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New Wave 1
Wed April 12

Alex Pauk, C.M. Music Director & Conductor
Mark Fewer, violin

PROGRAMME

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ROYDON TSE (CA)
Mobilize** for sinfonietta
SALVATORE SCIARRINO (IT)
Brazil based on music by Ary Barroso
CHRIS PAUL HARMAN (CA)
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CLAUDIA VIVIER (CA)
Pulau Dewata arr. JOHN REA (CA)
AKIRA NISHIMURA (JP)
Kocak for percussion sextet

* World Premiere
** World Premiere commissioned by Esprit with the generous support of the Ontario Arts Council

New Wave 2
Sun April 16

Alex Pauk, C.M. Music Director & Conductor
Ryan Scott, snare drum

PROGRAMME

MISATO MOCHIZUKI (JP)
Chimera for 11 players
JULIUS EASTMAN (USA)
Gay Guerrilla*** arr. JESSIE MONTGOMERY (USA) for string septet
ANDREW STANILAND (CA)
Orion Constellation Theory for snare drum and electronics
JULIA MERBELSTEIN (CA)
between walls* for orchestra and fixed electronics
STEPHANIE ORLANDO (CA)
4-7-8* Sextet for percussion and keyboards

* World Premiere
** World Premiere commissioned by Esprit with generous support from the RBC Foundation, the SOCAN Foundation and Sofia Gomez Gibbons
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Bright! Vibrant! Welcoming! These are the words that inspired me when I started planning Trash Panda’s first formal photo shoot and this is the shot that turned out to be most reflective of the band. I’m really into the brass band scene – I’m a saxophonist in Big Smoke Brass which started six years ago, and music has been my main focus for the last 15 years. I’ve always been drawn to photography, but I only had the chance to pursue it because of my pandemic free time as a musician. As a child, I remember seeing The WholeNote at the RCM while taking lessons and it’s fascinating to me to think that all these years later, a photo that I took is being featured on the cover. It’s fulfilling to have my two worlds collide. (See ON OUR COVER, page 9.)

The Trash Panda Brass Band, clockwise, from top left: Bien Carandang, Ray Sun, Ilincia Stafie, Anaïs Kelsey-Verdecchia, Charlotte Alexander, Kealan Braden

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Neighbourhood doesn’t mean the same thing as community

The WholeNote is on the move. Well, sort of. We are taking our editorial operations back to the neighbourhood where The WholeNote saw its beginnings in the summer of 1995. It had rapidly outgrown its niche as a column titled “Musical Pulse” in the Kensington Market Drum, our local newspaper founded in 1989 in an effort to give the neighbourhood some control of the media narrative when it came to issues we saw as an imminent threat to “the Market’s” survival.

The biggest such threat, back then, was a light rail transit line that Metro and the TTC were going to ram down the middle of Spadina Avenue - a Scarborough LRT-style train, in a protected right-of-way, which would have turned Spadina’s complex street life, from Bloor to Front, into a drive-through corridor. It would have had half the number of transit stops, crippled restrictions on turns, in and out of adjacent neighbourhoods, and eliminated most of the on-street parking along the Avenue’s middle stretch. This would have threatened the viability of the street’s hodge-podge of small scale business, and the rich mix of residents in the low-rise apartments above – residents who provided what urban visionary Jane Jacobs called “eyes on the street.”

Ears too - tuned to the Avenue’s ever-shifting soundscape: cries for help, shouts of laughter or rancor, all the blare of urban life … and, everywhere, music. Ears too – tuned to the Avenue’s ever-shifting soundscape: cries for help, shouts of laughter or rancor, all the blare of urban life … and, everywhere, music.

Wait a minute, cars bad, transit good,” I hear some of you say. Indeed...ish. Because the plan also called for drastic sidewalk cuts so the extra space needed to protect the transit line could be accommodated without reducing the four-to-six lane highway width that Metro Transportation wanted, to serve the commuter needs of the massive redevelopments planned south of Front Street – including the SkyDome and, if things went as planned, the athletes village for the 1996 Olympics – the Games, thank you Coca-Cola, that were awarded to Atlanta.

Issues like these have the power to galvanize all the interest groups within range, instantly turning talk about “the neighbourhood” into talk about “the community” – but its a use of the word usually ends with a whimper, once “the community” has instantly turning talk about “the neighbourhood” into talk about “the community” – but its a use of the word usually ends with a whimper, once “the community” has
ON OUR COVER

The Brass Are Bringing It
MJ BUELL

We were all really chill that day, and I remember thinking to myself that everything was really coming together. That section of Spadina just north of College where the street splits is an iconic spot, hidden in plain sight. We all know it but how many of us know what it is? I learned that day that it’s U of T’s Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, and I think it’s one of the most spectacular landscapes in the city.
— Conrad Gluch, photographer

“Trash Panda” is a made-up name for raccoons – those resiliently liminal creatures who have fun playing with anything they think might be tasty. Some performers have musical appetites like that. Ever since the jazzy, New Orleans-inspired Heavyweights Brass Band burst on the Toronto scene around 2009, there’s been a delightful emergence of scaled-down, really fun small brass bands who can perform unamplified almost anywhere: retooling the art of busking into a kind of amazing musical outdoor ambush, or heading indoors at the drop of a microphone! These bands include the likes of Big Smoke Brass Band, Juicebox Brass Band, the Eighth Street Orchestra and Bangerz Brass to name just a few. Typically these are ensembles of 5-8 versatile musicians, with a magic combination of serious playing chops and huge appetites for fun.

Enter Trash Panda Brass

In their own words: “We’re here and we’re Queer! Only having hit the streets in June 2022, Trash Panda Brass is a new and exciting voice in the Toronto brass band scene. Comprised of six queer U of T graduates, Trash Panda Brass is on a mission to diversify the brass scene, promote inclusivity and bring welcoming energy to all. In an effort to bring music and joy to as wide an audience as possible, Trash Panda has primarily focused on busking at various locations in and around downtown Toronto, but are also frequently seen playing at various festivals and private events …”

Their members include gay, bi, lesbian and transgender performers, who work brilliantly as a unit the way close friends do. Formed during the pandemic, and now working on a debut recording, they make a splash whenever and wherever they play outdoors - often on Queen West or across the street from the ROM. Several of their members also work, or have worked, together at Drom Taberna in Toronto where the Queen West and Kensington neighbourhoods intersect. Like several of these bands currently on the scene their repertoire includes (but is not exclusive to) reinventing songs of their generation like Katy Perry’s “I Kissed a Girl” and “Firework”, Lady Gaga’s “Bad Romance” and Dolly Parton’s “9 to 5”.

In addition to performing in the College Street Jazz Festival’s Grand Finale Concert on Sunday, April 23 at Revival Event Venue (see Colin Story’s Mainly Clubs on page 32), The Trash Panda Brass Band also has Toronto performances (one at the aforementioned Drom Taberna and one at Supermarket on Augusta Avenue) on April 1 and April 7 (details at trashpandabrass.com).

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MACBETH
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I have been feeling a very strong sense of déjà vu this penultimate week of March, as I go back into rehearsal (as fight director with Opera Atelier) for Handel’s *Resurrection* which was shut down mid-rehearsal almost exactly three years ago when the pandemic began. Of course, this is a rather nice feeling as, fingers crossed, all will be well for the show to be performed live, at Koerner Hall this April, with the female dancers of the Atelier Ballet at last being given the chance to wield swords along with their male counterparts!

**OF THE SEA**

Another show igniting my memory, although in an entirely different way, is Tapestry Opera and Obsidian Theatre’s world premiere of *Of the Sea*, opening on March 25 and playing through April 1 at the Bluma Appel Theatre in Toronto. As readers of my column know, I am a great champion of Tapestry’s constantly courageous pushing of the opera envelope, via their decades-old, hugely productive LibLab development program and *Opera Briefs*, their showcases of new works.

*Of the Sea* began as a LibLab (composer-librettist laboratory) experiment in creating an immersive virtual reality experience anchored in the mythology of the Caribbean and the tragic history of the slave trade. It was then showcased in the 2018 *Tasting Shorts*. Now a large-scale opera with a groundbreaking all-Black cast and full orchestral accompaniment by the COC orchestra, this new work is creating waves of excitement in the performance community.

For me, this excitement is enhanced by the presence in the cast of Chantale Nurse, a talented soprano who just happened to play the leading role of Fiordiligi (in one of the two casts) in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte* which I directed for the Glenn Gould School/Royal Conservatory of Music in 2009. Even though the run will be well under way by the time this magazine comes out, reaching out to Chantale to catch up and ask about her experience being part of this premiere was an opportunity too good to miss.

“I had heard even before I auditioned for it that Ian Cusson was composing the score and was intrigued by the combination of this proudly French-Canadian and Métis composer with (new to me) Black Canadian librettist Kanika Ambrose,” she told me. “I thought ‘wow, this is probably going to be something really interesting’, especially during the pandemic when I had a growing desire to be able to do something or say something through my art.”

She had recently created a recital program of all Black Canadian composers, for example, and when this new opportunity came up, she told me, “I felt I needed to be part of it. Once I got the score and libretto, and then did the workshop (last fall) I was blown away. It was beyond what I could have imagined and very very exciting.”

In an inspired amalgam of history and imagined mythology, *Of the Sea* follows the story of Maduka, his daughter Binyelum, and fellow Africans thrown overboard during the Middle Passage of the infamous Atlantic slave trade route, and who now populate underwater kingdoms that span the ocean floor. While some of the kingdoms make fiery plans for revenge, one man, Maduka, is blindly focused only on finding a way to give his daughter life once more.

With the opera world finally opening doors to new and non-Eurocentric creators, this premiere feels almost political in its storytelling ambitions, but as Chantale made clear to me, what is much more important is the humanity of the story. “At the heart of it, it is people dealing with being in a situation born out of trauma, and what they are willing to do to either live in a different better way, or to get revenge, or to try and save their children. While it is culturally specific, it is also universal and audiences will be drawn to sympathize and empathize with their story.”

