different open string chords and unexpected harmonics and producing a “distorted fiddle tune at the same time as the real one” towards the end of the piece. It’s quite a stunning effect.

Hear! Hear! Remembering John Beckwith takes place at 7:30 on February 28 at Walter Hall, U of T. Performers include Choir 21, Monica Whitcher, New Music Concerts Ensemble, Opus 8, Robert Aitken, Peter Stoll and others.

As mentioned, Beckwith’s Quartet doesn’t sound like traditional fiddle music, but I had no shortage of the “real” (or should that be “reel”?) thing over the past month or so. I was inundated with folk recordings by local artists in a variety of styles and from a variety of traditions. First up, a disc simply called Fiddle Music by Elise Boeur and Adam Iredale-Gray (Fiddlehead Recordings FHR013 elisecandadam.ca). Boeur plays both fiddle and hardangerfele (Norwegian hardanger fiddle) while Iredale-Gray alternates on fiddle and guitar. They are accompanied by upright bassist Robert Alan Mackie, who also provides lyrical solos on some of the numbers. The personal liner notes give the authors and origins of each of the tunes and how they came to be in the group’s repertoire. The disc begins with a medley of lively traditional Irish tunes featuring fiddle and guitar. This is followed by La Coccinelle (ladybug), a bourrée by French fiddler Jean Blanchard combined with a tune by Norwegian accordionist Kristoffer Kleiveland, performed on two fiddles with added bass. The lyrical valse à cinq Evening Glory, penned by Belgian Toon Van Mierlo, is arranged here for fiddle, guitar and bass.

Other eclectic offerings include more traditional Irish, American and Swedish tunes and several for hardingfele – a rull and a Setesdal Gangar – that Boeur learned while studying folk music in Norway. The disc concludes with a stark tune by the Icelandic jazz band ADHD, followed by another medley that starts slowly with the melancholic Frank Thornton, gets moving with Cock and the Hen and finishes with a rousing rendition of Cottage in the Grove. All in all, a feast for the ears, with fine playing from all concerned.

One work that I have particularly enjoyed revisiting in recent days is Quartet as recorded by the Orford String Quartet (John Beckwith Centrediscs CMC-CD 5897). Back in 1986 I had the pleasure of interviewing John on my radio program, Transfigured Night at CKLN-FM. When speaking about Quartet John mentioned that, like Bartók, who had drawn on his Hungarian heritage and had the string instruments mimic the sounds of cimbaloms and hurdy-gurdies, he wanted to reflect the traditional music of Canada in
Bassist Robert Alan Mackie reappears as a member of Vinta on the next disc, Beacons (vintamusicon.com). Other members include Emiln Stam (fiddle and piano accordion), John David Williams (clarinet, diatonic accordion, bass clarinet) and Nathan Smith (fiddle and viola). One might expect hints of Klezmer from the ensemble’s instrumentation, but Vinta is based in the folk-dance traditions of Europe, especially those of France and Sweden. Growing out of Balfolk gatherings in the High Park neighbourhood of Toronto, the enforced isolation of the COVID lockdown also provided an aspect of the group’s inspiration. “At a time when joy and celebration were far away, the four of us came together and shared everything we could. First came the old tunes, hot meals and loud laughter — sure enough, then came the new tunes.” The result is an album of original music in traditional style(s), and one cover — Seduction, a 1929 waltz by Frenchman Mario Cazes, which is combined with Mario and Everest by Stam, “a wedding waltz written for dear friends.” A highlight for me is another waltz, Rosedale Valley by Mackie, once again paired with a composition by Stam, Regent Street Parade. Other pieces of note include High Park by Williams, and the group composition Le réve des coccinelles, yes, those ladybugs again. Producer (and mandolinist extraordinaire) Andrew Collins praises Vinta’s “unique aesthetic driven by their original composing, arranging and virtuoso playing. [...] one certainty is that you will have a smile on your face.” I couldn’t have said it better myself.

The next disc features half the members of Vinta, Emiln Stam and John David Williams performing as a duo. I thought Stam was a familiar name and searching back a few years I found a disc by a local group called The Shoeless — a “cross-cultural stew, combining the sounds of Klezmer, French, Celtic, Appalachian and English music” in a trio with fiddle (Stam), banjo and cello – so obviously her roots spread far afield. The current album focuses on her Dutch heritage and draws on a collection of tunes published in the early 1700s, the title of which translates as Old and New Farmer Songs and Contradances from Holland. On The Farmer Who Lost His Cow and other old Dutch tunes (emilnandjohn.com) Stam plays five-string fiddle, piano and piano accordion, while Williams adds harmonica to his arsenal of clarinet and diatonic accordion. To 21st-century ears there is a certain sameness to the melodies, but differing tempos and the way the duo switches up the accompaniments makes for an entertaining listen that kept my attention. I’m not sure if it is just the novelty of the titles, but highlights included The Pig Scratches His Hole, The Mullet Fish and, of course, the title track, along with the almost minimalist The Friction Drum and the haunting Farewell My Love with its harmonica lead. As well as songs, there are numerous Gaillardes interspersed throughout this compelling disc. And I feel I must mention, the graphic art includes… ladybugs!

David Greenberg’s Multiple voices for One (Leaf Music DG2022A davidgreenbergviolinist.bandcamp.com/album/multiple-voices-for-one) is another disc that combines traditional fiddling styles with dance forms, contemporary arrangements and compositions. For over three decades, Greenberg has enjoyed a double career as a Baroque violinist and Cape Breton fiddler. His international career spans continents and his Toronto connections have included performing as a member of Tafelmusik and Toronto Consort among others. This disc features movements from Bach’s partitas and sonatas for solo violin and other classical movements intercut with a variety of jigs, reels and marches from various sources and original tunes by Greenberg and his son Owen, as well Toronto’s late legendary fiddler Oliver Schrper’s Enthralled. Greenberg plays both Baroque and octave violins on the album, both tuned in period style at A414. There is no overdubbing involved, he just plays one or the other on each track, but the booklet includes a clever picture in which he appears to be playing both at once with the smaller one tucked under his chin, the other on his shoulder and the bow spanning both instruments. Greenberg is an acknowledged master of violin and fiddle techniques and, as this recording attests, possesses a consummate musicality that spans genres and styles. An accomplished clinician, he offers a variety of online tuition opportunities, that latest of which is “Making Tunes with Intention,” a three-week course exploring the composition and arrangement of traditional style tunes – Celtic, Baroque, and classical – beginning February 26. You will find details and registration at davidgreenbergviolinist.com/mti-home.

Sticking with the violin family, but moving away from the fiddle tradition, the next disc features music for solo viola by longtime CBC producer and frequent contributor to The WholeNote, David Jaeger. In the spirit of full disclosure I will say that I have had a lengthy professional relationship with Jaeger over the years as the administrator of New Music Concerts but of course almost everyone in the contemporary music community could say the same. Since retiring from the CBC, Jaeger, when not busy producing independent recordings for some of Toronto’s finest musicians, has expanded his activities as a composer and there has been a wealth of new work in recent years. Conjuring: Viola Music of David Jaeger (Redshift Records TK524 redshiftrecords.org) spans four decades. The soloist is Hamilton native, now Vermont resident, Elizabeth Reid who rises to the various challenges the works present with aplomb and conviction. She is accompanied by Alison Bruce Cerutti in Sonata, Tristan and Isolde, written in 1992 in honour of the 70th birthday of the composer’s mother (and her dog and cat), and Sonata No. 4 for viola and piano written just four years ago. The Six Miniatures for unaccompanied viola are based on verses by Scottish poet David Cameron, the texts of which are included in the booklet, with the violist “in effect, playing the role of the reciter.” As befitting a founding member of the Canadian Electronic Ensemble, Jaeger’s three remaining works involve the use of technology in one form or another. Constable and the Spirit of the Clouds is an adaption of a work originally for solo cello. At the suggestion of Reid, Jaeger reworked the cello score for viola and added an electronic track “composed using a similar process.” i.e., examples of linear variation observed in the work of English Romantic artist John Constable. The result is intriguing. The final two works were written for the
Mid-career American super-star composer Missy Mazzoli “inhabits an exquisite and mysterious sound-world that melds indie- rock sensibilities with classical traditions...[equally at home in] concert halls, opera houses and rock clubs.” Dark with Excessive Bright (BIS-2572 missymazzoli.com) is a portrait disc spanning 15 years of Mazzoli’s international career, featuring Norwegian violinist Peter Herresthal. Once again, we are presented with a composer’s alternate takes on several works. The title piece was originally a concerto for double bass and string orchestra that at Herresthal’s request Mazzoli reworked for violin, “essentially flipping the work upside down.” Dark with excessive bright is a phrase from Milton’s Paradise Lost, a surreal and evocative description of God’s robes, written by a blind man. Mazzoli says: “I love the impossibility of this phrase and how perfectly it describes the ghostly, heart- rending sound of strings.” It appears here twice, bookending the disc, opening with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by James Gafligan and closing with a reduced version for solo violin, string quartet and double bass performed by members of Norway’s Arctic Philharmonic under the direction of Tim Weiss. Both versions are extremely powerful, with a sound palette that belies the all-string instrumentation, and it’s hard to comprehend that in the latter all that sound is being created by just six players. Vespers for Violin is a reimagining of the earlier Vespers for a New Dark Age, in which “sampled keyboards, vintage organs, voices and strings from that composition, drenched in delay and distortion,” are used to create an effective work for a solo violinist. Full orchestral resources are utilized in Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres) with music “in the shape of a solar system.” The title draws on two meanings of the word sinfonia: a Baroque work for chamber orchestra and the old Italian term for a hurdy-gurdy. Mazzoli describes it as “a piece that churns and rolls, that inches close to the listener only to leap away at breakneck speed, in the process transforming the ensemble into a makeshift hurdy-gurdy, flung recklessly into space.” There’s a Toronto connection in Orpheus Undone. It’s an orchestral suite, fragments of which have their origins in Orpheus Alive, a work composed for the National Ballet of Canada back in 2019. In its present form, it depicts “a single instant in Orpheus’s life, in the immediate aftermath of his wife Eurydice’s death. I have used the Orpheus myth...to explore the ways traumatic events disrupt the linearity and unity of our experience of time.” It was composed in 2021, no doubt in response to the trauma of COVID-19. Concert Note: Speaking of Toronto, Mazzoli’s Dark with Excessive Bright will be performed in its original double bass version by the Toronto Symphony and guest conductor Kerem Hasan, with TSO principal Jeffrey Beecher as soloist on March 1 and 2 at Roy Thomson Hall. 

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

TERRY ROBBINS

Vagues et ombres (Waves and shadows), the latest release from the Montreal string ensemble Collectif features music by Debussy and Canadian-American composer Luna Pearl Woolf (Alpha Classics 858 collectif.ca/en). The central work on the disc is Woolf’s Contact, an extremely effective and fascinating piece described as “a sonic view into the underwater world of beluga whales in the St. Lawrence Estuary,” including the impact of human actions.

It’s the Debussy selections that steal the show, however, in quite brilliant arrangements by Thibault Bertin-Maghit, the group’s bass player. Four piano pieces – Etude No.4, Des pas sur la neige, and Passepied and Clair de lune from the Suite Bergamasque open the CD, the increase in players and the resulting expansion of textures being balanced by the challenge faced in reducing Debussy’s orchestral masterpiece La Mer to nine players. The latter is an astonishing reinterpretation that draws quite remarkable playing from the ensemble in music in which – as they note – timbre and colour are paramount. It’s breathtakingly brilliant in all respects.

Baroque violinist Gottfried von der Golz is the soloist on Mozart Violin Concertos Nos.3-5 with the Freiburger Barockorchester under Kristian Bezuidenhout (Aparté AP299 prestonmusi.com/classical/products/936.4986 Mozart-violin-concertos-nos-3-5). The three concertos – the G Major K216, the D Major K218 and the A Major K219 – are “presented in a new version: in accordance with practices of the time. Bezuidenhout improvises a pianoforte part, while conducting the orchestra...A totally new and exciting approach to these works!” Well, don’t get too excited about the resulting impact – the piani-forte is almost totally inaudible, although it may well be subtly adding to the texture; if I hadn’t known I would never have noticed it, except possibly in a few moments in the D Major concerto.

No matter, for these are superb performances any way you look at them, beautifully judged and balanced, with faultless solo work and orchestral playing that is full of life on one of the finest Mozart discs you will hear.

The brilliant Norwegian violinist Vilde Frang is in top form on Beethoven Stravinsky Violin Concertos, with The Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen under Pekka Kuusisto (Warner Classics 0190296676437 vildefrang.com/beethoven-stravinsky). Kuusisto, himself a violinist makes his debut recording as a conductor, and what a debut it is, forming a perfect partnership with Frang. There’s a decided chamber orchestra feel to the performance with the timpani
prominent, the lengthy first movement cadenza being a transcription of the one (with timpani) that Beethoven wrote for his own piano transcription of the concerto.

Stravinsky’s spiky and neoclassical Violin Concerto in D Major Op.8 isn’t heard as often as it should be, the performance here underlining what we’re missing. It’s full of life and never merely academic, with an emotionally deep Arla II third movement.

Frang started studying both concertos at the same time in her teens, always feeling some sort of relation between the two. Certainly they make an ideal pairing on an outstanding CD.

With Schumann: The Three Violin Sonatas violinist Andrew Wan and pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin continue the partnership that gave us the recent outstanding 3CD set of the complete Beethoven sonatas (Analekta AN 2 9003 analekta.com/en).

The Violin Sonatas No.1 In A Minor Op.105 and No.2 in D Minor Op.121 are from 1831, written at the suggestion of violinist Ferdinand David. The Violin Sonata No.3 in A Minor WoO27 incorporates the two movements Schumann contributed to the F-A-E sonata, the 1853 collaboration with Brahms and Albert Dietrich that was a gift for Joseph Joachim, Schumann adding a first movement and a scherzo to complete an original third sonata.

Effortlessly beautiful playing from both performers coupled with exemplary recording quality makes for another outstanding release.

**Concert note:** Mooredale Concerts presents Andrew Wan and Charles Richard-Hamelin in works by Schumann, Medtner and Franck, Sunday February 12, at Walter Hall.


Miranda’s deep, rich cello and Marler’s clear, warm piano, perfectly balanced and beautifully recorded, immediately promise great things – and boy, do they deliver! Shostakovich’s Cello Sonata in D Minor Op.40 from 1934 is described as a lyrical, classical work, but it still has the pain-ridden slow movement and frantic fast movements so typical of his later works.

The Rachmaninoff Cello Sonata in G Minor Op.19 from 1901 is a big Romantic work that requires a big technique from both players, its third movement Andante surely one of the most glorious movements ever written. It’s hard to imagine a more glorious performance than this one.

Violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja and pianist Fazil Say have been playing together as a duo since 2004, and the close nature of their musical relationship is clearly evident in the three sonatas on Janáček Brahms Bartók (Alpha Classics ALPHA885 outhere-music.com/en/classical-music-shop/latest-releases).

The Janáček and Bartók sonatas were both completed in 1921, and both show the influence of folk music on the two composers. The Brahms work is the last of his three, the Sonata No.3 in D Minor, Op.108, completed in 1888.

Kopatchinskaja has a clear, bright tone that can sound quite light at times without ever losing strength, and the ease with which she handles the technical demands never lacks depth and conviction. Say is an equal partner in all respects on an excellent disc.

Xuefei Yang was the first Chinese guitarist to study at London’s Royal Academy of Music, and the first to launch a worldwide professional career. Guitar Favourites, her latest CD, reviews her 35 years with the guitar, returning to the quintessential guitar music that first drew her under its spell (Decca 485 8195 xuefeiyang.com).

Her technique is flawless and apparently effortless, but it’s what she does with it that makes this such a remarkable disc; the clarity, definition, dynamics and flow, flexible phrasing making even the most familiar pieces sound fresh. Works include Albéniz’s Asturias, Tárrega’s Recuerdos de la Alhambra (with rubato!) and Capricho Arabe, Sor’s Variations on a Theme by Mozart Op.9, four pieces by Augustin Barrios Mangoré including the three-part La Catedral, Yang’s own Xinjiang Fantasy, the first recording of When the Birds Return by guitarist John Williams and single pieces by Rodrigo, Lauro and Villa-Lobos. A gorgeous arrangement of Danny Boy completes a stunning recital.

A composition by the British pianist Stephen Hough opens Hough, Dutilleux & Ravel String Quartets, the latest CD from the Takács Quartet (Hyperion CDA68400 hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D_CDA68400). Hough’s six-part String Quartet No.1, “Les Six rencontres” was written in 2021 specifically as a companion piece to the Dutilleux and Ravel works. It’s extremely attractive, finely crafted and idiomatic writing, dedicated to the Takács Quartet and given what must be a definitive performance here.

Henri Dutilleux’s Ainsi la nuit from 1973-76 began as a group of short studies in sonority, the seven linked sections creating fascinating effects and tonal colours. Again, there’s superbly controlled and nuanced playing from the quartet.

A dazzling reading of Ravel’s String Quartet in F Major from 1902-03 completes a terrific CD.

2022 saw the Tippett Quartet mark their 25th anniversary year and the 150th anniversary of Vaughan Williams’ birth with Ralph Vaughan Williams & Gustav Holst String Quartets (SOMM Recordings SOMMCD 0656 somm-recordings.com/recording/vaughan-williams-holst-string-quartets). Vaughan Williams spent the year 1907-08

**Rosebud String Quartet’s new album, Haydn Op. 77 & Mozart K. 614, is out now! Bringing together three great works by masters of Viennese classicism, Mozart and Haydn, the Rosebud String Quartet’s remarkable chemistry and depth bring these compositions to life.**

**Haydn Op. 77 & Mozart K. 614** is available on all major streaming platforms!
studying with Ravel in Paris; his String Quartet No.1 in G Minor from 1909 showed a resulting greater textual clarity, although it remained unpublished until a revised version appeared in 1922. The viola, Vaughan Williams’ own instrument, is prominent in the String Quartet No.2 in A Minor from 1942-43; the work is dedicated to Jean Stewart, violinist in the Menges Quartet that gave the first performance in 1944. The beautiful Romance second movement, in particular, is Vaughan Williams at his most characteristic.

Holst wrote his Phantasy Quartet on British Folksongs Op.36 in 1916, but eventually withdrew it, feeling it to be “insufficient.” His daughter Imogen published a string orchestra version some years after his death. The viola is again prominent in this charming quartet edition by Roderick Swanston.

There’s more Vaughan Williams on Boyle, Moeran, Ireland, Vaughan Williams, his Household Music – Three Preludes on Welsh Hymn Tunes from 1940-41 opening the new CD from the Piatti Quartet (Rubicon RCD1098 rubiconclassics.com/release/piatti-quartet-boyle-vaughan-williams-moeran-ireland).

The main work here though is the premiere recording of the lovely String Quartet in E Minor from 1934 by the unjustly neglected Irish composer Ina Boyle (1889-1967), who, apart from travelling to London for lessons with Vaughan Williams, from 1923 spent virtually her entire life in the family home in County Wicklow. This attractive work remained in manuscript until a new performing edition was made in 2011.

John Ireland’s brief The Holy Boy is his 1941 arrangement of a 1913 piano solo. The disc ends with E.I. Moeran’s undated two-movement String Quartet No.2 in E-flat Major, discovered in his papers after his death in 1950. The Novello edition felt it to be “clearly an early work,” but while the first movement may support this view the Irish folksong nature of the second movement suggests a strong post-war influence of the songs he collected in County Kerry, some of which he published in 1948.

On Beethoven Shostakovich Schubert String Quartets the four Russian musicians of the David Oistrakh Quartet, all soloists in their own right, “embrace the fury of these three works” with full-blooded playing (Praga Digitals PRD250426 prestomusic.com/classical/products/9408438—beethoven-shubert-shostakovich-string-quartets).

On Beautiful Passing the title track is the single-movement violin concerto written by the American composer Steven Mackey in 2008 and inspired by the death of his mother. Anthony Marwood is the soloist, with David Robertson conducting the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (Canary Classics CC-22 canaryclassics.com).

Consisting of two halves separated by a coda, it’s a tough, uncompromising work that has passages of real beauty above and amid the sometimes-brutal orchestral texture, with a demanding and finely woven violin line brilliantly played by Marwood. It’s a work that invites and will surely reward further listening.

The remainder of the CD consists of Mackey’s Mnemosyne’s Pool from 2014, a five-movement symphonic saga dealing with aspects of remembering, Mnemosyne being the Greek goddess of memory. Described by Musical America as “the first great American symphony of the 21st century” it’s a hugely impressive orchestral canvas that receives an outstanding performance.

Mieczysław Weinberg Complete Works for Violin and Piano, Volume Four completes the series of music by the Polish-born Soviet composer and close friend of Shostakovich that began in September 2010. Yuri Kalnits is the excellent violinist and Michael Csayi-Wills the equally fine pianist (Toccata TOCC0188 toccataclassics.com).

This final release covers music from Weinberg’s teenage years – the Three Pieces from 1934-35 – to the 1959 Sonata for Two Violins Op.69, in which Kalnits is joined by

What we’re listening to this month: thewholenote.com/listening
Igor Yuzefovich. The Largo in F Major from 1944, only rediscovered in 2012, was originally part of the Sonata No.2 Op.15. The Two Songs without Words from 1947 and the Concertino in A Minor Op.42 from 1948, originally for violin and string orchestra, complete an excellent disc and series.

Composer Alex Baranowski is the latest subject in the Portrait series that has been so successful for violinist Angèle Dubeau and her La Pietà string ensemble (Analekta AN 2 8750 analekte.com/en).

The CD follows the usual format of short pieces and extracts arranged – in this case by the composer himself – for Dubeau’s group. This collaboration was clearly a joy for composer and artist alike, Dubeau calling Wiosna, the piece she commissioned, the heart of the album, while Baranowski called it one of the most personal pieces he’s ever written.

Most of the tracks reflect Baranowski’s work for screen and stage, with several extracts from the movies The Windermere Children and Nureyev, and the ballets Nineteen Eighty-Four and Kes. There’s not a great deal of variety, but the beautiful writing and top-notch performances will make this a sure-fire winner with Dubeau’s many fans.

**VOCAL**

Andrew Balfour – Nagamo
Musica Intima vocal ensemble
Redshift Records TK522
(musicaintima.org)

> Often, in histories of rock music, one confronts the idea that the so-called “concept album” is the sole province of this genre. Friendships, I’ve told, have been ruined as a result of heated debates as to whether Frank Zappa’s Freak Out!, Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band or Pet Sounds by the Beach Boys can rightly lay claim to being the inaugural blending of music with an extra musical meaning in conceptual form. All of this is ridiculous, of course. Woody Guthrie was recording dust bowl ballads and sharing narrative themes through his music with an extra musical meaning in conceptual form.

Concert note: Andrew Balfour and Musica Intima join the youth choir of the Toronto Children’s Chorus to present The Nagamo Project in Toronto at Eglinton St. George’s United Church on March 4.

**Jules Massenet Intégrale des mélodies pour voix et piano**

333 songs, 17 singers, the groundbreaking 13 CD box set features a who’s who of Canadian operatic talent.

**Nelligan**

Various artists
ATMA ACD2 2814 (atmaclassique.com/en)

> The tragic life story of Émile Nelligan, one of the most renowned 19th-century Canadian poets, has been a subject of several contemporary artistic endeavours and inspires wonder and speculation in creators and audiences alike. Born in 1879, Nelligan joined the École littéraire du Montréal at 17 and produced a significant body of poetic works by the time he was 19, at which point he was committed to a psychiatric hospital by his parents, for reasons that are not entirely clear. He stayed there for another 40 years and never wrote a word of poetry again.

Although characterized as a pop opera, Nelligan’s score is built on a classical foundation mixed with several musical genres, including pop and musical theatre. It is not surprising that the cast on this album is comprised of 15 stellar actors/singers, who brought to life both the emotional and circumstantial aspects of Nelligan’s story. Written by French Canadian icons, André...
premier fragment by Adam Sherkin, and pour une Amérique engloutie (IV) and Il va sans dire by Jérôme Blanc, vocalist and pianist create a canvas that is by turns sensuous, ruminative, teasing and dramatic.

Both artists weave mighty artistic spells throughout – Haldane with her impassioned and often amorous vocals that are melismatic and hauntingly beautiful, and Gionet with unmatched pianism that is marked with subtle lyricism. Listening to them is like experiencing an exquisitely choreographed pas de deux – one moment graceful and balletic, the next robust and athletic. Their supple ornamentation, informed by evidence of theatricality in the traditional Acadian sources, is also most effective. The open sound of this finely balanced recording enhances the ethereal quality of these delicate songs.

Raul da Gama

Wagner – Der Ring des Nibelungen

Deutsche Oper Berlin

Rinaldino, Naxos DVD 2107001 (naxos.com/CatalogueDetail/?id=2107001)

Deutsche Oper Berlin has always been famous for avant-garde, innovative, even iconoclastic versions of operas, so this brave new production was eagerly awaited. Filmed by Naxos on seven DVDs, all in HD full stereo sound in a deluxe edition, Der Ring des Nibelungen is a tetralogy that took Wagner 25 years to compose while in exile in Switzerland. It is directed by Stefan Herheim, a multiple award-winning Norwegian-German director. It is a visionary Ring for the 21st century with today’s complex issues like the refugee crisis, inclusiveness and gender equality worked in, but fully respecting Wagner’s drama and music. It’s a stunning production, a visual knockout with an international cast of the best singers available today, masterfully conducted by Donald Runnicles.

Das Rheingold begins with an empty stage. A group of refugees with worn out suitcases walk across it stopped by a grand piano. The leader of the group strikes an E-flat note and the music begins. The E-flat triad is the basis of the Prelude and represents pure unsoiled Nature, the depth of the river Rhine; from here onwards things start to go awry (like the Expulsion from Paradise, The Original Sin). The group then breaks up, some become the dragon is fearsome and there is a lovely, tender scene of Siegfried’s dialogue with a forest bird, sung by a little boy soprano. In the final love scene the group of extras who surround the rock are interracial, sometimes even same sex young men and women videography and projections, becomes a forest, mountains, fire or the majestic hall in Asgard. At the Finale the sheet is spectacular with all the colours of the rainbow as a backdrop to the Gods entering Valhalla. Outstanding singers are the young Wotan (Derek Welton), Alberich (Markus Brück) and Fricka (Annika Schlicht). Thomas Blondelle’s performance of the clever demi-god Loge is exceptional.

The grand piano is omnipresent at centre stage. Interestingly it stands for musical inspiration and is said to represent the famous Erard on which Wagner composed the entire Ring cycle. At emotionally charged moments a singer sits down and pretends to play with enthusiasm. Another important feature is the extras who do many different things, but mainly form a group like a Greek Chorus and at key points watch and silently comment on the action. Also, the director constantly reminds us of the plight of refugees with worn black suitcases piled up and forming a rocky terrain in the outdoor scenes.

In Die Walküre there are magnificent scenes. In the first act when the weapon-seizing Siegmund despairingly performs the famous Wälsche wo ist dein Schwert? he is elevated on a platform some 20 feet above the stage which suddenly turns pitch black with only Siegmund illuminated. Spring bursts in as a giant translucent ball lit up inside in springtime colours – just gorgeous. The passionate love duet is beautifully sung by Brandon Jovanovich and Elizabeth Teige. In the Third Act the Ride of the Valkyries becomes pandemonium. The score is being thrown around and the singers occasionally check it as not sure of what they are doing. The corpses they carry come alive, crowd the stage and try to rape the warrior maidens(!). Finally they are all hustled off the stage by the angry Wotan. Wotan’s Farewell to Brünnhilde is affectionately sung by Iain Paterson as the stage becomes enveloped in fire (which is spectacular).

Some say that in Wagner one must sit through long boring bits to reach the gorgeous climaxes. Not so here, as the director, by closely working with the actors, ensures that every detail in the music is correlated to the stage action. This way there are no boring bits. The Second Act’s very long, angry monologue by Wotan venting his anger to Brünnhilde (the wonderful Nina Stemme) becomes interesting, even exciting.

In Siegfried, the title character (American heldentenor sensation Clay Hilyer “who brought vocal heft and clarion sound to the role” – The New York Times) is raised in the forest by the evil dwarf Mime (the terrific Ya-Chung Huang). The Forging Scene is spectacular with vocal fireworks; the slaying of the dragon is fearsome and there is a lovely, tender scene of Siegfried’s dialogue with a forest bird, sung by a little boy soprano. In the final love scene the group of extras who surround the rock are interracial, sometimes even same sex young men and women
eager to make love and urge Siegfried and Brünnhilde to do the same. They applaud and rejoice when it finally happens.

In *Götterdämmerung* we leave the fairy tale and enter reality, the world of men who are cunning and greedy. Hagen, Alberich’s evil son (Albert Pesendorfer) is a tremendous basso and there are great musical highlights like Siegfried’s Rhine Journey and his gradual awakening from the magic spell (just before being murdered by Hagen) and the magnificently conducted Funeral Music.

In a cataclysmic ending – Brünnhilde’s self-sacrifice throwing herself into a giant funeral pyre – the Ring returns to the Rhine and in the conflagration Valhalla collapses and the age of the Gods is over. The stage is now empty in a silvery light and there is hope for a new era.

*Janos Gardonyi*

**Mahler – Das Lied von der Erde**
Claudia Huckle; Nicky Spence; Justin Brown
Champs Hill Records digital (claudiahuckle.com)

> This recent disc is a self-described “lockdown project” from the accomplished Anglo-German contralto Claudia Huckle, released with the support of the British Gustav Mahler Society. Recorded in 2021, it utilizes Mahler’s own rediscovered piano version published in 1989. Prepared in conjunction with the final orchestral version, this piano reduction offers the option of a more intimate interpretation of the work, notably so concerning the bellicose tenor part which must normally blast its way through perilous orchestral onslaughts; this possibility has been demonstrated in several recordings of the 1920 chamber version prepared for Arnold Schoenberg’s short-lived “Society for Private Musical Performances,” notably by the Smithsonian Chamber Players with a plangent John Elwes in 2007 and Reinbert de Leeuw’s 2020 release with the supple Yves Saëns. Nicky Spence however sings in full heftedtenor voice throughout. Be that as it may, he’s quite excellent despite his stentorian, operatic approach, which might not seem so inappropriate in an orchestral setting.

Huckle’s intense and moving performance brings us far deeper into the emotional world of these songs, however. As she writes in her liner notes, “One thing I realized during that beautiful spring of 2020 was that if I never performed again, my greatest regret would be never having sung *Das Lied von der Erde.*” Her deep commitment shines through in every bar.

Equally splendid is the masterful pianism of the American conductor Justin Brown, who contributes an impressive tonal palette and sensitive dynamic shadings to the complex keyboard part.

*Daniel Foley*

**Jules Massenet – Intégrale des mélodies pour voix et piano**
Various Artists
ATMA ACD2 2411 (atmaclassique.com/en)

> The prospect of even approaching a presentation as epic in scope as this 13CD box set, *Intégrale des mélodies pour voix et piano* from the pen of Jules Massenet, is utterly daunting. The reason is that the reviewer is, to paraphrase the words of Pliny, “being choked with gold.” This is not such a hyperbolic metaphor once you traverse this repertoire. The majestic sweep of these songs is the more significant when you consider that Massenet was once pilloried as “Mademoiselle Wagner” with a style of light, lyrical “saccharine” music. Green-eyed comments such as those are only some of the epithets that were directed at one of 19th century France’s finest and most prolific composers of oratorios and opera, examples of which include *Manon, Werther* and the now-celebrated *Thaïs.*

With the soaring arias in those operas, Massenet redefined the lyrical French tradition – the tradition of Gounod – in the light of Wagner’s advances in dramatic structure. This “lyric French” tradition clearly also found its way into Massenet’s shorter works – the songs that have been collected and presented in this mammoth set.

It has often also been said of Massenet that he was uninterested in profundity of any sort, but on evidence contained in these songs it is also clear that few composers have ever created such attractive, lyrical works. The composer Vincent d’Indy also suggested that Massenet’s work had a “discreet and pseudo-religious eroticism” (borne out by his 1872 opera *Marie-Magdeleine*). This eroticism, together with an affection for orientalism, coloured most of Massenet’s subsequent work – including some of these songs. Massenet never denied or admitted to those characteristics. However, he was openly cynical about pandering to the French taste for religious themes, even declaring: “I don’t believe in all that creeping Jesus stuff, but the public likes it and we must always agree with the public.”

Massenet gained a firm handle on operatic scoring and with the inherent melodiousness of the aria form it was only natural that the composer fused his prodigious gift for the lyric and the dramatic into a shorter art song form. He put all of this brilliantly to work in the airborne poetry of the songs that make up the breathtaking repertory of the *Intégrale des mélodies.*

There are 333 songs in these 13 CDs. The selection constitutes an almost complete edition of Massenet’s shorter work. The box also includes 13 unpublished and 31 never-before recorded songs. In short the box has epic proportions by any standard applied to any one musical genre – in this case, the song
Schnabel wasn’t immune, however, to the stylistic revolutions of Schoenberg and Stravinsky preceding World War I. His 22-minute Notturno, Op.16 (1914), written for Behr, marked a significant departure from his previous compositions. In Richard Dehmel’s lengthy poem, the narrator recounts an agonized dream about a dead friend. Dispensing with bar-lines, Schnabel’s music creates metric ambiguity along with discordant touches of the atonality he later firmly embraced. It’s a compelling musical psychodrama.

Texts and translations are included.

Michael Schulman

Milton Babbitt – Works for Treble Voice and Piano
Nina Berman; Steve Beck; Eric Huebner

New Focus Recordings FCR349
(newfocusrecordings.com)

Milton Babbitt (1916–2011) was one of the 20th century’s most significant composers and music theorists, whose analytical work on the music of the Second Viennese School continues to influence theory seminars throughout the world. Babbitt gained notoriety from his 1958 article Who cares if you listen? in which a strong case for the avant-garde composer is made, whether conventional audiences appreciate their efforts or not.

As a composer, Babbitt wrote both electronic and serial works, including the songs contained on this album which span throughout his career. Performed by soprano Nina Berman and pianists Steve Beck and Eric Huebner, this recording provides a window into Babbitt’s inherently complex, yet surprisingly tuneful style of composition.

Unlike Schoenberg and other proponents of the Second Viennese School, whose 12-tone methods permit some semblance of almost-tonality, the serialist approach employed by Babbitt strips away any reference to earlier systems of melody and harmony. Although the scores themselves are incredibly dense and challenging to execute and the music is undoubtedly atonal, there is much for listeners to focus on, for even the most random and aleatoric method of composition still results in some semblance of both melody and harmony, albeit far removed from the music of earlier times.

Performing and recording music of this complexity is no small feat and Berman, Beck and Huebner deserve double praise: first, for masterfully presenting this collection of 20th-century art song; secondly, for bringing greater awareness to one of the greatest “musician’s musicians” to ever live. While Babbitt publicly eschewed easy accessibility and immediate audience gratification, his music continues to stimulate, challenge and reward musicians brave enough to engage with his masterful body of work.

Matthew Whitfield

CLASSICAL AND BEYOND

Pachelbel – Magnificat Fugues
Space Time Continuo
Analekta AN 2 8911 (analekta.com/en)

This recording is fascinating, both in conception and execution. Comprised entirely of Baroque continuo instruments (i.e. cello, lute and organ), typically heard as the bass-line foundation of early music ensembles, Montreal-based Space Time Continuo presents a variety of Johann Pachelbel’s pipe organ works arranged and performed for their unique makeup.

As indicated by the album title, this recording features a number of Pachelbel’s fugues based on the Magnificat, a canticle often known as the Song of Mary. Perhaps best known for its multi-movement setting by J.S. Bach and the many smaller-scale versions written by English Cathedral tradition-composers for use in the Evensong liturgy, Pachelbel’s Magnificat arrangements are purely instrumental, with no expression of the text itself.

Pachelbel wrote a great number of these little fugues: 95 in all and, while there is some debate on whether these organ works were composed for intonation or alternation, there is no doubt that they were used in the context of the sung text, either before, during or after. For this performance, director and cellist Amanda Keesmaat arranged 13 of these fugues, along with the well-known Chacunne in F Minor – one of Pachelbel’s largest-scale organ works – resulting in music that, although contrapuntally identical to its original, is strikingly different both in timbre and texture.

Known largely for his Canon in D and little else, this recording demonstrates that there is much music by Pachelbel that deserves to be rediscovered. From the serious and solemn to buoyant and joyful, there is much here for everyone to enjoy and the uniqueness of having this terrific music performed by an equally magnificent bass-instrument ensemble makes this sophomore release from Space Time Continuo worthwhile listening for all.

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Matthew Whitfield
Lost in Venice
Infermi d’Amore; Vadym Makarenko
Eudora Records EUD SACD-2206
(eudorarecords.com)

► No less a figure than Friedrich Nietzsche once wrote “When I seek another word for ‘music,’ I never find any other word than ‘Venice.’” Over the years, many have written glowingly about this magical city and this Eudora recording is a fitting musical homage, featuring works by Vivaldi, Marcello and Veracini performed by the Baroque ensemble Infermi d’Amore led by Vadym Makarenko. The six-member group draws musicians from the entire world, all of whom studied at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Basel, Switzerland.

Of the six pieces by Vivaldi – four concertos, a single movement and a sinfonia – three are the result of reconstructions by musicologist Olivier Fourès, and four of them are world-premiere recordings. Similarly, the scores by Veracini and Marcello were unearthed in Venetian libraries, thus making the disc very much one of “undiscovered treasures.”

Clearly this small ensemble derives great enjoyment from playing together – what a fresh and robust sound they produce! And this vibrancy is further enhanced by a technical excellence evident throughout. As an example, the final movement from the Vivaldi Concerto in E Major RV263 presented here on its own was the original finale for another concerto, RV263a from the collection La Cetra. Nevertheless, Fourès points out that it was originally deemed “unplayable” for the average violinist of the time and was substituted at the request of the publisher. Here, soloist Makarenko easily meets the technical challenges, delivering a virtuosic performance.

► The Overture No.6 by Veracini and the Violin Concerto Op.1 No.9 by Marcello are both worthy inclusions and their respective discoveries were truly fortuitous.

A fine recording of some unilluminar repertoire from the Baroque period – we should all be so fortunate to be lost in Venice with such wonderful music accompanying our meanderings!

Richard Haskell

Bach – The Art of Life
Daniil Trifonov
Deutsche Grammophon 073 8270
(deutschgrammophon.com/en/artists/daniil-trifonov/daniil-trifonov-bach-the-art-of-life-2082)

► While the term ambitious is perhaps an overused descriptor for musical recordings (or anything else artistic for that matter), the adjective most certainly rings true for Daniil Trifonov’s 2022 Deutsche Grammophon release: Bach: The Art of Life. Spanning two CDS with liner notes by Oscar Alan, plus an extensive live concert Blu-ray disc, the recording provides a welcome window into comprehensive, sublime and historically accurate Baroque solo piano playing (in as much as anything originally written for the harpsichord or organ but played on the piano could be historically accurate)! That aside, this recording beautifully mines the music of the family Bach (J.S., of course, but also W.F., C.P.E. and J.C.) proving, at least musically, E.O. Wilson’s famous aphorism: “genes hold culture on a leash.” If, as the German musicologist Carl Dahlhaus pronounced, the 19th century belonged to Beethoven and Rossini (so much so that Johannes Brahms equated composing post-Beethoven to hearing “the tread of a giant behind him”), how then must it have felt to be a composer (not to mention, “son of”) following the supreme legacy left by patriarch Bach? And although this recording is centred around the elder’s Art of the Fugue, all the pieces featured here, father or sons notwithstanding, are given equal heft and importance, and are dealt with rigorously by Trifonov (who up to this point has not necessarily been known for his Bach playing) in a manner that is egalitarian, rather than lesser than, and with a keyboard touch that one hopes will bring these deserved works more in line with the ever-expanding canon of Western art music.

Andrew Scott

Mozart – The Piano Sonatas
Robert Levin
ECM New Series 2710-16
(ecmrecords.com)

► Although it is not uncommon to find one or two of Mozart’s piano sonatas on recital programs, it is much less common – and much more Herculean a task – to present all 18 of his sonatas in one marathon session. Fortepianist Robert Levin embraces this challenge wholeheartedly with this remarkable six-and-a-half-hour release, featuring not only all of Mozart’s fully finished piano sonatas, but also a number of miscellaneous sonata-form movements, all performed on Mozart’s fortepiano.

This reference to “Mozart’s fortepiano” requires some clarification, as his first six sonatas were most likely written not for the fortepiano, but rather the harpsichord or clavicord. Invented in 1658 by the Italian instrument maker Bartolomeo Cristofori, Mozart first encountered the fortepiano as developed by Johann Andreas Stein in 1777.

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

Album for Astor
Bjarke Mogensen
Accordionist Bjarke Mogensen, percussionist Johan Bridger, harmonica star Mathias Heise, and The Danish Chamber Players bring Piazzolla’s sultry music to life!

Suite Tango
Denis Plante & Stéphane Tétreault
Original tango-flavoured album inspired by the unaccompanied cello suites of J.S. Bach.

Featuring Caity Gyorgy
The debut LP from jazz vocalist Caity Gyorgy featuring special guests including Christine Jensen, Allison Au, Virginia MacDonald, Pat LaBarbera, Jocelyn Gould and more!

Lush Life
Heather Ferguson
This is a very accomplished and warmly recommended debut album by a singer whose reputation must surely spread internationally.

- Bruce Crowther, Jazz Journal UK

February & March, 2023
and, after giving this instrument a rave review, obtained his own from the manufacturer Anton Gabriel Wälter. Haydn also owned a Walter fortepiano. Beethoven expressed a desire to own one, and it is on this instrument that Levin performs this Mozartian marathon.

The main difference between the historical fortepiano and the modern grand piano is that the hammers are much smaller, lighter and thinly covered with leather, rather than felt. The lighter strings and gentler hammer action produce a sound that is considerably different than modern pianos, with more overtones and a more rapid decay. Where modern pianos can be murky and weighty—particularly in the lower register, fortepianos are lighter and more agile, with great clarity across the keyboard’s entire compass.

The fortepiano continued to develop after Mozart’s death, growing larger and more robust, and eventually evolving into the modern piano as we now know it. While we often think of the Romantic composers performing on Bösendorfers and Steinways, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Liszt all performed on fortepianos that, although considerably different from the instrument of a century earlier, were nonetheless still quite closely related to their classical-era ancestors.

For those accustomed to hearing Mozart’s piano sonatas performed on a modern piano, this recording will serve as a revelation. The idiomatic nature of Mozart’s writing is immediately apparent as the clarity, subtle dynamic range (as compared to modern pianos), and unique lyricism of the fortepiano result in a profound paradigm shift in the listener. Passages that once seemed unclear or required slower-than-expected tempi to avoid muddying the acoustic waters are here presented with utmost transparency, as the instrument and written score combine with great effect.

Consider, for example, the ubiquitous Sonata facile (No.16, K545), one of the most frequently performed and frequently heard of all Mozart’s piano sonatas. Here one can clearly discern that the rapid decay of the fortepiano determines a great deal of Levin’s interpretive decisions, for each note of this well-known melody now has a definite period of sustain and, to maintain the lyrical line, a “minimum velocity” is required by the instrument itself.

This recording is highly recommended to all who enjoy playing and listening to Mozart’s music, for not only does it present an ingenious composer’s works performed by an expert interpreter, it also provides a window into what Mozart himself might have heard as he was crafting these pieces at his fortepiano almost three centuries ago.