With a career that has ranged from classical opera and concert repertoire to burlesque, experimental techno opera, and even rock, Chantale has always enjoyed using her classical training and art form in different ways, and is “beyond overjoyed” to be playing the role of Serwa, the Queen of the Enweghi people who are plotting revenge on the slave ships. The music of *Of the Sea*, she says, is more classical than experimental, but “easy to listen to, and very beautiful. We are also telling a different story that hasn’t been told in this form before,” she continued, “I think people who come to the show will see something of themselves reflected in the story, and it will speak to them in a way that a Mozart opera might not.”
La Traviata
G. VERDI

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MAGGIE

It seems this spring that in whatever direction I turn there is a new opera or musical opening or, to paraphrase the lyric from Seven Brides for Seven Brothers, “new musicals are busting out all over.”

In Hamilton, for example, Theatre Aquarius is presenting the world premiere of Maggie, a new musical inspired by the life of the composer’s grandmother, a Scottish single mother who raised three boys in a small mining town between 1954 and 1976. Award-winning Canadian country music star Johnny Reid has joined forces with well-known librettist Matt Murray to write the book and lyrics and, with Murray and music director Bob Foster, also to create the score. Maggie began its development process at Sheridan College’s Canadian Musical Theatre Project under the aegis of Michael Rubinfeld who is also associate producer of this new production. Like Rubinfeld’s most famous hit from the CMTTP crucible, Come From Away, Maggie aims to celebrate the joy and healing power of community, including, as quoted in the press release, “not just (Johnny Reid’s) Gran but also an entire generation of women who fought through some tough times by keeping faith, hope, love, family friendship and humour close to heart.” Aquarius Artistic Director Mary Francis Moore is both dramaturg and director with Maggie playing in Hamilton from April 9 to May 6, then in Charlottetown from June 21 to September 2. www.theatreaquarius.org.

Acclaimed director, and former artistic director of Obsidian, Philip Akin, directs, and Jennifer Tung (who conducted Of the Sea as a short in 2018) is the music director. See www.tapestryopera.com for more information.

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KELLY VS KELLY
Another long-awaited world premiere that had much of its early development at Sheridan’s CMTP is Kelly vs Kelly which was originally scheduled to premiere back in the late spring of 2020. Nurtured through the CMTP (which sadly no longer exists), this is also the third of acclaimed composer Britta Johnson’s (Life After) musicals to be developed through the Crescendo program of the Musical Stage Company. The book this time, is by Sara Farb – perhaps better known to audiences as the exciting actor who originated the role of Princess Mary in Kate Hennig’s Last Wife trilogy, and is currently playing the devilish character of Delphí in Harry Potter and the Cursed Child at the Mirvish Theatre. Judging by an early showcase of excerpts before the pandemic, Johnson and Farb are a powerful team with a great instinct for exciting theatrical storytelling. Like Maggie, Kelly vs Kelly is inspired by true events, in this case from New York in 1915: When a 19-year-old heiress becomes tangled in an affair with a seductive tango dancer, her distraught mother has her arrested and charged with incorrigibility, sparking a court case that scandalizes the nation.

The tango dancing at the heart of the story is fully embodied in the staging which will be in the hands of director and choreographer Tracey Flye. May 26-June 18 www.musicalstagecompany.com

MACBETH THE MUSICAL
Not only are more and more new musicals and operas being created in Canada but more new creators are popping up all the time including 16-year-old composer Laura Nobili who reached out to The WholeNote as I was preparing to write this column to alert us to the premiere of her musical adaptation of Shakespeare’s famous tragedy. The title says “opera” but listening to an excerpt (which you can listen to here: https://youtu.be/X_vLqPSkrZg) it sounds more like a sung-through musical but still ambitious in reach and scope. I like the sound of what I heard and am impressed by Laura’s chutzpah in reaching out to get coverage for her creation.

Not only the composer but also the director and producer of her show, Laura has gathered a company of young actors, singers and musicians from York Region to join her. There is one performance only on May 17 at the City Playhouse Theatre in Vaughan. https://tickets.cityplayhouse.ca/event/655:117/655:150/.

As is often now the case there isn’t room to cover all the wonderful shows opening over the next two months. Dance highlights for me include the world premiere of Homelands, a multimedia dance creation from Toronto’s own Kahawi dance theatre as part of Harbourfront’s contemporary dance series Torque on April 14 and 15.

Theatre Passe Muraille continues their championship of experimental music theatre. April 8-16, with Never the Last which weaves together text and violin solos composed by Sophie-Carmen Eckhardt-Gramatté to explore the composer’s love affair and marriage with expressionist painter Walter Gramatté. passemuraille.ca.

May 24-27 will see the return of Junior, the international children’s festival taking place at Harbourfront. A wonderful multidisciplinary festival including many immersive events as well as more traditional staged performances, Junior has been reinvented post-pandemic with a new more participatory approach to creating theatrical works for young audiences, and all outdoor events will be free. www.harbourfront.com

On May 26-28, following the huge success of Follies in the fall of 2021, Richard Ouzounian is directing a staged concert of Sondheim’s A Little Night Music at Koerner Hall with a starry cast including Eric McCormack, Cynthia Dale, Dan Chameroy, and Chilina Kennedy

May will also see the opening of Gypsy at the Shaw Festival starring Kate Hennig in the iconic role of Mama Rose. Luckily Gypsy will run into the fall season so there will be many chances to see it.

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

MUSIC THEATRE | QUICKPICKS

June 25th L.R. Wilson Concert Hall, McMaster University
Vivaldi Four Seasons, Canadian Four Seasons
June 29th FirstOntario Concert Hall, Hamilton
Carmina Burana
July 6th L.R. Wilson Concert Hall, McMaster University
PopOpera
July 13th & 14th Ancaster Memorial Arts Centre
Verdi’s La Traviata
July 19th LIUNA Station, Hamilton
All Out 80s with Jeans ‘n Classics
July 20th LIUNA Station, Hamilton
Emilie-Claire Barlow

July 21st LIUNA Station, Hamilton
Practically Hip
July 23rd Sue-Ann Staff Estate Winery, Jordan
An Homage to the Noble Grape
July 27th L.R. Wilson Concert Hall, Hamilton
Berlioz, H, Symphonie Fantastique
Ravel, M, Piano Concerto in G (Elizabeth Pion)
Ravel, M, Bolero, Viva! O, Orion
August 3rd FirstOntario Concert Hall, Hamilton
Jesus Christ Superstar
August 17th Burlington Performing Arts Centre
Iichmouratov, A, The Bewitched Canoe
Tchaikovsky, 9, Violin Concerto (Kerson Leong)
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April 2023 will be a busy month for Esprit Orchestra, Canada’s only full-sized, professional orchestra devoted to performing and promoting new orchestral music. First up will be two programs in this year’s edition of the New Wave Festival, on April 12 and 16, followed by their Season Finale concert on April 23, all designed to celebrate Esprit’s 40 years of music making.

The New Wave Festival began in 2002 as a way to support emerging Canadian composers. From the beginning the goal was to create a more relaxed social environment to facilitate a more casual interaction between the composers, performers and the public. For this year’s festival, Toronto’s newest concert space – the TD Music Hall, which is connected to newly restored Massey Hall – will be the venue. The Music Hall has been designed with cutting-edge audio, video and lighting technology to create a lounge-like environment that mixes both music and the nightlife scene.

One key feature of the New Wave Festival, consistent since the beginning, is Esprit’s three-year Creative Strategy Program which gives participating composers the opportunity to premiere a commissioned work in each of three years, with each successive work gradually increasing the size of the orchestration. These commissions are presented in concert, alongside works by other influential composers. This year, four composers from the program will have their latest premieres programmed: Sophie Dupuis and Roydon Tse on April 12, and Julia Mermelstein and Stephanie Orlando on April 16. Interestingly, on Esprit’s Season Finale concert April 23, a newly commissioned work by Eugene Astapov will be premiered, which brings the narrative full circle: Astapov is himself an alumnus of the Creative Strategy program. I spoke to both Astapov and Mermelstein about their cumulative experiences working with Esprit.

Julia Mermelstein, now in her second year of the program, was very enthusiastic about her experience, and emphasized how important it was to have so much rehearsal time, comparing it to an experience elsewhere that only allowed for ten minutes of rehearsal; with Esprit she enjoyed three rehearsals, each one from 45 minutes to one hour in duration. In her first commission for Esprit, titled in water suspended, which premiered in May 2022, she explored different textures and ways of layering the instruments. “I was able to find a groove for myself, what I really like to express, and am now able to take it further with this new piece,” she said, adding that she likes to work with the musicians on the fine details and describing it as “very intimate work, and not something that can be rushed.”

Her latest piece to be premiered at New Wave, between walls, includes a harp as part of the instrumentation (a new venture for Mermelstein), as well as fixed electronics which will no doubt be well suited to the performance venue. She has used recorded samples of instrumental sounds and field recordings in the piece, as well as her own experiments, such as recording herself playing a stick on a wooden counter. Once again, she’s drawn to closeup and intimate sounds, with the electronics as an extension of the orchestral. “I’m playing with extending the natural resonances of each instrument – artificially extending what a piano, harp or wind instrument, for example, can do. It’s about blending and creating a seamless interaction between the acoustic and electronic sounds.”

The ideas behind the piece were inspired by a lecture given by Buddhist teacher Alan Watts in the 1960s called The Web of Life. What fascinated Mermelstein was the way Watts described the duality between the micro and macro. In this composition she is working with the metaphor of fabric, and how its complex textures made from individual threads weave together to create a whole.