Matthew Whitfield

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Klaudia Kudelko
C2 Management (klaudia-kudelko.com)

Klaudia Kudelko is an extraordinarily talented young pianist from Poland, highly accomplished in Europe and the USA, winning competitions, gathering prizes and enchanting audiences. She even played at Carnegie Hall. Her impressive website features her at a Bechstein grand performing Chopin’s Revolutionary Etude. It is an immensely difficult piece written during bombardment by Russian guns, very fast, her powerful left hand cascading non-stop fortissimo creating a constant turbulence while a defiant, heroic theme emerges in the right hand. Wow!

Time is her debut CD, the title referring to three time periods: early Romanticism of Schubert, high Romanticism of Chopin and the present represented by Polish composer Grażyna Bacewicz. Time, she says, always changes, but what never changes is relevance.

The centre of attention is naturally Chopin with two Etudes: the fast and turbulent Op.10 No.12 in C Minor, the Revolutionary as mentioned above, and the slow, introspective Op.25 No.7 in C-sharp Minor, very complex and full of feeling, beautifully performed. I was most impressed by the Polonaise-Fantaisie, a free-wheeling rhapsodic piece, notoriously difficult to interpret. Kudelko superbly controls the eb and flow of emotion while maintaining the strict 3/4 polonaise rhythm and there is a magnificent ending.

The program begins with Schubert, six short pieces from Moments Musicaux Op.94, each with simple themes but all different and highly inventive. The popular No.3 is played with infinite charm, utmost delicacy and playfulness while No.5 is stormy with a syncopated (somewhat equestrian) rhythm that attests to Kudelko’s superb technique.

The concluding work is a beautifully crafted Sonata No.2 by Bacewicz that harks back to the Second World War and here again is Time and Relevance. A memorable debut disc.

Janos Gardonyi

Destination Riverdale – Brahms; Verhey
Robert Dilutis; Mellifera Quartet

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Destination Riverdale – Brahms; Verhey
Robert Dilutis; Mellifera Quartet
lumberish. Cellist Benjamin Wenzel’s sound is just so deep, as God and Brahms intended. Sometimes I find the balances odd and I suspect a heavy hand at the mixing board. Dihutti plays a keen and expressive clarinet, usually in tune with the strings, if tending sharp at times.

The group make interesting pacing decisions in the rhapsodic section of the Adagio, not all of which I agree with, but respect nevertheless. The third movement reminds one that joy is still accessible to the aged (he was only 60-ish for heaven’s sake). Its two opposing characters are played (correctly) in a uniform pulse; smaller beat subdivisions rather than a change in tempo bring forth the contrast. In general, the group avoids any self-indulgent tempo variation, which feels somewhat austere: they have allowed more flexibility in pulse, especially in the development section of the first movement. Well-resined horsehair renders the heartbeat motif accompanying the sad duet between the clarinet and first violin. They remind one that the heart is, after all, a muscle. The devastating return of the opening thematic material that arrives at the very close of the Con Moto finale plays at the same pulse as the opening, undermining the tragedy. Call me sentimental, but I think the sorrow-filled final utterances should linger just a bit more.

Max Christie

Coleridge-Taylor
Chineke! Orchestra
Decca 485 3322 (chineke.org/news/new-album-release-coleridge-taylor)

- New Yorkers called him the “Black Mahler,” probably because he and then- New York-based Mahler were both composers and conductors. Now, his very un-Mahlerish, Weltschmerz-free compositions are increasingly performed and recorded, paralleling America’s belated recognition of Black composers.

London-born Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912) was the son of Englishwoman Alice Martin and physician Daniel Taylor from Sierra Leone, who returned to Africa before Samuel’s birth. His mother named him after the famous poet; Samuel added the hyphen. Successful in England, he made three U.S. tours and was welcomed at the White House by Theodore Roosevelt. Coleridge-Taylor’s early death was from pneumonia.

This two-CD set presents seven of his compositions and one by his daughter, performed by London’s Chineke! Orchestra, founded in 2015 as Europe’s first predominantly Black and ethnic-minority orchestra. (Chineke means “God” in Nigeria’s Ibo language.)

American violinist Elena Urioste’s warm, velvety tone caresses Coleridge-Taylor’s lyrical melodies in two works conducted by Kevin John Edusei. The songful, open-hearted, 31-minute Violin Concerto in G Minor, Op.80 features imposing fanfares and a cheerful, Scottish-tinged marching tune (Allegro molto) – themes from the previous movements joining in at the concerto’s celebratory conclusion. The nine-minute Romance in G, Op.39, is a dreamy pastorale with a brief, dramatic central section, Urioste’s violin singing throughout.

Two works purportedly influenced by Coleridge-Taylor’s African heritage instead conjured for me fin-de-siècle Vienna or Paris. Edusei conducts the genial, light-textured, African Suite, Op.35; Kalena Bovell leads the more dramatic, colourful, Ballade in A Minor, Op.33.


Michael Schuman

Children’s Corner – Music for Solo Piano
Melody Chan
Independent (melodyyvonnechan-li.com)

- FACTOR – The Foundation Assisting Canadian Talent on Recordings was set up in 1982 “to provide assistance toward the growth and development of the Canadian Music industry.” Among its primary mandates is to support the production of sound recordings by Canadian musicians and Children’s Corner is among the recent CDs resulting from this worthy endeavour.

It features American-Canadian pianist Melody Chan presenting a thoughtfully chosen program of music spanning a 250-year period, including works by Mozart, Brahms and Debussy. Born in Los Angeles, Chan was raised in Vancouver and studied at the University of British Columbia, later receiving her doctorate in performance from...
the University of Toronto. She has appeared with Orchestra Toronto and has taken part in the International Music Festival at Casalmaggiore, Italy.

The disc opener is Mozart’s well-know variation on Ah vous dirai-je Maman? K265, completed around 1782. Chan’s approach is poised and elegant, and she easily handles the technical requirements of this deceptively challenging work.

Four selections from Brahms’ Sixteen Waltzes Op.39 from 1865 – originally for piano four hands – are wonderfully spirited, while Debussy’s familiar Children’s Corner Suite from 1910, is an enduring depiction of childhood from a simpler time. Beginning with Dr. Gradus ad Parnassum, Chan’s playing is sensitively articulated, with just the right amount of tempo rubato.

In Summer by Canadian composer Christine Donkin is less familiar, but this languorous essay artfully depicts a summer’s day in northern Alberta, while the four-languorous essay artfully depicts a summer’s day in northern Alberta, while the four-languorous essay artfully depicts a summer’s day in northern Alberta, while the four-languorous essay artfully depicts a summer’s day in northern Alberta, while the four-languorous essay artfully depicts a summer’s day.

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Two selections from Piazzolla’s tango-suite are imaginatively arranged and performed by Buzz Brass, a quintet of Canadian brass players who are known for their innovative and energetic interpretations of classical and contemporary music.

The disc opens with a vibrant, rhythmic arrangement of Amor de与否, which sets the tone for the rest of the album. The brass sections are well-balanced and dynamic, with the trumpet and trombone duets being particularly memorable.

In addition to the tango-suite, the album also features arrangements of works by Debussy, Mozart, and Pachelbel’s Canon. The arrangement of Pachelbel’s Canon is particularly interesting, with the brass ensemble creating a rich and full-bodied sound that is both nostalgic and modern.

The brass tuning with vibe backdrop. His Claude Bolling swinging brass Toot Suite: Allègre arrangement opens with trumpet solo in a mix of Baroque and jazz ideas like fast horn lines, ringing vibraphone tones, electric bass and short drum solo/accompaniments. Paul Dukas and Lew Pollack composition arrangements by Enrico O. Dastous and Steve Cooper respectively are enticing too.

So many classical brass sounds to listen to here as each Buzz Brass member is an awe-inspiring passionate musician alone and in ensemble.

Richard Haskell

Horizons – Gershwin; Piazzolla; Saint-Saëns
Buzz Brass
AnalektA AN 2 8929 (analektA.com/en)

• World-renowned Canadian quintet Buzz Brass was formed in 2002. Here eight tracks of genre-spanning compositions are arranged for their brass instrumentations and occasional special guest musicians.

• Buzz Brass’ own arrangement of Khachaturian’s Gayaneh: Sabre Dance showcases their tight clear ensemble work in performing the composer’s famous steady groove beat, descending melody sliding glissandos and contrasting higher-pitched section. Guest arrangers of the remaining tracks complement their brass sound.

• Français Vallières’ arrangement of Saint-Saëns’ Danse macabre has guest harpist Valérie Milot adding colourful plucks against brass legato themes and detached notes. His intricate arrangement of Gershwin’s Cuban Overture, with guest pianist Philip Chiou, is a bouncy, uplifting and true to classic rendition. Arranger/friend Javier Sebastián Asencio provides a brass-only arrangement of Piazzolla’s dance Milonga del ángel. The melodies and rhythm sounds generated by the bandoneon bellows air movement transliterate successfully to breathing into brass instruments especially in held notes and loud volumes. His Montréal Hora Cero five-piece medley adds vibraphone with unexpected vibe and horn slides, drums, and slower

• Some new classical releases are concept albums, finding meaning in underlying connections between pieces from different composers and periods. The pieces may relate to each other through style, gestures, compositional techniques, tonality or themes. Loop: Ligeti’s Inspiration & Legacy is brimming with such relations. The album is centred around György Ligeti’s Sonata for Viola Solo, written in the late 20th century and expressing distinct elements of the Baroque era, with six movements based on different tempi, rhythms and themes. Violist Rose Wollman’s ingenious concept is based on imaginative yet logical pairing of each of the six movements with a piece from the Baroque era and commissioning six contemporary composers to write a companion piece to the Ligeti/Baroque set. The result is remarkably insightful: pieces within each trio/quartet sequence beautifully, as if they had all been written at the same time. The companion pieces support and illuminate aspects of Ligeti’s movements, sometimes in unexpected ways.

• Featured Baroque composers include Bach, Tartini, Gabrieli, Corelli, Telemann and Biber, with their recognizable rhythmical and thematic elegance. Ligeti’s movements have Eastern European folk elements as well as jazz and Latin influences, but they are very much written in Ligeti’s unique language and display clever compositional techniques. Contemporary composers – Garth Knox, Alexander Mansour, Rose Wollman, Atar Arad, Mélia Watras and Natalie Williams – match and mix the colours, gestures, language and structure in the most imaginative ways.

• Wollman’s extensive liner notes give a detailed explanation of her creative and analytical process in finding common threads. Her playing is agile, intelligent, movingly expressive; her articulation superb. The intimate atmosphere makes this album even more appealing.

Ivana Popovic

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY

Bill Brennan – Kaleidoscope: Music for Mallet Instruments
Bill Brennan: Rob Power; Étienne Gendron
Centrediscs CMCCD 30822 (centrediscs.ca)

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Ivana Popovic

Andrew Timar

Canadian percussionist, pianist and composer Bill Brennan has racked up an impressive 100 album credits to date. Kaleidoscope, however, is the first album featuring his keyboard percussion compositions. While Brennan’s career has focused on contemporary concert music and jazz genres, he has also long immersed himself in the music of other cultures. He gratefully acknowledges the deep influences of the music of Ghana, Brazil, Indonesia and India in his liner notes. Those international music influences are on display throughout the album.

For 20 years a core musician with Toronto’s Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan, Brennan’s Shadows and Istana were originally scored for his eight-piece [gamelan] degung – though they get an instrumental makeover here. Yes, Istana and Shadows are cast in the five-tone gapped scale of the West Javanese degung mode. But the use of vibes, tam-tams, finger cymbals, and especially the glistening tones of the glass marimba in these effective arrangements give the music a gently shimmering effect, as though heard through a permeable cultural gauze.

Brazilian influences are evident in several works. Brennan describes Belo Horizonte as a musical representation of a morning stroll in a park in the Brazilian city of Belo Horizonte, enlivened with the sounds of breezes, bamboo, chirping birds and chattering monkeys. Scored for two vibes and marimbas, Brennan skillfully evokes that soundscape by layering syncopated Brazilian bell patterns, making juicy key changes, and shifting harmonies, textures and dynamics.

Then there are the appealing Nostalgie and Vinyl Café Waltz, which lean toward the Brazilian city of Belo Horizonte, enlivened with the sounds of breezes, bamboo, chirping birds and chattering monkeys. Scored for two vibes and marimbas, Brennan skillfully evokes that soundscape by layering syncopated Brazilian bell patterns, making juicy key changes, and shifting harmonies, textures and dynamics.
ILTA
Stefanie Abderhalden; Kyle Flens
Neuma 162 (neumarecords.org)

Chicago-area musicians – flutist Stefanie Abderhalden and percussionist Kyle Flens – get top billing in this satisfying, yet also occasionally quirky, recital of modernist and postmodernist concert music. Despite the billing on the cover, the album’s repertoire is considerably more focused on percussion than flute: five of the seven titles are scored for percussion alone. In addition, percussionists Malika Green, Katie (Wiegman) Burdett and Thomas Loretto add their skills to works by American composers Robert Fleisher, Robert Honstet, David Maki, plus iconoclastic Greek-French composer Iannis Xenakis.

Live performances, studio recordings and electroacoustic elements can all be found on this eclectic album. Yet it all hangs together as a satisfying percussion-centric recital. The 2008 title track Ilta (“evening” in Finnish) by Maki opens with Thai gongs, the alto flute and vibraphone sounds emerging from their resonant tones. The middle section’s instrumentation shifts to the higher C flute and crotale, the soundscape returning in last section to gong long tones animated by flute melodies.

The best-known work here is Rebounds A (1988) by Xenakis (1922–2001). This virtuoso work for multiple bongos, tom-toms and bass drums, played convincingly by Flens alone, grows ever more complex over its 6’33” duration. Exhibiting a kind of rhythmic accelerating or perhaps metric compression, it reflects the composer’s considerable interest in mathematics, specifically in the Golden Section, a numeric ratio associated with the Fibonacci sequence. I found Flens’ performance an architecturally taut and emotionally intense listen.

Andrew Timar

20 for 2020
Inbal Segev
Avie AV2561 (avie-records.com)

While in the heart of the 2020 pandemic, Israeli-American cellist Inbal Segev commissioned 20 works from some of today’s leading composers – some with whom she has worked before – asking them to document their responses to the challenging times. With this collection of mostly new compositions it is nearly impossible to speak on every piece but suffice to say there was not a single track on this double CD set that I was not moved by. There is a richness to the selections that are innovative and challenging, but still beautifully accessible.