Eugene Astapov has been connected with Esprit since his days in the music program at Earl Haig Secondary School, and has been heavily involved in past New Wave Festivals since then. During his first year as an undergrad at university, he received his first commission from Esprit, and in 2017 his piece Hear My Voice was premiered as part of that year’s New Wave Festival. Recognizing Astapov’s talent for conducting, Esprit’s Alex Pauk invited him to conduct his own piece, and also works by other composers who were part of the festival. Electronics featured in that piece as well. Hear My Voice has an early recording of Alexander Graham Bell, made shortly after the invention of the telephone, embedded into the orchestral texture. Astapov’s second commission for the festival, Emblem, was premiered in 2019.

Then, when COVID interrupted things, Astapov was offered a contract to serve as Esprit’s associate composer/conductor; part of this contract
includes his latest Esprit commission, *Burial Rites*, to be premiered during the concert on April 23. The piece was written in memory of Astapov’s student Marcus Gibbons who died of cancer when he was 17. Astapov spoke movingly of this very talented composer whom he taught from the age of ten, and of his desire to pay tribute to him and his family. “Marcus had a great sense of humour and a very positive attitude, even while going through his cancer treatments.” Many memories and impressions of their time together are reflected in the composition as well as a musical portrayal of Marcus’ courage, strength and philosophical personality. Since there was so much to express, the piece is written in three movements. “The first movement is the heaviest and is meant to have an emotional impact on the audience. The second movement is more urgent in character and the third movement is the celebration of the positivity that Marcus had. It does not end tragically, because I wanted to shine light on his character.”

As part of his evolving associate composer/conductor role with Esprit, Astapov increasingly has input into Esprit’s concert programming. Although Esprit regularly performs orchestral music, during the New Wave Festival, many of the programmed works are for chamber ensembles and soloists, giving the program variety and the opportunity to feature various solo performers. In this year’s festival, there will be an arrangement of Vivaldi’s *Pulau Dewata* by John Rea, an arrangement for string septet of Julius Eastman’s *Gay Guerrilla* by Jessie Montgomery, a performance of Steve Reich’s *Sextet* for percussion and keyboards, a solo work for snare drum by Andrew Staniland performed by Ryan Scott, and a solo work for violin by Chris Paul Harman.

Astapov’s conducting career is every bit as prolific as his composing. Upon moving back to Toronto after completing his studies at Juilliard, he began teaching composition in various high schools and had the opportunity to conduct these student works, all as part of Esprit’s educational outreach program. Currently, his conducting is focused on the work of contemporary composers, which has had the additional benefit of influencing his own approach to composing. “Conducting is not just about beating time, but about being involved in the music making,” Astapov said. “When the physicality of conducting sits comfortably in the body then it’s easier to connect with the players and the music.”

Both of these New Wave Festival concerts and the April 23 Season Finale concert are opportunities to hear a wide range of new compositions, alongside classics of the contemporary repertoire written four or five decades ago. As such, they are also windows into the profound difference Esprit has made in shaping the Canadian contemporary music landscape over the past four decades. Astapov’s *Burial Rites* will be accompanied in the April 23 final concert by the world premiere of Chris Paul Harman’s *sottosopra*, along with a performance of *Spring and Winter* from *The Four Seasons Recomposed* by Max Richter; and of *Symphony No.1* by John Corigliano, with whom Astapov studied at Juilliard.

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**IN WITH THE NEW | QUICKPICKS**

**Apr 14, 7:30pm:** Kaha:wii Dance Theatre’s *Homelands* is an immersive multimedia event featuring an interplay between three main forms: video, live dance, live music. Choreographed by Santae Smith with music by Pura Fé. Shane Powless, Katitsiionni Fox, Jaiden Mitchell, Ian Maracle, Ami Kokui Tamakloe and Santae Smith perform at Harbourfront Centre Theatre in Toronto. Q &A immediately following the Apr 15 performance. Part of Harbourfront Centre’s contemporary dance series, “Torque.”

**Apr 22, 8pm:** Music Gallery. Emergents: Matthew Cardinal + Yolande Laroche. Curated by Sara Constant, Matthew Cardinal, modular synthesizer & electronics; Yolande Laroche, clarinet/keyboard/vocalist; Stephanie Kuse, video artist at the Music Gallery, Toronto.

**May 07, 11am & 2pm:** Xenia Concerts/TO Live. Designed to be autism- and neurodiversity-friendly. Thalea String Quartet performs Seven Miniatures for String Quartet and Electronics by Rory Berk, Anthony Hodgetts, Laura LaPeare, Maddux Ma, Nathan Neutel, Jamie Petit, and Thomas Sinclair (transcribed by Bekah Simms) at Meridian Hall in Toronto. All listeners are welcome.

**May 13, 2pm:** Five at the First presents “ARC Trio: Music for Viola, Cello & Piano”: Omar Daniel’s *Intermezzi* for solo piano; Ann Southam: *Re-Tuning* (1985) for solo viola and tape; Aolphius Hailstork: *Theme & Variations on “Draw the Sacred Circle Closer”* for cello; Drigo: *Meditazione* for viola, cello & piano; Brahms: *Trio Op.114*. Angela Park, piano; Caitlin Boyle, viola; Rachel Mercer, cello. First Unitarian Church of Hamilton.

**May 27, 6pm:** Nordic Perspectives. Canadian premiere of music by Ardo Ran Varres and other works. Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra; Kara-Lis Coverdale, piano; Kirke Karja, piano; Triskele, voice & traditional instruments. Collective Arts Brewing, in Hamilton. One of several events presented by Estonian Music Week.

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

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**NÎPÎY’S SONGWALKS**

**May 27th, 2023**
2:00 & 7:00 pm

**Toronto Botanical Gardens**

Featuring a world premiere by Cris Derksen about the inequalities of clean water access in Canada

www.amadeuschoir.com
Q & A: Blake Pouliot, violin
PAUL ENNIS

“...What strikes you instantly is that Pouliot’s sound is a beauty: big, rich and warm in the lower registers, clean and clear up high, feathery and husky qualities, along with sweet and rough, all equally there in his colouristic palette.” – Gramophone Magazine

Toronto-born violinist Blake Pouliot (pronounced pool-YAHT) brings his passionate music-making to Koerner Hall, where he will make his debut on April 21. Winning the Grand Prize at the 2016 Orchestre Symphonique de Montreal Manulife Competition – the most significant of Pouliot’s early accolades – led to his first recording (for Analogta). His 2019 Juno Award nomination was further evidence of an ascending career path, leading to this much-anticipated Koerner visit. The following email Q&A took place in early March.

WN: When did you begin your musical education? Was music an integral part of your childhood?
BP: Music has always been a part of my life. My dad was a TV producer for the legendary Canadian variety show The Tommy Hunter Show and my mom was a singer on the show too. Music, in particular countryp music, was therefore available in my house for as long as I can remember. My parents noticed I had perfect pitch when I was about two years old, and within two years I took an interest in playing the piano. It wasn’t until I was seven, however, that I first picked up a violin, and how we are 21 years later and still playing.

What was the first piece of music you fell in love with?
The Barcarolle – Belle Nuit, O nuit d’amour by Offenbach. I learned a version transcribed for solo piano that enchanted me in my youth. But once I heard it as it was originally composed it only further inspired my adoration for the work. To this day I admire it deeply.

The passion, technique and romantic fervour you brought to your approach to Sarasate’s Zigeunerweisen (Gypsy Airs) in Mazzoleni Hall a few years ago reminded me of violinists of the Golden Age. Who were your musical heroes in your formative years?
I’m flattered you thought my Zigeunerweisen reminded you of that golden era! I haven’t ever thought of being compared to them so I’m really honoured. I definitely spent time listening to those legends as a child – Heifetz, Perlman, Menuhin, Szeryng etc. They helped expose me to great virtuosity on the violin. I really became entranced with the new wave of violinists however, whom I believe really influenced my approach. As a young Canadian I was of course delighted by all the recordings of James Ehnes, the impassioned musicality of Janine Jansen and the mastery of period performance and innate creativity from Rachel Podger. I feel like I wanted to somehow be a combination of all three of those artists.

Since winning the Grand Prize at the 2016 Orchestre Symphonique de Montreal Manulife Competition and being nominated for a Juno, you’ve become a Soloist-in-Residence at the Orchestre Métropolitain working with Yannick Nézet-Séguin in Montreal and also appearing with him and the Philadelphia Orchestra. What is it like to work with him?
Yannick is an absolute delight. I’m most impressed by artists who display their authentic selves on and off the stage, and he is (in my opinion) the gold standard of that. The way he is changing the face of classical music by stressing the importance of community engagement is so inspiring, and I admire him immensely because of it.

It can also be daunting to work with an artist of his stature, but his compassion and creativity made collaborating for the first time nothing but exhilarating and I’ve been very fortunate to work with him a handful of times since. He’s a true class act, one of my biggest inspirations in the industry and I’m looking forward to getting to share the stage with him more in the future.

How did you construct the program for your April 21 Koerner recital? What drew you to Miklós Rózsa’s Variations on a Hungarian Peasant Song, Op.4, for example?
I’m very excited about this program. I wanted to construct a program that was musically versatile, harmonically balanced, and true to my musical stylings. Classical music is going through a tremendous shift, and I think one of the ways to continue this boundary expansion is by curating programming that pays homage to the art form’s origins as well as where classical music is headed. I also think that the idea of thematic programming needs to be more adventurous. Therefore, this program will include the Canadian premiere of a commission of mine, some not-so common pieces, and some violin standards.

Miklós Rózsa is a composer I discovered while living in Los Angeles for ten years. Like Korngold he was a Jewish composer who moved to the United States to escape WWII, and while here he gained critical acclaim (including three Oscars) for his film scores. But he was a prolific classical composer. His music contains obvious influences of folk-based nationalism to his native Hungary and his music has a wonderful Bartókesque/early film score flavour. The Variations on a Hungarian Peasant Song is an explosive and virtuosic journey, and in my opinion a wonderful way to open a program.
And Clara Schumann’s 3 Romances for Violin and Piano, Op.22?
The Clara Schumann 3 Romances are a beautiful transition from Rózsa’s fiery and rhapsodic character. One of the last things she ever composed, romances were one of her favourite forms to compose in. It’s quite complex in its structure but that’s what makes it so fun to dissect. It’s also quite tricky for the pianist, which is why I’m delighted to be able to collaborate with such a wonderful pianist as Henry Kramer.

Please describe Derrick Skye’s God of the Gaps for Violin and Electronics which you commissioned. How did that come about?
I first discovered Derrick’s music at a concert in LA. I found his style and musical instincts so unique that I knew I had to find a way for us to collaborate. The title God of the Gaps refers to humanity’s application of deification to explain the gaps in our understanding of the environment around us, and its composition style navigates the connections between Persian classical music, West African music, Western classical music and experimental electronic music. The piece is entirely made up of unmetred cells without a pulse, and combines pre-recorded sounds made by Derrick, myself and samples of a lullaby written for me by my dad, making it immensely personal. I have always been fascinated with Iranian music as well and with everything going on in Iran right now, I wanted to share a small part of their culture.
Derrick is immensely talented and the nicest guy; I can’t wait for everyone to hear the Canadian premiere of his work.

Is there a connective thread in the three pieces in the second half of your recital – Kaija Saariaho’s Nocturne for Solo Violin; Ernest Chausson’s Poème, Op.25; and Brahms’ Sonata for Violin and Piano No.3 in D Minor, Op.108?
The overall theme of the program is romance; exploring every meaning of the word and the context for which it can be used. Romance towards one’s culture with the connection between Rózsa and Derrick Skye, Romance for our surroundings with Saariaho and the Chausson; and Romance in its most raw form with Schumann and Brahms. I could recite all the intricacies and specific details within the program, but in the spirit of saving paper I invite everyone to come experience the unity of the program in person on April 21!

What do you find most satisfying about performing?
Some days I ask myself that question. I think it changes, and continues to change as I get older. But I suppose at the root of it all it’s the ability to connect with people over aural art. The ability to stand in a concert hall filled with hundreds or thousands of people, and have everyone being present and enjoying the same sounds is so special. With the technological rise and over-saturation that is the Internet, I’m so humbled I get to pursue a vocation that allows an in-person connection and brings a healthy escapism to such a chaotic time. It’s a blessing, and I’m delighted to be coming to share some music with my hometown.

Violinist Blake Pouliot and pianist Henry Kramer perform in Koerner Hall on April 21 at 8pm.
APR 18, 8PM: The Royal Conservatory presents the remarkable 30-year-old Beatrice Rana in a solo piano recital. It’s been almost nine years since the acclaimed, Italian-born pianist made her GTA debut during Toronto Summer Music’s 2014 season – the pandemic postponed a couple of bookings – but her upcoming Koerner Hall appearance promises to make the wait worthwhile. Bach’s elegant French Suite No. 2 in C Minor, BWV 813 and Debussy’s challenging Pour le piano make a delightful pairing leading to Beethoven’s post-intermission colossus, his Piano Sonata No. 29 in B-flat Major, Op. 106 (“Hammerklavier”). MAY 7, 3PM: The Royal Conservatory presents Bruce (Xiaoly) Liu in his Koerner Hall debut. In 2021, Liu became the first Canadian to win the Chopin Piano Competition and interest is high for his first Toronto solo appearance. Only a handful of stage seats remain unsold at this writing for Liu’s recital of five works by Chopin and one by Liszt. He turns 26 the next day.

APR 20, 7:30PM: Beethoven’s Op. 59 String Quartets were dedicated to Count Andrey Razumovsky and, like most of the composer’s quartets, were first performed by the Ignaz Schuppanzigh quartet. Franz Weiss was the violinist in the ensemble that for more than 20 years acted as Beethoven’s house band and he was also a composer; curiously enough, Weiss dedicated his two quartets, written in 1813, to the music-loving Razumovsky, in whose sumptuous palace the quartet worked. Weiss’ astonishingly fresh and inventive Op. 8 Nos. 1 & 2 Quartets are by turns hilarious, heartbreaking, profound, and, for their time, quite daring and experimental. The Gallery Players of Niagara present the period instrument Eybler Quartet playing these Weiss quartets – at Heliconian Hall. APR 22, 3PM: Hammer Baroque presents the Eyblers, who specialize in chamber music written up to the time of Beethoven’s death, playing these “other Razumovsky quartets” in St. John the Evangelist Church, Hamilton.

APR 21, 8PM: The Chamber Music Society of Mississauga presents a sparkling program, all inspired by dance and topped by Stravinsky’s dance with the devil, L’Histoire du Soldat. Commissioned in 1938 by clarinetist Benny Goodman and violinist Joseph Szigeti, Bartók’s Contrasts exploited the full range of possibilities for both the clarinet and violin. Up to this point, Bartók had never composed chamber music that included a wind instrument, so instead of blending the diverse sounds of the three instruments, he focused on their differences. Works by Ravel and Piazzolla will also showcase the talented musicians: James Campbell, clarinet; Sarah Fraser Raff, violin; and Angela Park, piano; in the Erin Mills United Church, Mississauga.

MAY 4, 8PM & MAY 5, 7:30: Highlights of a packed Toronto Symphony Orchestra lineup as the TSO’s 100th anniversary year nears its end. Messiaen’s massive Turangalîla Symphony is the
Everything Everywhere
All at Once
of the orchestral repertoire: love song, hymn to joy, time, movement, rhythm, life and death. With Marc-André Hamelin (piano); Nathalie Forget (ondes Martenot); and Gustavo Gimeno (conductor). MAY 24, 25 & 27, 8PM: Jader Bignamini, now in his third season as Detroit Symphony Orchestra music director, crosses the border to lead the TSO in Ravel’s irrepressible arrangement of Moussorgsky’s Pictures at an Exhibition and accompany James Ehnes in Tchaikovsky’s singular Violin Concerto. MAY 31, JUN 1 & 3, 8PM: Two months after violinist Nicola Benedetti and her trio performed in Koerner Hall, she returns to Toronto to perform Wynton Marsalis’ Concerto in D, a piece on which Benedetti and Marsalis collaborated for two years. The two worked together, often across transatlantic phone lines, for months on end, she told NPR. Benedetti would pick up her violin and put her phone on speaker – and across the Atlantic in the U.S., Marsalis would do the same at the piano. The work, she says, was painstakingly slow. Conductor-on-the-rise Elim Chan also takes up the TSO baton for Brahms’ lyrical Symphony No.2.

MAY 13, 7:30PM: Former Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra music director James Sommerville returns to conduct the HPO in Beethoven’s iconic Symphony No.5 in C Minor, Op.67. Earlier in the evening Nikki Chooi, formerly concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and currently concertmaster of the Buffalo Symphony Orchestra, brings his transcendent playing to Mozart’s Violin Concerto No.4 in D Major K218.

MAY 28, 3PM: Trio Arkel’s celebration of the tenth season of their concert series continues at Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre. Violinist Marie Bérard told me during my conversation with her and cellist Winona Zelenka in the February-March WholeNote that “the meat of the program, Strauss’ Metamorphosen, is this great reduction for seven players.”

JUN 4, 3PM: TSO concertmaster Jonathan Crow is the soloist in Bruch’s tuneful Violin Concerto No.1 in G Minor. Conductor Michael Newnham also leads Orchestra Toronto in Rachmaninoff’s lush, immensely popular Symphony No.2 in E Minor and a new work by the winner of the Orchestra Toronto Prize in Composition.

**FACTOID:** In our recent December-January issue, we noted the ray of hope a perusal of our Listings gave us as live music by seven large ensembles reasserted its presence after being completely uprooted by the pandemic. Just a few months later, a similar look at the Listings finds 17 (count them if you must and enjoy their concertizing if you can).
In our February/March issue, Wendalyn Bartley previewed Rodney Sharman and Atom Egoyan’s Show Room, their first operatic collaboration since Elsewhereless in 1998. Presented by new music ensemble Continuum, Show Room ran for two performances this past March 18 and 19, and Lydia Perović was there.

There’s a dangerous point halfway into the new chamber opera Show Room where you are very close to deciding that a) this is clearly an absurdist piece, in the style of Ionesco, where characters wrangle over the meaning of what’s said, and that b) you’re not really enjoying it. You had originally thought that it was a comedy: the recurring whining from the period recorders in the orchestra whenever the lady visiting the boutique tries on a new gown was actually comic. But then things change and you’re in a very different opera. As the two principals work out the dramatic conflict, they themselves change, as if by a switch in the stage lighting: sympathies travel from one woman to another, to neither, and back. Hurt and righteousness switches from one to the other. The action – such as it is – is as follows: a lady of means (mezzo Andrea Ludwig) comes into a showroom and unhappily tries on multiple gowns. Her adult son is there (baritone Nicholas Higgs), offering encouraging if concise commentary. The boutique owner/designer (soprano Carla Huhtanen) is trying to be helpful but can’t resist remarking how unusual it is for a woman to be accompanied by her son while gown shopping. There is quite a bit of conversation which, on the surface at least, is about the meaning of beautiful clothes. Ludwig looks spectacular as she comes out in each new dress, but is evidently deeply unhappy with what she sees in the mirror. The orchestra’s high, whiny, clangy accompaniment both takes her sadness seriously, and not. (A marimba-like instrument in the orchestra, gently bowed on its edges, adds eerie overtones to the violin-recorders-period-trombone chant.)