The complete work is an exploration of dark and light, of despair and joy; not only documenting the many layered issues around the pandemic and isolation, but also world events in general. With two CDs of chamber-style compositions, it is worth noting that Segev’s choice in composers represents a diversity of time and cultures. With the youngest (Sophia Bass, b.1996) to the most established (“the most obscure great composer of our time”) Gloria Coates (b.1938) this album is essential listening for any lover of contemporary classical music, not just the cello. I was hooked from the first track, Room to Move by Via Cuong, a cathartic, sweeping work written for octet played entirely by Segev, splitting the eight parts between the two cellos, her 1973 Ruggieri and her modern 1957 Becker, to add nuance and colour to the different parts.

This piece had me dreaming of being a circus hoop performer. From here, Fernando Otero’s first movement of a Cello Concerto revised here for cello, string quartet and bass is a challenging work “infused with tango and jazz.” James Lee III’s Ekaah, a heartbreaking lament on how there can be so much hate in the world, ends with a stunning prayer. The whole piece is surely destined to be a recital feature. Complex pizzicato work in Timo Andres’ Agita is followed by Sophia Bass’ mesmerizing piece Taal-Naad Namun for cello, tabla and tampura. Bruce Wolosoff’s Lacrymae for cello choir was again over-dubbed solely by Segev, in true pandemic fashion. Jazz pianist Vijay Iyer’s The Window exposes the powerful complexities of hope while avoiding sentimentality. Christopher Cerrone’s The Pleasure at Being the Cause is a minimalist play on simultaneously holding and moving, as was the constant during the pandemic. The first CD ends with Puerto Rican composer Angelica Negron’s Ruta Panorâmica, a delightful road trip complete with traffic and road sounds for cello, bandoneon and electronics.

The second CD is just as varied, again each composition is uniquely noteworthy. Though there is simply no space to recognize the beauty of every track, standouts for me included composer and environmental activist John Luther Adams’ A Weeping of Doves, Molly Joyce’s It Has Not Taken Long, Immanuel Wilkins’ Exhale, a speeded, breathtaking saxophone-style solo that is so relentless one can only wonder how Segev manages to pull it off, and Stewart Goodyear’s wonderful Kapok, which packs a powerful ending to the project. The bonus encore of Segev’s own composition Behold, for cello quartet, adds yet another work to the cello ensemble repertoire.

Segev’s tone throughout this challenging project manages to be every colour imaginable, while both clear and vibrant, and warm and dark. The entire double album encompasses a stunning display of fireworks and gentleness. That so many of these works will surely be iconic mainstays of the contemporary cello repertoire, for those who dare to take them on, is a testament to the leadership and investment in the cello repertoire from this great artist.

Cheryl Ockrant

Kate Read – After
Kate Read
Leaf Music LM258 (leaf-music.ca)

A curious mixture of contemporary solo viola compositions and Baroque pieces, this debut album by Kate Read is engaging and explorative, as well as enterprising.

Although not a theme, the music on this album indirectly depicts the natural elements of Newfoundland, where Read currently resides – beauty amidst ruggedness, vast-ness of (sonic) space, wildness of possibilities. Read is a powerful performer, fully present in every phrase and turn, adventurous, always aware of the structure and direction. Her sound is imposing yet gentle, with an array of colours and expressions.

All contemporary pieces on the album involve electronics but don’t venture into the avant-garde, entailing structural symmetry and classical aesthetics. Two are new commissions by Kate Read: Evernight by Benton Roark, a neverending joyful cascade of 16th notes using amplified viola with analogue electronics, and Blackwood Sketches by Andrew Staniland. The latter is a visceral, expressive take on an acclaimed etching by David Blackwood, Fire Down on the Labrador, and involves synths tones and low notes to depict the whale, ice and wood underneath and in between the viola’s segments. Keep in Touch by Nico Muhly features an unusual, pre-recorded track that blends with the viola exquisitely. The album closes with Aftermath, a collaborative improvisation on two of Bach’s pieces with Michelle LaCour, featuring synthesized and found sounds, pedals and layering.

Baroque pieces by Biber (Passacaglia from Mystery Sonata No.16) and Bach (movements from Violin Sonata No.3) are arranged for viola by Read and played with passion. The unusual programming gives a spark to this album.

Ivana Popovic
The Lakota Music Project
South Dakota Symphony Orchestra; David Gier
Innova 1081 (innova.mu)

This highly creative project is a stunning combination of material composed by six gifted Indigenous Americans of the Lakota Sioux nation featuring the eminent South Dakota Symphony under the musical direction of Delta David Gier. The Lakota Project is a brilliantly constructed collection of music specifically written and designed to dissolve the walls between the Lakota peoples and their horrific history of abuse and near genocide at the hands of European settlers. The music itself was created in an atmosphere of trust and open communication and is a pure, resplendent boon to the process of reconciliation.

Black Hills Olowan by Brent Michael Davids features the Creekside Singers dynamic; mystical motifs depict the incredible power of natural forces and the ensemble's magnificent voices serve to intensify the magic. The composition and arrangement here are nothing short of superb, and awash with emotional and musical gravitas - chaos and destruction, and then rebuilding. Also exceptional is the six-movement Victory Songs (Wakétgli olówan) by Jerod Impichchahaa’ Tate, which fluidly moves the listener through time and history - from the beginning of the world to the horrific murder of Sitting Bull. Stephen L. Bryant's sonorous voice digs deep into the soul, at once elevating us up into ethereal dimensions and plunging us back down into the grief and horror of one group of the human race determined to exterminate another.

Of particular delight is Desert Wind by guitarist Jeffrey Paul. Paul drags us into the present time and place with his cheeky, relentless electric guitar, soothed by Robert Erhard and Sharon Maunter-Rodgers on cellos and the Creekside Singers. The closing track is (ironically) John Newton's 1772 Christian hymn, Amazing Grace. Arranged by Theodore Wiprud, this song celebrates a transformation that speaks to the oneness of all...a radiant and much needed message in our present world.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

American Stories
Anthony McGill; Pacifica Quartet
Cedille CDR 90000 216 (cedillerecords.org)

This is a great recording. What is not to like here? The Pacifica quartet are excellent. Anthony McGill turns the clarinet into a beautiful distinct voice, and the stories? Well, let’s talk.

Leaving aside the question of whether music can function as narrative, let's at least say that while American Stories doesn't push the inclusion-and-equity button too hard, it includes equally compelling tales from a variety of voices. Richard Danielpour's threnody Four Angels reflects on the aching sorrow caused by the Birmingham church bombing now almost 60 years in the past. The angels are the four young girls who lost their lives to the hatred of a racist. The piece derives real beauty from that reflection and opens our hearts to hope. Despicable acts seem to be part of the curse of humanity, and courage and hope two blessings we require in order to persist. Commissioned by McGill in early 2020, it was premiered online in 2021.

The longest and most entertaining work is the final one, Valerie Coleman's Shotgun Houses. Coleman grew up in West Louisville, Kentucky as did the subject of the piece. Muhammad Ali's early life and rise to prominence as an African American hero is depicted in three movements: the first, with the same title as the entire work, describes the neighbourhood itself, the architecture of poverty celebrated for the strength of the inhabitants. Grand Avenue is one of those streets, notably Ali's home address when he was still Cassius Clay and before his Olympic triumph in 1960. In this last movement Coleman pencil strokes Ali at the speed bag, on a flight (his first ever) to Rome, and in the ring for three rounds on his way to the gold medal, in under seven minutes; the entire work lasts about 18. I hope the composer at least considers whether it might be expanded, perhaps even with an epitaph to honour Ali's later years as an activist, and his struggle with Parkinson's disease.

Between these are two other great pieces: High Sierra Sonata by Ben Shirley and James Lee III's Clarinet Quintet. More tone poem than narrative, Shirley's piece is an honest response to the dynamic beauty of the American southwest, in American vernacular style, if that means anything. Lee has a heavier task, addressing the treatment of the Indigenous peoples who were cheated out of promised territory in the Dakotas. Made me think of a half-finished monument to Crazy Horse that sits near Mount Rushmore. Both pieces substantially add to a growing genre: the clarinet quintet.

Max Christie

Invocation
Duo Kermani-Gentili
Pro Classics 7025 (duo-kermani-gentili.com/en/cd)

Is music by women composers like the dark matter of the musical universe: influential, yet somehow undetectable by current means? Try again.

Invocation sheds light on this element, featuring works for clarinet and piano. The duet of clarinettist Kymia Kermani and pianist Alba Gentili-Tedeschi have focused on European composers, all women, most presenting (I would argue) mid-20th-century style. An exception is the first composer featured, Marie Clémence de Grandval (1823-1907), whose Deux Pièces include the title track for the disc. Apart from her importance as an established female composer in the 19th century, I don't think hers was the strongest opening piece; tuneful and sweet, a bit like Adolph Adam, but less observed; de Grandval was kind enough NOT to write Minuit Chretien.

A selection of well-performed miniatures, there are 27 separate tracks through its 58 minutes. It's as if the composers were afflicted by modesty. I feel most compelled by the music of Holocaust escapee Ursula Mamlock's Rückblick, in Erinnerungen die Reichspogromnacht 9. November 1938, a brief but harrowing depiction of her family's flight from Berlin in the wake of Kristallnacht. The tracks are linked by short interludes by Barbara Heller (b.1936). Her Luftspuren are lovely enigmatic epigrams that serve as a "promenade" between the other works.

Composition dates are absent in the jacket material, but with help from their publisher I learned Polish composer Krystyna Moszumarska-Nazar, who studied composition at the same school as Krzysztof Penderecki, quite possibly a bit earlier, was nine years his senior. Isn't it wonderful to imagine that her clever (and also earlier) Three Miniatures for Clarinet and Piano influenced the much more celebrated man whose work of the same title was published in 1959? Now there's some dark matter!

Max Christie
The Rudersdal Chamber Players lift the music of Poul Ruders off the page and into the ether with finesse and passion. Liner notes include Ruders’ own quirky accounting for the pieces, and players’ biographies, which one senses were written by themselves. The group has been together since 2017, with members mostly of the current generation, all excellent. No explanation is offered for the similarity of the names, so call it a coincidence. The group is named for a music festival whose home is Rudersdal.

The music itself is intense and compelling. Three works fill out the roughly 60 minutes of track time: *Throne* for clarinet and piano (1988); and the more recent *Clarinet Quintet* (2014) and *Piano Quartet* (2016). Describing or categorizing Ruders’ music requires more space than allotted, so I decided to list some adjectives and some possible likenesses to other composers: swinging, soaring, walling; sweet and then astringent; moody and meditative; then boisterous and exuberant.

Sometimes in the style of a chorale, featuring monody or homophony, with minimal vibrato (the Adagio movement of the *Clarinet Quintet*), at others (especially in the *Piano Quartet*) he reverts to more boldly modern style in the sense that his usual tonalism gives way to expressionistic chromaticism. And especially in the playing of the terribly capable clarinetist Jonas Frøland, tonalism gives way to expressionistic chromaticism. And especially in the playing of the terribly capable clarinetist Jonas Frøland, tonalism gives way to expressionistic chromaticism.

Ruders’ compatriot Carl Nielsen (minus although Ruders is doubtless a pantheist) trump to tug on your emotions.

Ruders’ own quirky notes include that for yourself. Feature of his music is its soul and I urge you to discover that for yourself.

Max Christie

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**Works for Violin and Percussion Orchestra**

Nicholas Kitchen; New England Conservatory Percussion Ensemble; Frank Epstein

**Naxos 8.574212 (naxos.com/Search/KeywordSearchResults/?q=Agocs)**

**Our Recordings 8.220680 (ourrecordings.com)**


- Insistent rhythms and pentatonic melodies, including an ancient Mayan dance-song, evoke tropical steaminess in the five-movement *Xochiquetzal* (2014) by Robert Xavier Rodríguez (b. San Antonio, Texas 1946). Kitchen’s violin vividly represents Xochiquetzal, Aztec goddess of beauty, love and fertility, among hummingbirds, casting a love spell, alongside her rain-god husband, weeping tears of flowers and bestowing music and dance upon her worshippers.

- The four-movement *Concerto for Violin and Percussion Orchestra* (2018) by NEC faculty member Kati Agócs (b. Windsor, Ontario 1975) begins with *Incinta*, gentle tinkles accompanying a long-lined, sentimental violin melody. In the animated *Inquieto*, staccato percussion punctuates rapid, repeated violin figurations. *Maeestoso* presents another extended, soulful violin melody, slowly throbbing percussion, an intense violin cadenza leading to a dramatic *tutti* climax before returning to the opening lyricism. *Brios.Cantabile*’s piquant melodies and propulsive rhythms create a whirlwind, Gypsy-like dance, its extant final flourish ending both the concerto and this very entertaining CD.

Michael Schulman

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**Album for Astor Piazzolla**

Bjarke Mogensen; Danish Chamber Players

**Our Recordings 8.226916 (ourrecordings.com)**

- Danish accordeonist Bjarke Mogensen writes in his liner notes that this Astor Piazzolla instrumental release is for “the centenary of his birth.” Mogensen bases his accordion performances and instrumental arrangements here in his admiration, studies and understanding of Piazzolla’s compositions and bandoneon playing. Combined with Mogensen’s personal sound, this is over one hour of perfect Piazzolla.

- The attention-grabbing opening track is Mogensen’s accordion solo arrangement of *Adiós Nonino*, Piazzolla’s work composed in memory of his father. An accented fast beginning leads to the famous slow, sad, emotional melody with rubato, then back to faster lush full glissandos and colours, showing off Mogensen’s skillful musicality, fast technique and respectful interpretations. The closing track solo arrangement *Despertar* (cadenza) is calming.

- The other tracks feature ensembles. Mogensen arranges six works for himself and the Danish Chamber Players. Highlight is *Fuga Y Misterio*, from Piazzolla’s opera *María de Buenos Aires*. Contrapuntal writing with fast attention-grabbing accordion single lines, fugal instrumental lines, then full instrumentals with accented accordion and orchestra detached notes produce spirited dance sounds.

- Mathias Heise on harmonica joins Mogensen on their co-arrangement/duet of *Café 1930* from *Histoire du Tango*. The harmonica blends surprisingly well with the accordion, especially in high-pitched lines above accordion bellow vibratos. Co-arranger Johan Bridger’s melodious virtuoso ringing vibraphone playing competes with and complements accordion tango runs in *Vibrphonissimo*. His vibes/percussion tight rendition with accordion moves from moody to tango nuevo in *Tristango*.

- Piazzolla’s music lives on in this clear recording.

Tiina Kiik

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**Denis Plante – Suite Tango**

Stéphane Tétreault; Denis Plante

**ATMA ACD2 2881 (atmaclassique.com/en)**

- Bandoneonist/composer Denis Plante was inspired by J.S. Bach’s *Cello Suites* which feature such dances as *courante, gigue* and *sarabande* to compose Suite
Tango, six multi-movement dance suites for bandoneon and cello. Plante is joined by Stéphane Tétreault here. These two multi-award-winning musicians play the mesmerizing unique sounds with compassion.