It is getting late and the shopowner is hoping to close soon; the son, not sure if his mother will be buying anything, writes the shopowner a large cheque for her time, and asks her to help his mother in the change room. After some time, the shopowner comes out to inform him that his mother is crying. Additional awkward exchanges ensue and the mother comes out in her regular clothes. The orchestra changes gears and densifies for the reading of words which both mother and son, reading from letters, release at the shopkeeper, phrase by salacious phrase. The sentences are from the letters, it turns out, that the husband of the shopper sent to his lover – this very fashion designer and boutique owner. Finally, the two women are alone on the stage, in a tense conversation.

While the music becomes highly expressive, the acting stays restrained and mannered, and the libretto remains somewhat abstract, with the shopowner ending the opera alone, repeating one of the best lines from the letters to herself and to us, about...
OFF CENTRE MUSIC salon

Jimmy Roberts wishes
Happy Birthday to Johannes Brahms

May 7th, 2023 at 3:00 p.m.

FEATURING:
Steven Dann, viola; Andrea Ludwig, mezzo-soprano;
Peter McGillivray, baritone; Jimmy Roberts, piano;
Kathryn Tremills, piano; Inna Perkis, piano; Boris Zarankin, piano

Artistic Directors: Boris Zarankin & Inna Perkis

For more details and to purchase tickets
www.offcentremusic.com

ON OPERA | QUICK PICKS

Apr 28 to May 20: The Canadian Opera Company’s production of Verdi’s Macbeth features Quinn Kelsey as Macbeth; Alexandrina Pendatchanska and Liudmyla Monastyrska share the role of Lady Macbeth; Önay Köse as Banquo; Matthew Cairns as Macduff; the COC Chorus & Orchestra; Speranza Scappucci, conductor; and Sir David McVicar, director. Plenty of blood-thirsty ambition-driven drama to go around! Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, Toronto.

May 05, 8pm: Toronto Operetta Theatre - La Verbena de la Paloma (The Festival of the Dove) is classic zarzuela – a fun kind of sung and spoken Spanish lyric theatre. It premiered in Madrid in 1894, and is set in the lively streets of that city during a festival. Adapted for the cinema in 1921, 1935, and again in 1963, it has great excuses for singing and dancing; young love almost thwarted by foolish older folks, and a happy ending. With Margie Bernal, Rómulo Delgado, Stuart Graham. Kate Carver, conductor & piano, Guillermo Silva-Marín directs. Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, Toronto.

Lydia Perović is a freelance writer in Toronto. Sign up to receive her newsletter at longplay.substack.com

May 05 to May 27: The Canadian Opera Company presents Puccini’s Tosca. Sinead Campbell-Williams and Keri Alkema share the title role, Stefano La Colla as Cavaradossi, Roland Wood as Scarpia, Joel Sorensen as Spoletta, and Donato Di Stefano as Scaramuccia. With the COC Chorus & Orchestra; Giuliano Carella, conductor, Paul Curran, directs. Love, lust, murder and politics, and (SPOILER!) probably NO happy ending. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, Toronto.

May 13, 7pm: Southern Ontario Lyric Opera’s spring production is Verdi’s La traviata, which is based on Alexandre Dumas’ La Dame aux Camélias. This fully staged production with the Southern Ontario Lyric Opera Chorus & Orchestra is conducted by Sabatino Vaccia. Burlington Performing Arts Centre.

Poster, 1921 movie version

Gala Fundraiser May 9th
See OffCentreMusic.com for more details
The 20th century term “postmodern” is often uncritically applied to a whole range of artistic expressions that are not easily compartmentalizable—wherever influences and traditions whose conceits lie on a continuum somewhere between antithetical and oppositional are blended together. Sometimes, though, it is entirely appropriate, as was the case with Andrew Balfour’s beautiful and important piece, NAGAMO (Ojibway for “sing”), recently presented on a coast-to-coast tour by Balfour and musica intima.

One of Canada’s most unique vocal ensembles, musica intima is a Vancouver-based twelve-singer-strong chamber group of diverse voices whose raison d’être is relationship building through deliberate programming and collaboration with Indigenous art in the spirit of reconciliation. A shared leadership model allows the singers of the conductor-less vocal ensemble to exchange ideas freely while exploring their own musical creativity, leading to dynamic performances where the ensemble engages with the audience directly and spontaneously, and local vocal ensembles can be woven into the piece, building a big tent under which a rich panoply of styles, languages and traditions can meaningfully co-exist.

Such was certainly the case this past March 4 at Eglinton-St. George’s United Church in Toronto, with Balfour and musica intima presenting NAGAMO, along with the Toronto Children’s Chorus (under the watchful eye of new artistic director Zimfira Polosz), the Toronto Youth Choir and the Earl Haig Secondary School Senior Choir. St. George’s acoustically resonant chapel space provided the perfect setting for the Toronto debut of a work bravely attempting to reconcile in sound the tradition and clear Christian religiosity of Elizabethan choral music (William Byrd, Henry Purcell, Orlando Gibbons) with Indigeneity.

In the hand of 2023 Juno nominee and Sixties Scoop survivor, composer Andrew Balfour, original texts have been altered from Latin to Ojibway and Cree, and the incorporation of nature vocalizations and a staging approach that at times saw the fully expanded choir encircle the audience, resulted in an immersive and exhilarating performative experience. Most impressively, Balfour manages to elegantly strike the fine balance needed to bring greater representation and an Indigenous perspective of spirituality to this European musical form, while maintaining and respecting the rigour and beauty of its original compositional polyphony.

As a Cree from Fisher River First Nation who grew up a choir boy in the adopted home of an Anglican priest in Winnipeg, Balfour is perhaps uniquely positioned to author a work so important, and so uniquely Canadian. Similar, perhaps, to others whose intersectional identity contains the strains of historical conflict, Balfour has spent much of his compositional career bringing into congruence his Indigeneity with his love of Renaissance choral music. On record, and during such performances as the NAGAMO project Toronto debut, Balfour puts out the idea of “what if” as a possibility. What if the history of colonialism in Canada was different? What if the spirit of reciprocity that first greeted the Chiefs and First Nations leaders who travelled to Europe during the 17th century to form alliances had continued? With NAGAMO, Balfour’s provocative questions are not only asked, but brought to a harmonious musical conclusion.

Ably supported by musica intima, Balfour has perhaps found the perfect foil for his grand compositional ambitions. Over two sets of music, bookended by riveting performances from Indigenous singer and Song Keeper Rosary Spence, a capacity Saturday night audience was treated to a truly special performance that did not compromise musicality or tunefulness in the service of being intentional intellectual or provocative. On the contrary, the NAGAMO project underscores just how effectively thoughtful consideration and a mature handling of traditions otherwise considered contradictory can result in philosophical, historical and musical good.

With valuable contributions and support from the Toronto Children’s Chorus, the Toronto Youth Choir, and the Earl Haig Secondary School Senior Choir, whose young members will likely reflect upon their involvement in this special project for years to come, March 4th was indeed an evening in Toronto worth remembering.
SEE WHAT’S ON STAGE
AT THE AGA KHAN MUSEUM

Labyrinth Ensemble
April 15 | 8 pm
Tickets from $37.50
Evgenios Voulgaris joins the Labyrinth Ensemble in a captivating exploration of 17th-century music and contemporary compositions.

Dakh Daughters
April 30 | 7 pm
Tickets from $37.50
An exhilarating theatrical experience “...genuinely original – mixing classical minimalism with passionate Ukrainian folk and a touch of ‘freak cabaret’, delivered with punk energy...”
- The Guardian

Rumi Nations
May 13 | 8 pm
Tickets from $30
Rumi’s mystical words are set to music in an entrancing showcase featuring renowned vocalists and musicians, as well as the turn of the dervish and original poetry in the Sufi tradition.

Rhythms of Canada
June 30–July 3
Tickets on sale soon
Four days of unmatched summer fun as the Museum turns into a destination for world class performances, delectable food, and activities for all ages.

For the full schedule of events, visit agakhanmuseum.org
CHORAL SCENE | QUICK PICKS

Apr 22, 7pm: Singing Together at the Toronto Korean Presbyterian Church. This is an annual multicultural choral event that began in 1995 at Toronto’s Columbus Centre, with two Italian choirs, a French and a German choir. The event unites local ethnic choirs to perform repertoire from their own cultures, with a finale performance of common pieces composed by Canadian musicians. This year, the common pieces will feature a Cree work and a popular song composed by the late Canadian country songwriter Ian Tyson, and will include Spanish, Chinese, Italian, Korean and Ukrainian choirs.

Apr 23, 5pm: A Place Fear Can’t Find. The Modern Sound Collective’s Concreamus Choir is a 50-voice new music choir dedicated to innovation in the choral arts and the creation and performance of excellent new works by young composers. The group is made up of singers, students, composers and educators from around the Greater Toronto Area. This concert will include Sami Anguaya’s Lying Awake, Waiting; Nicholas Wanstall’s The River of Sleep; Emily Green’s Snowfall, Snowmelt; Ben Keast’s I Reap a Long December; and Hirad Moradi’s Ah, Moon of My Delight; with Jennifer Wilson, soprano and; Kai Leung, conductor. At Runnymede United Church in Toronto.

Music Fit for a King is sure to satisfy those among us who cannot wait for the May 6 coronation of Britain’s Charles III. Join Toronto Classical Singers on Apr 23 at 4pm as they celebrate 30 years of presenting great choral masterpieces including Handel’s Coronation Anthems, and other celebratory tunes by Parry and Elgar, conducted by Jürgen Petrenko at Christ Church Deer Park in Toronto.

And then on coronation day, May 6 at 7:30pm there’s the Gala Concert at St. James Cathedral with the Choir of St. James Cathedral in concert with Orchestra, at Cathedral Church of St. James in Toronto.

Apr 29, 10:30am: Ever wondered what it’s like to sing Carmina Burana? Find out on Apr 29 at 10:30am. Toronto Mendelssohn Choir’s “Singsation Saturdays” are Saturday morning workshops, led by one of TMChoir’s own conductors. Start your Saturday with people who love to sing! The Carmina Burana workshop will be led by Jean-Sébastien Vallée. Their May 20 workshop will be led Shireen Abu-Khader, TMchoir’s Composer-in-Residence. Both at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church in Toronto.

May 06, 7pm: Peterborough Singers will perform Verdi’s Requiem. With guest soloists Leslie Fagan, soprano; Laura Pudwell, mezzo; Ernesto Ramirez, tenor; Jonathan Liebich, bass; with a double choir, and the ‘orchestra’ of Ian Sadler at the pipe organ, joined by 12 brass players. At Emmanuel United Church in Peterborough.

May 07, 3:30pm: In collaboration with Balance for Blind Adults, Toronto Chamber Choir presents a program called Musical Vision: A Brief History of Music and Blindness. In this new Kaffeemusik, the TCC and friends feature music by gifted artists who did not let their lack of sight cloud their musical vision, and will welcome some special guests,

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VOCA CHORUS OF TORONTO
Shining Night
FRI APR 28, 2023
including distinguished CBC journalist Michelle McQuigge and her guide dog Lucy, Michelle will surprise us with true tales about blind harpers in Ireland and Wales, the blind pianist Maria Theresia von Paradis (for whom Mozart may have written a piano concerto), the charlatan surgeon who botched cataract surgery on both Bach and Handel, and Louis Braille’s adaptation of his writing system to music notation, and much more. Featuring a new commission by pianist Michael Arnowitt. At Calvin Presbyterian Church in Toronto

May 28, 7:30pm: the Grand Philharmonic Choir concludes their season with the world premiere of Stephanie Martin’s “Water: An Environmental Oratorio”, the story of the importance of this precious resource and a community’s efforts to protect it. Anton Bruckner’s powerful Te Deum opens this concert which includes Katy Clark, soprano, Marion Newman, mezzo-soprano, Jean-Philippe Lazure, tenor, Phillip Addis, baritone; with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony and combined forces of the Grand Philharmonic Children’s Choir Grand Philharmonic Youth Choir and Grand Philharmonic Choir. Mark Vuorinen, conducts.

Stephanie Martin

Andrew Scott is a Toronto-based jazz guitarist (occasional pianist/singer) and professor at Humber College, who contributes regularly to The WholeNote Discoveries record reviews.
CELESTIAL REVOLUTIONS

MAY 3 & 4 AT 8PM

Artistic Direction by Ben Grossman & Alison Melville

The heavens changed and he was the first to notice. Astronomer and alchemist Tycho Brahe's meticulous observations altered our understanding of the skies forever. Join us for an exploration of Brahe's fascinating life and times, featuring music from the cosmopolitan cities of 16th-century Leipzig, Basel, and Prague, and the world premiere of a new commission on Brahe by Canadian composer Alex Eddington, with cymbalom master Richard Moore, and director Tyler Seguin.

Tickets starting at only $20

TRINITY-ST. PAUL'S CENTRE
427 BLOOR ST WEST

Buy Tickets at Toronto Consort.org
The Toronto Bach Festival taking place this coming May 26, 27 and 28, curated by long-time Tafelmusik oboist and Bach scholar John Abberger, is the first attempt to make an annual festival dedicated to what Abberger calls Bach’s “timeless music” a recurring part of the city’s musical calendar since the University of Toronto-backed Toronto International Bach Festival – under the direction of Bach luminary Helmuth Rilling – had Bach devotees circling their calendars months in advance from 2002 to 2006.

Festivals that are created in a “top-down” way, however, often fall victim to the very things that propelled them to almost instant success – major institutional support and the presence of an international superstar at their helm. When those disappear, the calendar fixtures they gave rise to can very quickly follow suit.

This is not to say that growing a festival from the grass roots up is any guarantee of success either: it requires fertile soil, grit, and an unwavering sense of what the festival is for. With these thoughts in mind, I got in touch with Abberger to talk about this year’s TBF and how it got this far.

WN: On the festival website you call Bach “the consummate artist, who channelled the human spirit into music”. Translating that into keeping a festival like this going year after year is another matter, though, isn’t it. What keeps you going?
JA: Quite simply, I’ve never met a person who wasn’t touched by Bach’s music; his ability to speak to our common humanity makes his art universal. When I think about the astonishing quality of pretty much everything he wrote, I feel strongly that we should all have an opportunity to experience more of his works, and a festival is the obvious way to go beyond the mere 20 per cent or so that is performed regularly by other musical organizations. Bach as an essential community service, you might say – a more reliable way to get where we want to go – or need to be – than the TTC.
I once worked for a small literacy organization that had a tortoise for its emblem, as a reminder that if you can only move slowly, you should make sure, from the get-go, that you are heading in the right direction. What did you get right, right from the beginning in 2016?

Above all, there is a public insistently eager to experience Bach in the diversity that only a festival context can offer. One of our organizing principles has been the three pillars of Bach’s compositional output: instrumental, vocal and keyboard music. The cantatas are particularly important; of the five festivals that we have produced so far, only one did not include some cantatas (and that one presented two “Lutheran Masses” that include many repurposed cantata movements). Many of the keyboard works are seldom performed, and they broaden our understanding of Bach’s art. We have also seen, right from the beginning, a remarkable enthusiasm for each year’s public lecture.

Part of the narrative of a festival is that bigger audiences and more events are markers of success. But there’s also a “right size” for audiences for various kinds of musical experience, if they are to feel “authentic” (whatever that means)? Can a festival like this get too big?

That’s an excellent question, and one for which I don’t have a definitive answer at the moment, although I do have some thoughts. With the addition of the Kaffeehaus concert in the 2023 festival, I feel we have reached the maximum of what an audience can effectively take in over the course of three days. We want to offer an immersive experience, and we think very carefully about the timing of our events in terms of making the best progression from event to event for our audiences. If we were to expand beyond what we are offering this year, we would have to radically rethink the nature of what we are offering, and how all that works. This is powerful music, and I always consider what I think our audiences will be able to absorb in the space of a few days.

What specifically does the Kaffeehaus concert add to the mix?

From the very beginning, I have been searching for a way to present a less formal concert, loosely modelled on the evenings of music that Bach performed in his new position as Cantor and Director of Music at the coffee house setting is where Bach first performed a great deal of instrumental music, as well as some of the secular vocal works.

As for the rest of it, we will continue our tradition of inviting great guest artists to perform at the festival – in this case, the harpsichordist Steven Devine. Like John Butt last year, Steven has not performed in Toronto, and he is a wonderful artist. He’ll be performing the great Concerto in D Minor for harpsichord and strings, and his presence gives us a great opportunity to program the seldom performed Concerto in C Major for two harpsichords together with our own Christopher Bagan at the opening concert of the festival. The next day Devine will perform the complete first book of the Well-Tempered Clavier, an unusual opportunity to hear this iconic work performed in its entirety.

Sacred vocal music will not be neglected. This year we mark Bach’s arrival in Leipzig with a performance of the first two cantatas that he performed in his new position as Cantor and Director of Music for the City of Leipzig. Our festival this year is, by design, a microcosm of this important turning point in Bach’s professional life. These two cantatas, along with two of his finest concertos on the opening concert, and the Well-tempered Clavier, represent some of the high points of the astonishing productivity that commenced with his move to the city. Our public lecture, by Bach scholar Daniel R. Melamed will also focus on this fascinating pivot in Bach’s creative life.

For full festival details visit torontobachfestival.org

Performing them broadens our understanding of Bach as a composer, and demonstrates to the public that Bach’s music can be enjoyed in a relaxed atmosphere notably different from the standard concert setting. Also, producing a concert like this follows our mandate of historically informed performances, as a coffee house setting is where Bach performed a great deal of instrumental music, as well as some of the secular vocal works.

David Perlman can be reached at publisher@thewholenote.com

David Perlman can be reached at publisher@thewholenote.com

EARLY MUSIC | QUICKPICKS

Apr 6, 7:30pm: Opera Atelier’s Handel: The Resurrection, which the COVID-19 pandemic shut down in mid-rehearsal three years ago, will finally hit the stage at Toronto’s Koerner Hall, with all that ravishing music in a fully staged production that includes: Carla Huhtanen, Meghan Lindsay, Alyson McHardy, Collin Ainsworth, Douglas Williams, sword-wielding dancers of the Atelier Ballet and more. Also April 8, 7:30pm and April 9, 2:30pm.

Apr 15, 8pm: at the Aga Khan Museum you can hear the Labyrinth Ensemble - 14 performers on santur, riqq, bendir, baglama, saxophone, clarinet and electric bass. This concert is an exploration of 17th-century music composed by Romanian prince Dimitrie Cantemir and Ottoman composer, Ali Ulki, led by special guest Evgenios Voulgaris on oud & yaylı tambur. Tickets to this concert also include same-day admission to the Aga Khan Museum.

Apr 28, 8pm: In Tafelmusik’s Higher Love: Virtuoso Arias, hear Samuel Marinho, male soprano, in his Canadian debut, performing arias from Handel’s Armindo, Vivaldi’s Il Gustino, and other works. The male soprano is probably the world’s rarest voice type – with a captivating sound that defies description in words. “My goal is to open up classical music and really bring it to everyone,” says Marinho. “Regardless of whether someone feels like a man, a woman, or non-binary, I want people to make music.” At Jeanne Lamon Hall, Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre. Also Apr 29, 2pm.

May 7, 3:30pm: Airs for the Seasons is a concert celebrating Rezonance Baroque Ensemble’s debut recording. Scottish composer James Oswald wrote the Airs between 1765 and 1761 as a collection for combinations of flute or violin plus continuo – the Rezonance version includes two violins, one flute, cello, harpsichord, lute and theorbo. At St. David’s Anglican Church, Toronto.