Baroque meets modern day Argentinian dance music head on! Suite No.1, “Argentina” is a perfect introduction to Plante’s compositions here. First movement Preludio, with its slow emotional rubato opening, creates the mood, with a gradual accelerating into instrumental conversational tango styles. Lyrical slower bandoneon opens Sibardo, with legato cello contrapuntal countermeasures, plucked cello and lower-pitch bandoneon solo adding different colours. The third movement Tango is so very melodically rooted in this dance-form style, highlighted by cello melodies accompanied by accented bandoneon chords and single notes, then shifting to bandoneon melodies with cello accents.


Plante composes with Bach and tango-flavoured styles combined, alone and developed into compelling new sounds. Both performers play with colourful rich tones, and virtuosic stylistic/instrumental expertise. It’s time to listen and/or to dance to Suite Tango!

Tiina Kilk

JAZZ AND IMPROVISED

Featuring
Caity Gyorgy
La Reserve Recordings (caitygyorgy.com)

With the opening barn burner, I Feel Foolish, singer-songwriter Caity Gyorgy puts us on notice of what’s to come on Featuring. It’s the first of many compelling songs she’s written for her latest release, and what’s to come is 13 tracks of vocal virtuosity and genuine jazz, ranging in style from swing to cool to bebop.

Backed up by a hard-swinging trio (Felix Fox-Pappas, piano; Thomas Hainbich, bass; Jacob Wutzke, drums) with guest appearances by guitarist Jocelyn Gould (who does a gorgeous duet with Gyorgy on the ballad, I Miss Missing You), fellow young phenom singer, Laura Anglade and a long lineup of horn and woodwind players, including Pat LaBarbera and Virginia MacDonald. Gyorgy solos effortlessly and extensively along with the master instrumentalists, but never sacrifices warmth or musicality for adroitness. Storytelling wins out even when vocal gymnastics are dazzling us, as they do on A Moment, featuring the remarkable Allison Au on sax. My Cardiologist is a masterclass on how to be both light-hearted yet seriously musical, with its witty take on what love does to our hearts.

The accolades continue to pile up for Gyorgy since her debut release two short years ago, as she made Best of 2022 lists and won a Juno Award. I’m looking forward to seeing the rest of the world catch on as this homegrown talent expands her reach through tours in the U.S. and beyond. Track her progress at caitygyorgy.com.

Cathy Riches

Concert note: Caity Gyorgy performs on March 31 at the Old Ancaster Fire Hall in Ancaster.

Recollecting Mathieu Soucy
Inner-Bob Records (mathieusoucy.com)

Young jazz guitarist Mathieu Soucy, a recent graduate of McGill and a Montreal native, showcases his prolific compositional and technical skills on this debut album. Soucy adds his own twist to the songs, managing to both create a beautiful hark back to the eras of swing and bop while also bringing them into current times; making for a new classic of sorts. The record features an excellent set of musicians, with Gentiane MG on keys, Mike De Masi on bass, Jacob Wutzke on drums and Caity Gyorgy on vocals. Most pieces are penned by the guitarist himself with a couple of fresh takes on well-known jazz classics mixed into the musical pot pourri.

Lennie’s Changes starts off the album with catchy, toe-tapping energy; fast-paced bass runs and a constant, driving beat keep this captivating little number moving until the last note fades. Where or When is a spiffy take on the Rodgers and Hart classic, featuring the sultry and mellow vocals of Gyorgy with Soucy’s talents as a guitarist splendidly coming to the forefront within the piece. The fascinating thing about this album is how Soucy manages to make these pieces sound as if they could have been written back in the golden era yet also fit incredibly well into the current musical landscape. With this invigorating album, the up-and-coming young guitarist shows that he definitely has more in store for the future.

Kati Kiliaspea

Make That Flight
François Houle & Marco von Orelli
ezz-thetics 1032 (hathut.com)

A barebones, but not budget flight, this 11-track itinerary is fuelled by only two instruments and the improvisational imaginations of Canadian clarinetist François Houle and Swiss cornetist Marco von Orelli. The key to microscopic interactive playing like this is to make the partnership expansive not reductive, creating as many harmonized or contrapuntal tropes as necessary. Not only are compositions divided between the musicians, but for every delicate reed tone and portamento brass sequence heard, an almost equal number of altissimo squeals and half-value extensions

Let Go
Sam Taylor; Terell Stafford; Jeb Patton; Neal Miner; Willie Jones III
Cellar Music CM013122 (cellarlive.com)

Philippen native, tenor saxophonist Sam Taylor has a pure joy for both playing and writing music which shines through phenomenally on his latest release. Recorded at the legendary Van Gelder Studios in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Taylor has managed to capture that afore-mentioned joy within each of these pieces and send it right to the ears and hearts of listeners; it’s impossible to not smile while listening through. The talented musician has brought together his musical heroes and inspirations in his backing band, featuring Terell Stafford on trumpet, Jeb Patton on piano, Neal Miner on bass and Willie Jones III on drums. The pieces are uplifting and fresh takes on jazz classics with one song penned by Taylor himself.

The record is a ray of musical sunshine that brightens up the dreariest, grey winter days from the first note. A perfect balance of slower, mellow tunes and fast-paced, head-bopping ones make for an ear-pleasing, all-encompassing musical journey to satiate that itch for fresh music that you didn’t quite know you had. Luminescence stands out as a particularly energetic and snazzy piece with fantastic solos peppered throughout, showcasing each musician’s fine talents. Bye Bye Baby, a fitting title to end the record, leaves the listener with a sense of hope and positivity for the future as well as a curiosity to see what this prolific saxophonist comes up with next. A great addition to the jazz aficionado’s collection!

Kati Kiliaspea
balance the horizontal flow. This is most expansively expressed on the concluding Morning Song 1 where the tune’s forward motion is speckled with shaking growls and toneless breaths from von Orelli and scoops and stretches from Houle. Eventually both intersect and resolve the tune with connected but distorted high pitches. Transitions aren’t always that abrupt, as dual sweeps up and down the scale are sometimes concluded with grace not suturing. Other times, as on a track like Tandem, the title is literally defined. Allegro cornet puffs and calliope-like clarinet peeps move through parallel shaking emissions only to finally connect with tandem-animated narratives.

Overall, while each sequence allows for individual technical expressions, all are resolved with lockstep ambulation or rondo-like affiliations, leading to broken octave linear motion. Without the need for electronic technology or more partners, Houle and von Orelli prove that together they can auspiciously fuel a memorable musical flight. —Ken Waxman

In a Summer Dream
Hannah Barstow; Mike Murley; Jim Vivian
Cornerstone Records
cornerstonerecordsinc.com

There can be no question that the creative pairing of pianist, vocalist and composer Hannah Barstow with saxophonist/composer Mike Murley is beyond inspired... and the addition of eminent jazz bassist Jim Vivian is not only the perfect complement to Barstow and Murley, but also to the superb, eclectic selection of rarely performed tunes and the two original compositions here. Barstow and Murley serve as producers, innovatively arranging works from such diverse artists as Johnny Mandel, Nat Adderley, Johnny Mercer and Michel Legrand.

The program kicks off with Mandel’s Don’t Look Back – which features a haunting, delicate melodic line as well as masterful playing from Barstow who has put her own swinging stamp on this Broadway tune. Her pitch-perfect, rhythmic jazz vocal style adds another dimension to the meaningful lyric, while Murley and Vivian emanently support Barstow throughout. Barstow’s intonation, tone, lyrical interpretation and respect for the melody is worthy of a vocal master class – and the sooner the better!

Who Are You comes from iconic trumpeter/composer Kenny Wheeler. The tenor solo opening gently segues into Barstow’s stunning vocal line. Murley sings through his tenor, effortlessly creating an aura of musical intimacy, and Vivian’s skilled and moving bass solo takes us deeper on the trip. From the inspired minds of Legrand and Mercer, comes Once Upon a Summertime, replete with a sumptuous solo from Murley. Of special note is Barstow’s original title track, which calls to mind the great Norma Winstone. By any musical criteria, this is one of the finest jazz recordings of the year.

—Ken Waxman

A Little Louder Now
Lauren Falls; David French; Trevor Giancola; Todd Pentney; Trevor Falls
Independent (laurenfallsmusic.com)

With her second dynamic saliva, gifted and accomplished bassist and composer Lauren Falls has fired off a fine recording comprised almost entirely of original tunes. Joining her is a superb ensemble, including Todd Pentney on piano, Trevor Giancola on guitar, David French on tenor saxophone and Trevor Falls on drums. First up is New View – a languid, sensual trip, grounded by Pentney’s perfectly insistent chordal movement and Giancola’s incredible touch and taste on guitar – which brings to mind the great Jim Hall or Mundell Lowe. French’s warm, substantial sound perfectly parentheses the almost hypnotic tonal modalities of the composition.

The well-conceived title track absolutely grooves with intent and prominently displays the artistry of each musician. Falls is rock solid, and her superb bass work not only permeates the musical landscape, but it deftly leads her group through this evocative tone poem. Drummer Falls not only embodies seamless, perfect dynamics, but additionally manifests the ideal diaphanous support of his sister’s gorgeous solo. Disagree to Disagree is an outstanding effort, rife with emotional content, exploring both longing and resolution. French weaves his tenor in and out of the composition, with clever improvisations that underscore the contrapuntal aspects of the tune.

Another standout is Take Me. This track lilts along with pure joy, and the duet sequences between tenor and guitar are almost breathtakingly beautiful, as is Pentney’s piano solo. The closer, Vincent Youmans’ venerable Tin Pan Alley classic, I Want to Be Happy is presented here with a fresh, contemporary twist, featuring some interesting non-standard chord changes that perfectly illustrate the cognitive dissonance of the search for personal happiness in a seemingly cold, rigid, unforgiving world – just as it was in the Great Depression.

—Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

Another example is that of the 28 years when he was active, pianist Esbjörn Svensson (1964-2008) was all the rage. The music that he created with his trio c.s.t. had an

—Ken Waxman

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

HOME.S.
Esbjörn Svensson
ACT 9053-2 (actmusic.com)

During the 28 years when he was active, pianist Esbjörn Svensson (1964-2008) was all the rage. The music that he created with his trio c.s.t. had an...
elegant and wry minimalist feel, which made it altogether memorable. When Svensson died in a scuba-diving accident his legion of fans was aggrieved. And now, with the music of Home.S, it’s time to raise his indomitable spirit once again.

This music, says his wife who produced this disc, was composed and recorded on his home computer in the spring of 2008. Eva Svensson reminds us that her husband had an all-consuming passion for astronomy and reminded us about his 1998 From Gagarin’s Point of View with e.s.t.. Svensson was also a classicist and, in homage to him, his wife decided to name each of the nine tracks after the Greek alphabet. And she did right by her husband.

All the music on Home.S is played – and hummed, and harmonized – slightly off key. Somehow this adds to the music’s haunting appeal. It makes you feel as if Svensson is omnipresent in the nine fluttering charts from Alpha to Iota not only in body, but not unsurprisingly, as a memorably blithe spirit. Some tracks – Alpha and Gamma – end abruptly, as if Svensson’s train of thought was interrupted. However, the eloquent music does coalesce around Baroque ideas that spring from dense contrapuntal gestures, as if Bach’s Goldberg Variations was on Svensson’s febrile mind.

Amber
Lori Freedman; Scott Thomson
Clean Feed CF608CD
(cleanfeed-records.com)

In a mundane word, amber is just a fossilised tree resin with a prescient glow. However, in the hands, tongues and lips of clarinetist Lori Freedman and trombonist Scott Thomson Amber is a many-splendoured metaphor redolent of golden colours and tones that define more than merely their duelling instruments. With the repertoire on this album, the music of Amber evokes a kind of Romance language with which to connect with the very heart of the music continuum.

From start to finish both clarinetist and trombonist create a high-spirited and lyrical palimpsest featuring some truly beautiful writing and daring improvisation. With each variation the two musicians penetrate aspects of amber with strength, precision and charging, idiosyncratic virtuosity. You’ll be made to forget that works like Sesquiterpenoids, Glessite, Succinite and Labdanoid have anything at all to do with nature, aglow with resins and hydrocarbons that have formed over centuries since the before the Neolithic Age. Instead you will be dazzled by each piece; an idiomatic meditation suggestive of a proverbial melody imbeded in amber.

Listening to Freedman’s and Thomson’s performances you would not stop marvelling at how two artists use their musicianship – albeit uncommonly ingenious – to reflect the vitality and many-layered originality of this music. And how bellowing B-flat and bass clarinets and growing trombone can turn the artists’ metaphor into music with a sensuousness and voluptuous beauty all its own. Bravo to both for this visionary music.

Raul da Gama

Alive at the Village Vanguard
Fred Hersch; esperanza spalding
Palmetto PM2208CD (orcd.co/aliveatthevillagevanguard)

If you knew that you were going to a concert that paired Fred Hersch with esperanza spalding, you’d be fairly sure that sparks were about to fly on stage. Throughout his career Hersch has been one of the most imaginative musicians whose pianism bristles with almost insolent virtuosity. Spalding, better known as a virtuoso contrabassist, has also begun to dazzle listeners with her puckish voice which she has wielded to seduce and dazzle audiences in a manner that combines musicality and ingenuity far beyond her young years.

Together the two musicians become a formidable duo that explores music on Alive at the Village Vanguard with virtuosity, refreshing charm and borderless scope. If you find yourself believing that Sheila Jordan and Steve Kuhn created a seemingly unreachable standard when it comes to the piano–voice duet you will surely be in for a wonderful surprise. Hersch and spalding have not simply reached, but cleared the proverbial bar with space to spare.

Spalding may not tell jazz stories about Charlie Parker with the kind of veracity of Jordan, but she (spalding) makes up for everything with her airborne delivery. She effortlessly propels song lyrics into airy parabolic trajectories infusing them with luminous tone textures along the way. A case in point is the epic version of Parker’s Little Suede Shoes. Meanwhile with Girl Talk, she seems to have the audience eating out of her hands as she weaves a marvellous yarn. Hersch is agile and brilliant throughout.

The Ostara Project
Amanda Tosoff; Jodi Proznick; Allison Au; Rachel Therrien; Joanna Majoko; Sanah Kadors; Jocelyn Gould
Cellar Music CM021422 (cellarlive.com)

I listened to this album in its entirety several times before reading Lisa Buck’s eloquent liner notes, and I think I may make a habit of this order of events moving forward.