May 26, 7:30pm: Joseph Haydn’s Orfeo: L’anima del filosofo (The Soul of the Philosopher). This North American premiere is a collaboration between the University of Toronto and McGill University, with Astitha Tennekoon, Lindsay McIntyre, Parker Cemeten, and Maeve Palmer, and The McGill Baroque Orchestra led by Dorian Bandy. Nico Krell is the stage director. In the MacMillan Theatre, Edward Johnson Building, at the University of Toronto. A symposium – “Resurrecting Haydn’s Orfeo”, led by Dr. Caryl Clarke, will be held at 10am on May 27, Walter Hall.

May 28, 7pm: The Oculist. On period instruments, the INNERchamber Ensemble follows the path of a questionable eye surgeon through Europe, at the dawnning of the age of modern medicine. Bach, Handel Telemann. At Revival House, in Stratford.
After a joyous return to live performances last year, with record-breaking audiences, we are delighted to be back on Toronto’s stages to present the timeless music of Johann Sebastian Bach. There is something for everyone with our 4-concert festival, taking place in three iconic locations in the city.

TORONTOBACHFESTIVAL.ORG
(416) 466-8241
With a fifty-year history producing both traditional and contemporary chamber concerts, Music Toronto is a mainstay to patrons of classical music in the GTA. This year, the organization launches a new series: the Celebration of Small Ensembles (COSE), a unique concert concept that will take place in an unconventional classical-music venue, the Aperture Room, an event space on the third floor of the Thornton-Smith Building, at 340 Yonge Street, close to Dundas Square.

Each COSE concert will feature three different ensembles playing short, thematically focused programs. Recently announced as Music Toronto’s Artistic Director Designate, cellist Roman Borys, who has curated this first COSE, is a founding member of the Juno Award-winning Gryphon Trio and has been a presence on the Canadian classical scene since the 1990s.

WN: How did the Celebration of Small Ensembles first come about? This series seems to have grown naturally out of Music Toronto’s Discovery Series; in what ways is COSE different?

RB: The direction we’re taking with the Celebration of Small Ensembles series stems from previous programming ventures in Music Toronto’s rich programming history – supporting emerging artists much like the Discovery Series did, and also having much in common with the concerts that Gryphon Trio, MTO Artistic Producer Jennifer Taylor, and musical friends from various other genres presented at Toronto’s Lula Lounge. Those concerts celebrated diverse small ensemble traditions and facilitated collaboration among musicians with different musical backgrounds, a direction that influenced many programming choices and projects I initiated during my 13-year tenure as Artistic Director of the Ottawa Chamber Festival. Now working in a new capacity at Music Toronto, I see the COSE series re-engaging MTO in an exploration of forward-looking, small-ensemble programming trajectory that introduces audiences to a roster of very exciting, well defined artistic voices, many of whom are just beginning to emerge on the professional concert scene.

Reading through the individual concert descriptions, there seems to be a focus on unique themes and on undertold musical stories (e.g. Interro Quartet’s “Compound Quartet”, duo nistwayr’s Indigenous-centred readings of repertoire, and KöNG Duo’s unconventional musical use of conventional non-musical objects.) What were some of the guiding principles behind the programming?

Every COSE concert will feature three artists, each presenting a short, curated set. We’ve prompted the artists to set aside traditional classical programming parameters and instead take the audience on a short, well-defined musical journey, juxtaposing music in new ways, exploring themes rooted in contemporary culture, and allowing artists to hone and express their artistic point of view.

And the Aperture Room as a venue? It’s also somewhat unconventional. How did you find it?

We liked the idea of inviting audiences to discover a new gathering space on the top floor of a historic Toronto building in the centre of the city, and then to find themselves in the friendly company of other curious listeners in an intriguing new space that will feature wonderful artists sharing music new and old.

What else can audiences expect from these concerts?

These events all take place on Saturday afternoons. Starting at five and ending after seven each event will have two short breaks during which patrons can chat and purchase refreshments – a little surprise and delight to help you make the most of your weekend.

The Celebration of Small Ensembles takes place on May 6, 20 and June 3. For more information, please visit Music Toronto’s website.

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 Thornton-Smith Building, circa 1925, and today.
The festival of music begins! Truly this has been a year of celebrating the return of live music! The Rose Orchestra invites you to a festival of sound to commemorate a triumphant season of exquisite orchestral entertainment at the glorious Rose Brampton. The night will feature an opening piece of the world premier of a song cycle composed by Maestro Warren, sung by internationally acclaimed bass baritone Daniel Lichti; The Rose Orchestra performing Brahms Symphony no 2; and don’t miss The Rosebuds who will perform classical selections.

OAKLAND STROKE
JAZZ @ LBP HOSTED BY JAYMZ BEE
Get ready for the Greatest Horn Hits of the 70s! Featuring music by Tower of Power, Earth Wind & Fire, Blood Sweat & Tears, Chicago, and more! Oakland Stroke is a 10-piece juggernaut of soul and good vibes, featuring a 5 piece horn section. Led by Toronto native Lou Pomanti, experience them live.

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Autorickshaw and Penderecki String Quartet | July 23 | 3 pm
Hinrich Alpers | July 30 | 3 pm
Marika Bournaki and Julian Schwartz | Aug 6 | 3 pm
John Pizzarelli | Aug 13 | 4 pm
Tickets ($40-$125)

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Familiar Venues and a Brand New Festival

COLIN STORY

The Rex: On April 12, guitarist/vocalist Jocelyn Gould plays The Rex in a four-night run with her quintet. Originally from Winnipeg, Gould came to Toronto by way of the University of Manitoba, where she did her undergraduate studies in jazz, and Michigan State University, where she earned a Master’s of Music. A Benedetto endorsee, Gould plays in a traditionalist style, with the athletic bebop lines, octaves and bluesy flourishes of her cited influences (Wes Montgomery, Joe Pass, Kenny Burrell, Grant Green) on full display. An accomplished vocalist as well as guitarist, Gould has a penchant for swinging, nuanced arrangements of both august jazz standards and her own original compositions. Gould’s debut album, Elegant Traveler, won the 2021 JUNO Award for Jazz Album of the Year: Solo, and she has maintained a busy post-pandemic schedule, with tours of the US, Canadian jazz festivals, and, most recently, a two-month tour of North America as one of four guitarists participating in International Guitar Night, which features four different guitarists in both solo and group format. Joining Gould at the Rex are vocalist Micaela Rae, pianist Emmet Hodgins, bassist Dan Fortin, drummer Ethan Ardelli.

College Street Jazz: New this year, the College Street Jazz Festival (CSJF) brings three days of programming to six different College Street venues from Friday, April 21 through Sunday, April 23. The CSJF is a Canada Council-backed venture from JazzInToronto, a group that runs a website (and connected social media accounts) that publishes and promotes local jazz listings, run by Lina Welch, Ori Dagan, Mark Lemieux, and Camille Neirynck-Guerrero. The CSJF’s stated goal is “to produce highly engaging events which bring musicians, venues, and audiences closer together after the challenging times we’ve faced.” Last year, of course, was the first year since the beginning of the pandemic in which major Canadian festivals returned in person; though something akin to real life does indeed seem to be reliably back, the very idea of a large-scale gathering of patrons and musicians still seems somewhat novel. Revival Bar, The Emmet Ray, Free Times Cafe, Bar Pompette, College St. United Church, and bookstore-cum-club Sellers & Newel are the festival venues.

College Street Jazz Festival continues on page 52

At Jazz Bistro on April 28 and 29, legendary saxophonist George Coleman takes the stage, in concert with New York-based saxophonist Eric Alexander and a Toronto-based rhythm section composed of pianist Bernie Senensky, bassist Neil Swainson, and drummer Terry Clarke. (Coleman and Alexander have been touring in this format for years; as a teenager in the late 2000s, I remember seeing them play in Vancouver with a local rhythm section at the now-defunct Cellar Jazz club.) Coleman should be a familiar name to any WholeNote reader, most notably because of his involvement in Miles Davis’ quintet, with Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Tony Williams, with whom Coleman recorded Seven Steps to Heaven, My Funny Valentine, Four and Miles Davis in Europe, before leaving the group to pursue other projects (after which the late Wayne Shorter took over his seat). As a performer, educator, and bandleader, Coleman has had a storied career; at the age of 88, his approach to melodic treatment and linear invention remains as progressive and rich as ever.
KOERNER HALL 2022.23 CONCERT SEASON

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WITH HENRY KRAMER
FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 8PM
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WILLIAM EDDINS CONDUCTS THE ROYAL CONSERVATORY ORCHESTRA
FRIDAY, APRIL 28, 8PM
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BREL! THE SHOW
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**Print:** Our next print issue, Volume 28 no.6 covers June, July and August 2023. The print submission deadline for that issue will be Tuesday May 16.

**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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**LIVE OR ONLINE**

**Tuesday March 28**

- **12:10:** Nine Sparrows Arts Foundation. Lunchtime Chamber Music: Rising Stars Recital. Featuring performance students from the U of T Faculty of Music. Yorkmin- 

**March 28 to June 6, 2023.**

**This issue contains event listings from March 28 to June 6, 2023.**

**LISITINGS IN THIS ISSUE**

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

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

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Livestream video available for a limited time.