Groups that are formed as “collectives” or “projects” can often struggle to program a cohesive set of music or an album’s worth of material, but not The Ostara Project. From the track titles to the songs themselves, and even the album’s design and artwork, there is an uplifting theme to the seven original tracks and one arrangement we are presented
with. This is not an uncommon feeling among debut recordings, but it manages to feel more poignant when expressed during the turbulent times we are in globally.

Delta Sky starts the album off with a catchy groove and excellent interactions between soloists and the rhythm section. Bassist Jodi Proznick and drummer Sanah Kadoura are the core of this rhythm section, with pianist Amanda Tosoff and guitarist Jocelyn Gould alternating harmonic duties throughout the recording. Delta Sky is saxophonist Allison Au’s only composition credit on the album, but she contributes beautifully phrased melodies and sophisticated motivic solos to the remaining tracks too.

Another compositional highlight is the contrasting and conversational Lluviona by trumpeter Rachel Therrien. There are some moments of collective improvisation here, contrasting the groovy preceding numbers and subsequent ballad Tides are Turning. Joanna Majoko does a superb job bringing life to the lyrics heard on The Ostara Project and she penned a rhythmically intriguing arrangement of the standard Bye Bye Blackbird.

There is plenty more to say about the musicianship brimming from this album, but I encourage you to listen for yourself.

Sam Dickinson

Lush Life
Heather Ferguson; Miguelito Valdes; Barrie Sorensen; Tony Genge; Jan Stirling; Joey Smith
Independent (heatherferguson.ca)

I had the pleasure of meeting Heather Ferguson at Toronto’s El Mocambo in May 2022; we were both at Ori Dagan’s Click Right Here album launch. I remember thinking how rich and warm her speaking voice was, and wasn’t surprised when she told me that she, like Dagan, was a jazz vocalist.

Lush Life is the Victoria-based artist’s smashing debut album. And while it may be her first full-length CD, Ferguson has been honing her singing chops for years. This is not a beginner’s voice. This is the voice of an experienced student and lover of jazz who has been paying close attention over a lifetime to the best interpreters of the 20th century’s classics and standards. You can hear it in her beautiful phrasing and in her engaging, confident, generous, insightful and passionate performance. She is a consummate storyteller who keeps things interesting and inviting.

Ferguson treats us to ten tracks, with help from some of Victoria’s finest, including Miguelito Valdes on trumpet, Barrie Sorensen on saxophones, drummer Damian Graham, keyboardist Tony Genge and guitarist Joey Smith, whose stellar arrangements add another layer of excellence to the project.

From the expressive and lovely title track, the truly soulful Body & Soul and the sultry (and cheeky at the end) At Last, to a deeply evocative Cry Me A River and darn right gorgeous Round Midnight, Ferguson’s Lush Life is a celebration of a musically infused life well lived!

Sharna Searle

Funk Poems for “Bird”
Timuçin Şahin’s Flow State
Panoramic Recordings pan27
(newfocusrecordings.com/catalogue/timucin-sahins-flow-state-funk-poems-for-bird)

Composer and pianist Cory Smythe has worked with several of contemporary music’s most creative figures, among them Anthony Braxton, Tyshawn Sorey and Nate Wooley, but it would be difficult to name a more inventive conceptu-alist, engaging historical musical and social forms to generate challenging contemporary dialogues, reinventing the jazz practice of creative variations on standard repertoire. His Circulate Susanna investigated Stephen Foster’s famous genocidal ditty (see the original lyric of 1848); Accelerate Every Voice, was a choral piece about rising water levels. Now Smoke Gets In Your Eyes approaches Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach’s ancient pop tune to address a world on fire. Smythe’s probing, highly creative liner booklet is illustrated with images of the song’s celebrated performers, including Louis Armstrong, Judy Garland, Fred Astaire and Bryan Ferry.

The work comes in two distinct parts. The first four pieces, originally developed with the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra, are performed by a stellar 11-member ensemble (saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock and cellist Tomeka Reid are prominent), playing four pieces. Liquiform 1 comes as close as might be possible to creating liquid sound, while Combustion I has trumpeteter Peter Evans invoking fire with blistering, incendiary flurries. Combustion 2 has singer Sofia Jernberg reducing the original song to snips.

The second and longer part consists of Smythe’s seven solo explorations of the song, alternating pitch and timbre. The original song is often wholly fragmented, appearing in glimpses through Smythe’s abstract, shifting improvisations as if etched in smoked glass.

Stuart Broomer

The Off-Off Broadway Guide to Synergism
Tyshawn Sorey Trio +1 with Greg Osby
Pi Recordings P196 (pirecordings.com)

On his preceding recording, Mesmerism, drummer/composer Tyshawn Sorey turned from his more esoteric composing practice to stress jazz performance traditions, a conventional instrumental group exploring a standard, but

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but expandable, repertoire. Here that notion has grown from a single studio session and a piano trio to nearly four hours with brilliant saxophonist Greg Osby joining Sorey, pianist Andrew Diehl (the star of Mesmerism) and bassist Russell Hall, recorded over three nights at New York’s Jazz Gallery.

It’s a mode that’s rarely heard on record (where composer royalties are an issue), though it’s the lifeblood of the jazz club, a concentrated dialogue around a common repertoire, though here broader than usual. Its thematic bases include American Songbook titles (Cole Porter’s ‘Night and Day’, Van Heusen and Burke’s ‘It Could Happen to You’) to earlier jazz forms (Fats Waller’s ‘Jitterbug Waltz’, Billy Strayhorn’s ‘Chelsea Bridge’) to bop and free jazz (Thelonious Monk’s ‘Ask Me Now’ to Andrew Hill’s ‘Ashes and Ornette Coleman’s ‘Mob Job’), several heard in different forms from different nights.

The performances brim with life. Osby is central here, whether broadly lyrical or pressing toward expressionist intensity, generating continuous lines that accommodate themselves to the varied material but have a life of their own. This celebrated core jazz experience, a small group exploring the melodic and harmonic possibilities, the expressive resonances and collective meanings of a song at length (20 minutes in the case of ‘Three Little Words’). It’s a contemporary embodiment of a great tradition.

Stuart Broomer

Unstuck in Time: The Kurt Vonnegut Suite
Jason Yeager Septet w/Miguel Zenón

The performances brim with life. Osby is central here, whether broadly lyrical or pressing toward expressionist intensity, generating continuous lines that accommodate themselves to the varied material but have a life of their own. This celebrated core jazz experience, a small group exploring the melodic and harmonic possibilities, the expressive resonances and collective meanings of a song at length (20 minutes in the case of ‘Three Little Words’). It’s a contemporary embodiment of a great tradition.

Stuart Broomer

Hyaku, One Hundred Dreams
Satoko Fujii
Libra Records 209-071 (librarecords.com)

Hyaku, One Hundred Dreams is pianist/composer Satoko Fujii’s 100th CD as leader and a fitting celebration of her remarkable career, launched in 1996 with duets with Paul Bley. Among images of her first 99 works, South Wind, the fourth, leaps out, its title track figuring significantly for me during 20 years of teaching jazz history. Based on an Okinawan mode, it combines dramatic energy and pacific beauty, embodying what jazz has increasingly become, an inclusivist art alive to local dialects and the possibility of global values.

The contrasts, too, are dramatic, reflecting how much has changed. South Wind’s big band was conventional, with sections of trumpets, trombones, reeds and rhythm instruments, with Fujii the sole woman among 15 musicians; Hyaku is a nonet with individual emphases on both instruments and musicians, its ensemble almost evenly split between women and men. Further, Hyaku’s five-part suite blurs composed and improvised components.

From its beginning, Hyaku introduces essential qualities in Fujii’s music, the subtly organic shape of her initial piano figures, the landscape-like incidental percussion, the dream-like flow state and an undercurrent of welling energy. Each movement will extend a continuum with what has gone before, theme statements, improvised solos and ensemble passages achieving rare homogeneity. Each member of a brilliant ensemble will appear in the foreground, from trumpeters Wadada Leo Smith and Natsuki Tamura through bassoonist Sara Schoenbeck, tenor saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock, electronic musician Ikue Mori and bassist Brandon Lopez to drummers Tom Rainey and Chris Corsano.

Stuart Broomer

Heyday
RJ LeBlanc
MCM; Bent River Records; Dieuze Onze Records (rjleblanc.bandcamp.com)

The Sun is a composition that takes calculated risks while never coming across as arrogant. Each metre and tempo change is seamless, without clear delineations necessary in terms of solo sections versus premeditated grooves. In the track’s third and fourth minutes, the synth ostinato slows to a halt, but the momentum of the music isn’t compromised, as it either punctuates a backdrop of thunderous percussion or brings the song to a close.

Montreal bassist RJ LeBlanc as a session leader is dazzlingly adept at precisely that: taking one simple musical element and finding a thousand different uses for it. In a less overt way, the way LeBlanc incorporates harmonics on his bass in the mesmerizing emotional core track ‘Chanson pour Marguerite’ is quite fascinating. Extended passages employing harmonics are used in the beginning as a means of introducing the primary melodic figure, used as an interlude connecting sections, and then underneath the guitar (Nicolas Ferron) to create a climactically uplifting ambient soundscape. Meanwhile, this album perhaps shines brightest when LeBlanc brings along the entire ensemble, with Saturnales in particular being a dizzyingly dense achievement of married sound. The track, like the album itself, is an exploration of ingenuity and how invigorating it can be to have friends to realize your ideas.

Yoshi Nuclear Wall

Songwriter
Alex Bird; Ewen Farncombe
Independent (alexbird007.bandcamp.com)

Alex Bird doesn’t need an accompanist. With a single phrase, the directness of his voice conveys so much emotional information, that even the most silent seconds have an unshakeable sense of fulfillment to them. Pianist Ewen Farncombe, knowing this, gives Bird plenty of voids to work with. There’s an endearing ebull and flow to their tandem, like the cordial exchange of shared dance, a conversation, a flurry of interjections or two shopping carts gracefully rolling across
a lot. There are moments where each musician almost sounds like they’re crafting an independent piece.

Such is the case in the closing minute of Symphony of Love, with Bird’s loose reframing of the melody evasively circling around Farncombe’s increasingly zestful comping. There are magical moments where each musician sounds like they’re completing the other’s ideas before they’re conceived. Such is the case in the closing minute of the aptly titled I’ll Go Where You Lead, with Farncombe’s thoroughly intentional calls concerning how the beginnings of each phrase coincide with Bird’s. Fact is, there are magical moments everywhere to be had on this album, because Bird is in control of his songwriting craft and Farncombe is as adaptable and willing an accompanist as they come. Bird’s vocals may not need an accompanist to make profoundly interesting and layered music, but Farncombe expands what is possible in that regard. The sum here far exceeds its parts.

Yoshi Maclear Wall

POT POURRI

Hooked
Dizzy & Fay
Independent (dizzyandfay.com)

Dizzy & Fay are at it again. With Hooked, their second release in just two years (thanks lock-downs!), the duo (keyboardist, songwriter, arranger and producer Mark Lalama and Juno-nominated singer and songwriter Amanda Walther) continues to build its persona, reminiscent of smoky jazz clubs, late nights and one too many martinis.

Hooked ventures beyond the duo and their considerable playing and singing skills though, with arrangements rich with woodwinds (Johnny Johnson) horns (William Carn and Jason Logue) drums (Davide DiRenzo) and bass (Rich Moore). The City of Prague Philharmonic even makes a couple of appearances and Drew Jurecka’s orchestrations on those tracks really shine.

As great as all of those accoutrements are, what draws us in most is the songwriting. Inspired by the Great American Songbook, Lalama and Walther have given us a set of songs that are both lyrically and musically strong and stylized, yet heartfelt. Themes of love and longing dominate but no modern album is complete, it seems, without at least one song about the pandemic and I’m Alright elegantly shrugs it all off while Good News cleverly evokes the strange mix of ennui, despair and coziness many of us felt. Hooked is playful and cool but will break your heart if you let it.

(The duo’s virtual world, the Dizzy & Fay Speakeasy, complete with tour dates and merch, can be explored at dizzyandfay.com.)

Cathy Riches

Concert note: Dizzy & Fay perform in Toronto at Reid’s Distillery on February 8 and again on March 8, and then can be heard in Kingston March 9 (Next Church), Ottawa March 10 (Options Jazz Lounge) and London March 12 (Aeolian Hall).

Song
Sheku Kanneh-Mason
Decca B0036196-02 (deccaclassics.com/en/artists/sheku-kanneh-mason)

Since winning BBC Young Musician in 2017 cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason has been much in demand from every musical quarter, traversing a road to glory, the envy of many musicians, some twice – even three times – his age. It is now safe to say that the music world is Kanneh-Mason’s oyster, albeit with room to spare for all his über-gifted siblings.

But the cellist has – to all intents and purposes – pride of place in music’s rarefied realm. His Shostakovich First Cello Concerto unearthed real depth. From evidence of his various Decca recordings he seems to have soaked up every experience in the glitz and gush of what you might call his formative years. At the time of reviewing Song, with its repertoire culled from the classical and the popular, and from secular and sacred pieces, Kanneh-Mason is set to perform his interpretation of Elgar’s monumental Cello Concerto in E Minor Op.85 - a work long held out of bounds because of Jacqueline du Pré’s iconic 1962 recording – with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. (Unfortunately, that will have taken place by time of publication.)

However, Song amplifies the truth that Kanneh-Mason may have inherited Du Pré’s crown. The freshly radiant interpretation of Beethoven’s Variations on Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen, Mendelssohn’s Songs without Words (both also feature his brilliant pianist-sister, Isata), Stravinsky’s Chanson russe and Bach’s sacred music are spectacular. But Same Boat, a song composed by Kanneh-Mason (with vocalist Zak Abel) is the album’s apogee. In this simple song lies notice of Kanneh-Mason’s glowing compositional genius.

Raul da Gama

My America 2: Destinations
Jim Self; Various Artists
Basset Hound Music (bassethoundmusic.com)

► Unless you’ve been living in a cave with no access to media for the past 40 years, you have heard the tuba playing of Jim Self. A legendary fixture in Hollywood recording studios, he has performed on countless sessions for film and television and is probably best known for his performance as the “Voice of the Mothership” from Spielberg’s Close Encounters of the Third Kind. And all the while, Self has maintained an impressive “live” career in many groups, including the Los Angeles Opera, the Hollywood Bowl Symphony, as a jazz musician and a celebrated tuba soloist.

His latest solo release, My America 2: Destinations (a sequel to My America released 20 years ago) is a jazzy romp through places in the USA that have been important to him throughout his long career. (As the cover states: “We hold these tunes to be SELF-evident.” Cute.) It goes without saying that Self’s solo tuba playing is amazing and his backup band made up of top LA studio musicians is as tight as one would expect, but what makes this album memorable are the arrangements by his longtime friend, Kim Scharnberg. His eclectic, inventive writing, his creative scoring (and, of course, Self’s stellar tuba playing) will have me returning to this disc time and time again.

Scott Irvine

I’d Love to Turn…
John Oswald
fony (pfonly.bandcamp.com/album/id-love-to-turn)

► Prolific Canadian composer / performer John Oswald is back with an illustrious, boundary-crashing release, dedicated to Phil Strong. Four main tracks are online streaming, with additional five bonus tracks, videos and main track PDF scores for downloading.

The main four tracks are Oswald’s self-described plunderphonic Rascali Klepitoire/hybrids combining elements from live-performance recordings with studio-based additions and plunderphonic transformations, primarily focused on music he discovered in the mid-1960s. Fee Fie Foe Fum is complex, surprisingly easy listening based on the 1966 pop hit, and Oswald’s research between Frank Zappa’s first album release
and Edgard Varèse’s death. Familiar tidbits are superimposed into fragmented short upbeat modern sounds.

The BBC orchestral commission I’d Love to Turn... quotes The Beatles, Ligeti and Terry Riley. This studio recreation combines orchestral sounds with electronics, creating new music embedded in popular music.

Oswald quotes from around 40 piano scores in brief fragments, up to four simultaneously, in the Marc-André Hamelin solo piano commission Tip (2022). A calm, classical-flavoured opening leads to chords, flourishes, runs and rhythms. Love the evocative high-pitched ringing sections.

Varèse, Zappa and 1960s music are featured in reFuse. Oswald’s ear-catching talent to keep a work moving with fragmented interchanging, superimposed live instruments and electronic quotes and effects drive this “name that tune” work. Bonus tracks highlights are live Hamelin rehearsal Tip, and Turning Point Ensemble reFuse performances. Oswald renews Ligeti, Zappa and Varèse each separately on three additional tracks.

The more one listens to Oswald’s memorable music here, the more one hears and loves.

Tiina Kilk

Something in the Air
Adding a Real Gallic Flavor when Creating French Jazz

KEN WAXMAN

Perhaps it’s related to the storied freedom of 1920s Paris where a Black entertainer like Josephine Baker could become a superstar, or the French pre- and -post Second World War intellectuals who wrote learnedly about jazz when it was still scorned in North America, but improvised music in France took longer to assert its own national identity than in other countries. With successive waves of foreign musicians making their homes there, local musicians became the most proficient Europeans playing styles ranging from Dixieland to Hard Bop. That has changed for the better since the 1970s. Since free jazz/improvised music accepted musical influences from all over, unique Gallic sounds began coming to the forefront. Folkloric influences from the countryside, advanced notated and electric/ acoustic experiments and melodies from France’s former colonies became accepted. As these discs demonstrate, while it’s impossible to exactly define jazz from France, in its best iteration it’s certainly not an imitation of North American models.

Along with others such as Jacques Thollot and François Tusques, keyboardist Jef Gilson (1926–2012) was one of the first Gallic musicians to incorporate free improvisations into straight-ahead jazz. However, by 1974 when Workshop (Souffle Continu FFL 1075 CD soufflecontinuerecords.com) was recorded, his music was individual since it was also influenced by the ethnic sounds Gilson had heard and played during an extended Madagascar sojourn. The two lengthy tracks here reflect that. On one hand co-leader alto saxophonist Philippe Mäté (1939–2002), projects the multiphonic sweeps of spiritual free jazz while percussionists, bassists and keyboardists create a highly rhythmic underpinning that propels and accents the narratives. Bruno Di Gioia’s baying English horn adds another element to the extended Vision, while his and Maurice Bouhana’s dual flute interludes contribute Third World hues to both tracks, amplified by drum pounding, cow bell whacks, cymbal shaking and keyboard glissandi. The varied keyboards played by Gilson and Pierre Moret also serve as linkage between percussion rhythm and Mäté’s unfettered free jazz. Moving among spiky bites, energetic overflowing and smeared multiphonics, the saxophonist’s output frequently ascends to prestissimo and staccato timbres.

Juddering rumbles from one electric keyboard keeps the saxophonist from straying too far from the exposition in those cases, and Gilson’s jazz-inflected electric piano accents complement lyrical asides in the saxophonist’s more relaxed moments.

Jump forward almost five decades and this electro/acoustic mixture is also expressed by 40-year-old pianist Eve Risser. Except in this case the polyrhythmic weaving expressed by her eight-part suite on Eurythmia (Clean Feed CF 609 CD cleanfeed-records.com) is interpreted by the 12-piece Red Desert Orchestra instead of Gilson’s septet. Its classic sound is achieved by adding specific modulations played by African and Levantine qarqabs, balafons, djembes and bars to the orchestra’s Western electric and acoustic instruments. Although some of the tracks are more so-called European and some more so-called ethnic, creative melding is the most prominent take away. In fact, it’s the concluding Sojaja which puts this in the boldest relief. Picking up the relentless percussion beats of the previous track, with dancing cross rhythms and balafon strokes most prominent, harmonized riffs from the five-piece horn section are heard as speckled electronic oscillations also come to the fore. As the percussion pops and shakes continue, Antonin-Tri Hoang’s alto saxophone takes apart and reconnects the theme with fluttering squeals. Finally, these and other textures fade into Tatiana Paris’ lyrical guitar coda. Later her voice along with Risser’s harmonize with the reeds on Desert Rouge providing balance to the bent notes and multiple cross rhythms from the percussionists, while trumpeter Nils Ostendorf and trombonist Mathias Müller blow mariachi-like triplets that settle on top of the undulating groove. Ever present, the surging percussion raps are prominent throughout the disc. Yet between pianist Risser’s carefully positioned repeated patterns and chording control, the performances are prevented from becoming techno-trance music. Furthermore, in spite of standout solos, especially from Müller on Gämse, which blasts up the scale and down again with an emphasized collection of half-valve slurs, slides, shaker and plunger grumbles, Eurythmia never becomes a singular jazz-improv session, but inhabits its own idiosyncratic niche.
More attuned to expected improvisation is the quintet of pianist Cécile Cappozzo on Hymne d’automne (Aïyer aïyCD 179 ajler. com), six tracks which blend into one another to make a suite. With the rare ability to compose tunes that are both dulcet and daring – often on the same track – Cappozzo’s themes are interpreted by tenor saxophonist Guillaume Bellanger, bassist Patrice Grente, drummer Etienne Ziemniak and her father, trumpeter Jean-Luc Cappozzo. Not that there’s any nepotism or favouritism here. The elder Cappozzo, who in the past has collaborated with other pioneering French improvisers like Daunik Lazro, is versatile enough to efficiently put his daughter’s ideas into action. Often, as on the title track, the two Cappozzos outline a skeleton theme consisting of single-note keyboard clips and portamento brass grace notes only to have the rest of the hand interject flamboyant dissonance in the form of reed slides into flattemat and blunt pops and smacks from the bassist and drummer.

As the exposition turns energetic, Jean-Luc Cappozzo joins the fray with emphasized triplets and fluctuations in counterpoint to Bellanger’s strained mid-range split tones until guitar-like strums from Grente return the performance to a reflective narrative. This strategy continues throughout, culminating with the concluding Hymne d’automne (reprise). In that case, rapid drum paradiddles and breaks introduce the meeting of the trumpeter’s triplet peeps with the saxophonist’s slap tonguing and reed bites. Finally, a calming piano portion doubled by the resonant trumpet’s triplet peeks with the saxophonist’s slap tonguing and reed bites. Eventually she propels the narrative to a stop-time swing feel, toughened by drum breaks. In the horn responses, including downward flowing reed multiphonics and half-valve growls, her lyrical glissandi mean the tune retains a relaxed Sunday-in-the-park feeling despite the dissonance sprayed around its resolution.

Just as French chefs added new ingredients to create nouvelle cuisine and other forward-looking fare, so a group like Die Hochstapler does so with its music on Within (Umlaut TSCD umlautrecords.com). The reason for the German name, translated as The Impostors, is that Italian bassist Antonio Borghini and German drummer/vibist Hannes Lingens live in Berlin where these two instant compositions were recorded. Meanwhile, the front line of alto saxophonist Pierre Borel and Louis Laurain, who contributes trumpet, bird calls and vocal sounds, are as French as Camembert.

Although the lineup is consistent with contemporary jazz groups, the POMO mélange the quartet creates bounces along echoing Free Jazz, classic jazz, jazz-rock, bebop and touches of swing at various tempos without losing the linear thread. Often moving in and out of focus, each member is spotlighted. For instance, Borghini, responsible for bouncy, andante tracking throughout, has a string thumb pop and walking bass line feature on Part 2 backed by aviary cackles from the horns. On the same piece Lingens uses backbeats, ruffs and rim shots to harmonize with the others, who begin the piece with rhythmic hand clapping and later intensify the bop quotes from soloists. Leaving his aviary excursions to a minimum, Laurain usually expresses himself with half-valve intensity or ornate triplets, with quotes as likely to reference Dixieland warhorse When The Saints... as Ornette Coleman’s Focus on Sanity.

Eschewing the controversial eroticism of Bernardo Bertolucci’s 1972 film, the two still project a bouncey dance beat, not only on the title track, but on other numbers where syncopation lightens the performance. Ducret’s this-side-of-metal harsh flanges and jagged runs are emphasized on tunes such as Chant/Son and Buck Train with various motifs in the exposition. Meantime, Monniot, who at one point was a member of the Orchestre National de Jazz, knows exactly how to accentuate the compositions, either with broken chord vibrations from the alto or scooping continuum from the baritone sax. He does both in sequence on many tracks, preserving the storytelling in counterpoint to the guitarist’s up and down clangs and flanges. Most of the time however, as demonstrated on the introductory Yes Iger and the brief concluding La Lettre du Caire, his inter-sectional reed vamps and flattemat travel in lockstep with guitar fuzztones and hardened strums. In these cases and elsewhere the result is a moderated ending. Quiet connection is often ascendant as well. The best illustration of this is on A Sign of Mood, where Ducret’s folksy frailing on 12-string guitar is decelerated in tempo by reed scoops, leading to a melding of sonic strands.

With the varieties of jazz and improvised music now as numerous as there are types of wine, it’s impossible to delineate one particular French style. One thing is certain however: a dependence on North American idioms is part of the past.
At the beginning of 2022, Supraphon released a 15CD box set of Karel Ančerl Live Recordings with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra (supraphon.com). Unearthed from the Czech radio archives, this collection includes some previously unpublished recordings making this set a must-have for collectors of one the 20th century’s greatest conductors. All will recognize the orchestra’s signature sound and be thrilled with this collection of music from well-known names and many little-known Czech composers.

Ančerl was born into a prosperous family in Czechoslovakia in 1908. Very well educated, after graduating from the Prague Conservatory he pursued conducting under the tutelage of Hermann Scherchen and Václav Talich. His career was halted for World War II. He and his family were sent to a concentration camp in 1942, and ultimately to Auschwitz. Tragically his wife and young son did not survive.

After the war he became artistic director of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra as one of the world’s premier ensembles and won them international fame with frequent extensive concert tours abroad and thanks to Petr Kadlec. Although the sound quality varies, this is to be expected of detailed mono concert and radio recordings.

I cannot remember my first encounter with the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams but through the years his music has never failed to speak to me. SOMM Recordings has issued Volume 1 of a proposed series of Vaughan Williams Live, commemorating the 150th anniversary of his birth (somm-recordings.com/label/Ariadne) with performances conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent. This first volume contains Symphony No.6 in E Minor, played by the BBC Symphony Orchestra (1964) and a brilliant Symphony No.9 in E Minor played by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra recorded

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in Royal Festival Hall in 1958. As expected of Sargent, this is a scintillating and definitive performance. This is the premiere of the Ninth Symphony written not long before Williams' death in 1958. The cover photograph is of Sargent and the composer discussing the performance during rehearsal. It gives me chills knowing that Vaughan Williams was so intimately involved in this recording.

The opening work on this disc is a wonderful performance of a very exciting The Wasps Overture, recorded live in Royal Albert Hall by the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1957. Once again kudos to Lani Spahr the American musician and award-winning audio engineer whose astonishing true-to-life restorations really capture the sounds of the dynamic original audio.

Many years ago, when Decca completed The Golden Ring, Wagner's mammoth Ring of the Nibelungen with the Wiener Philharmoniker under the direction of Sir Georg Solti, there was some concern about just how many copies they would sell. The story goes that the Americans' first order saved the day. Decca need not have worried as The Golden Ring was ultimately “the big hit” and has been selling well for them ever since. The original analogue master tapes were remastered in 2022 with engineers using all the technological advancements to extract more information from the original tapes and using the latest noise reduction software they have been able to achieve the truest possible sound. For this we are eternally grateful. If this single disc is any indication of the anticipated complete Ring Cycle we are in for some incredible listening. Decca has produced a beautifully packaged single disc of Great Scenes from Der Ring des Nibelungen (deccaclassics.com/en/catalogue/products/the-golden-ring-solti-12799) with choice pieces from each of Das Rheingold, Die Walküre, Siegfried and Götterdämmerung. The complete Wagner Ring Cycle is being released as individual operas on SACD and vinyl as well as in complete sets on both platforms.

The cast really is golden, with too many names to list. I would single out Birgit Nilsson as Brünnhilde, James King as Siegmund, Christa Ludwig as Fricka and Wolfgang Windgassen as Siegfried. Don’t come after me if I have failed to mention your favourite. The entire cast of all four operas is really first class.

Listening to these well-chosen excerpts has whetted my appetite for the complete set! [Editor’s note: At time of publication both Das Rheingold and Die Walküre are available from deccaclassics.com with Siegfried and Götterdämmerung to be released in the coming months.]

A new set of live performances recorded between 1953 and 1972 of Christian Ferras has been issued on four CDs by SWR Recordings (SWR 10114 preستومusic.com/classical/products/9329040—the-swr-recordings-christian-ferras-plays-violin-concertos-and-chamber-music). Ferras was renowned as the finest violinist of his day. He was an artist who seemed deeply in touch with the composer and profoundly felt the music beyond just the score.

I remember seeing a video of a live performance and as he played the tears rolled down his face.

These discs are all recordings of Ferras with the SWR Orchestra of Baden-Baden and Freiburg. Whether with orchestra or in chamber music his playing reflects his wonderful musical sensibilities. Ferras plays with beauty and harmony. I admit to being very moved listening to Beethoven’s Violin Concerto in D Major, Op.61, however, all pieces are played with incomparable musicality and thoughtfulness. The set includes Beethoven, Debussy, Ravel, Enescu, Schumann, Tchaikovsky, Brahms and Berg. The chamber music for violin and piano is with Pierre Barbizet. Again, the remastering has been done from the original tapes and sounds as if it were recorded yesterday.
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