**MOOREDALECONCERTS.COM**

**MATHIEU GAUDRET**
Schubert Recital 3:15pm April 2

- **3:15:** Mooredale Concerts. Mathieu Gaudet. Piano. An all-Schubert program: Twelve German Dances D.790; Sonata No.18 in e 0.956, Two Scherzos D.593; and Four Impromptus Op.90 D.899. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-922-3714 X103
- **3:30:** Northumberland Orchestra and Choir. In the Moment. A collaborative concert of quiet reflection. Faure: Requiem; Vaughan Williams: The Lark Ascending, Oriana Singers; Emily Rocha, soprano; Joseph Song Chi, baritone; Victoria Veh, concertmaster & solo violin; Robert Grandy, organ. Trinity United Church, 284 Division St., Cobourg. Tickets at www.nocomusic.ca and www.onariasingers.com. $10-$30. Also Apr 17 (3:00pm).
- **4:00:** Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto. Vespers. A collaboration with the Guelph Chamber Choir. Ian Casson: New Work (world premiere); Rachmaninoff: All-Night Vigil; and works by Larysa Kuzmenko and Uli Praunil. St. Anne’s Anglican Church, 276 Gladstone Ave. www.eventbrite.ca/e/vespers-tickets-501286981857. From $12.
- **4:00:** The Edison Singers. Rachmaninoff: Vespers. Noel Edison, conductor. St. Thomas’ Anglican Church, 99 Ontario St., St. Catharines. Tickets at www.theedisonsingers.com/performance. $45; $25(at 16 and under). Also Apr 7 (Guelph at 7:30pm), 8 (Toronto at 1:30 pm).
- **7:00:** INNERChamber Inc. Early: Beethoven: String Quartet Op.18 No.1; Grieg: String Quartet No.1 Op.27. INNERChamber String Quartette (Julie Baumgartel, violin; Andrew Chung, violin; Jody Davenport, viola; Ben Bolt-Martin, cello). Reival House, 70 Brunswick St., Stratford. Tickets INNERchamber.ca. $50; $10 (arts workers/st). LIVE & LIVESTREAM: A light meal is available to patrons in Stratford.

**NINE SPARROWS ARTS FOUNDATION PRESENTS**

**THE GOOD FRIDAY CONCERT**
Music and Readings for a Most Holy Day
FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 2023 | 4:00 PM

**SPECIAL GUESTS:**
Anne Lindsay, Celtic fiddle
Sharlene Wallace, Celtic harp

**FEATURING:**
Lark Popov, piano
Stephen Boda, organ
The Hedgerow Singers
Eric N. Robertson, conductor
Rev. Peter Holmes and Colleen Burns, narrators

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**THE WINTER CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL PRESENTS**

**CONCERT 3**

**Wednesday April 5**
- **7:00:** Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society. Chamber Music Concert. Program to be announced. Ciccillitti-Cowan Guitar Duo: Adam Ciccillitti and Steve Cowan. First United Church, 16 William St. W., Waterloo. 519-569-1809 or www.ticketscene.ca/kwcms. $35; $20 (st)
- **8:00:** Rose Theatre. Big Wreck. Bombs Away, Fields, High on the Hog. 1 Theatre Ln., Kitchener. 519-569-1809 or www.ticketscene.ca/erloo. $30; $20 (st).

**Thursday April 6**
- **4:00:** Peripheral Vision. We’ve Got Nothing: Peripheral Vision Featuring Aline’s étoile magique. Peripheral Vision (Trevor Hogg, saxophone; Don Scott, guitar; Michael Her- ring, bass, Nick Fraser, drums); Aline’s étoile magique (Aline Homzy, violin; Thom Gill, guit- ter; Dan Fortin, bass; Michael Davidson, vibra- phone; Manito Marques, drums, Tranzac Club, 239 Brunswick Ave. 416-922-8137. PWYC. $10 suggested.
- **7:30:** Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts, Brock University. Department of Music Big Band Concert: Latin Flair. Bernstein: West Side Story; Holst: “Jupi- ter” from The Planets; Grainger: Molly on the Shore; Mahler: Adagietto from Sym- phony No.5; Fritz Neubock: Rhapsody, Brock Big Band; Zeltan Kalman, conductor; Rebecca Heathcote, alto saxophone. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, Cairns Recital Hall, 250 St. Paul St. St. Catharines. Tickets: 905-688-0722 or 1-855-515-0727 or www.firston- tarioac.ca. $15; $10 (st).
- **8:00:** Rose Theatre. Best Wreck. Bombs Away, Fields, High on the Hog. 1 Theatre Ln., Kitchener. 519-569-1809 or www.ticketscene.ca/erloo. $30; $20 (st).

**Friday April 7**
- **8:00:** Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts, Brock University. Depart- ment of Music Concert: A Spiritual Journey. Bernstein: West Side Story; Holst: “Jupi- ter” from The Planets; Grainger: Molly on the Shore; Mahler: Adagietto from Symphony

**HANDEL**

**Brockes Passion**

Friday, April 7
Tickets: $30 / $15
6:30 p.m. pre-concert talk
7:30 p.m. concert
metunited.ca/Handel

**Jonathan Oldengarm, direction and continuo**

**Metropolitan Festival Choir**
Period Instrument Orchestra
Michael Colvin, Evangelist
Jacqueline Woodley, Tochter Zion
Geoffrey Sirett, Jesus

**THE WHOLENOTE.COM**
**Thursday April 6**

- **11:00am: Encore Symphonic Concert Band. Monthly Concert. 35-piece concerto band performing band concert music, pop tunes, jazz standards (2 singers) and the occasional march. Trinity Presbyterian Church York Mills, 2737 Bayview Ave. www.encoreband.ca. $10.**

**Friday April 7**

- **4:00: Nine Sparrows Arts Foundation. The Good Friday Concert: Music and Readings for a Most Holy Day. Anne Lindsay, conductor; Marlene Wallace, Celtic harp; Lar Popov, piano; Stephen Boda, organ. The Hedgeworger Singers; Eric N. Robertson, conductor; Rev. Peter Holmes and Colleen Burns, narrators. Yorkminster Park Baptis- t Church, 1560 Yonge St. 416-822-1167 or www.yorkminsterpark.com. Free. Donations welcome.**

- **7:30: Confluence Concerts. Songs of Syria. Andrew Dowdeng curates a program of the rich and beautiful music of Syria, featuring members of the Canadian Arabic Orchestra. Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave. info@conflu- enceconcerts.ca. Also Apr 8.**


- **7:30: Metropolitan United Handel. Handel: Brockes Passion. HWV 48. Libretto by Bar- thold Heinrich Brockes. Metropolitan Festival Choir; Period Instrument Orchestra; Michael Colvin, tenor (Evangelist); Jacqueline Woodley, soprano (Tochter Zion); Geoffrey Sirr, baritone (Jesus); Jonathan Oldengarm, direction & continuo. 56 Queen St. E. www. metrovocal.ca/handel. $15 & $30. Pre-concert talk (6:30pm).**

- **7:30: The Edison Singers. Rachmaninoff Vespers. Noel Edision, conductor. St. Thomas’s Anglican Church (St. Catharines), 99 Ontario St., St. Catharines. Tickets: www.thedision- singers.com/performances. $45; $25 (st/18 and under). Also Apr 24 (pm – St. Catharines), 8:30pm (Toronto).**

- **8:00: Georgtown Bach Chorale. The Pas- sion According to St. Matthew. Bach: St. Matthew Passion. Michael Taylor (Evangelist); Georgtown Bach Chorale Chamber Choir, Soloists, and Baroque Orchestra. Knox Presbyterian Church, 116 Main St. S., Georg- town. www.georgtownbachtchorale.org or 905-873-9905. $45.**

**Saturday April 8**

- **1:30: The Edison Singers. Rachmaninoff Vespers. Noel Edision, conductor. Hart House, Great Hall, 7 Hart House Circle. Tickets: www. thedisioningers.com/performances. $45; $25 (st/18 and under). Also Apr 24 (pm - St. Catharines), 7:30pm (Guelph).**

- **2:00: Five at First. String Extravaganza XII. Qlick: Suite Hebraique for solo cello. Nokuthula Ngwenyama: Primal Message for viola quintet; Brahm: Sextet in B-flat. Scott St. John & Csaba Koczó, violins; Caitlin Boyle & Theresa Rudolph, violas; Rachel Desoer & Anne Lindsay, violins and the 19th-Century Piano. Schubert: D. 950, String Quintet in E flat major; D. 703, String Sextet.**

- **2:00: Lunchtime Organ Recital. Christopher Beecroft, organ. 121 Queen St. W. www.coc.ca/concerts. Free.**

- **7:30: Confluence Concerts. Songs of Syria. Andrew Dowdeng curates a program of the rich and beautiful music of Syria, featuring members of the Canadian Arabic Orchestra. Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave. info@conflu- enceconcerts.ca. Also Apr 8.**

- **7:30: Opera Atelier. Handel: The Resurrection. See Apr 6. Also Apr 9 (2:30pm).**


**Sunday April 9**

- **2:30: Opera Atelier. Handel: The Resurrection. See Apr 6.**

**Tuesday April 11**


- **8:00: Rose Theatre. Jazz at LBP: Oak- land Style. Music by Tower of Power, Earth Wind & Fire, Blood Sweat & T ears, Chicago, and the 19th-Century Piano.**


- **12:00 noon: Princess Margaret Cancer Centre. Atrium Concerts. A free concert of jazz standards. Rebecca Enkin, voice; Mike Allen, guitar; Edi Castro, bass, Princess Mar- garet Cancer Centre Atrium, 610 University Ave. Tickets: 464-474-9474. Free.**

- **12:30: OrganIX Concerts. Christopher Dawes, Organ. Our Lady of Sorrows Cath- olic Church, 3055 Bloor St. W. 416-571-3660 or organixconcerts.ca. Freewill offering ($20 suggested).**


**Wednesday April 12**


- **12:00 noon: Brownsontasaurus Records. Nick Maclean Quartet. Featuring Brownman All. Nick Maclean, piano; Brownman All, trumpet; Ben- nett Young, bass; Jacob Wutzke, drums. La Revolution, 2848 Dundas St. W. 416-389-2843 or www.eventbrite.ca/e/nick-maclean-quar- tet-feat-brownman-all-toronto-tickets-58765613337. $20/$15 (adv).**

**Thursday April 13**


- **12:00 noon: Brownsontasaurus Records. Nick Maclean Quartet. Featuring Brownman All. Nick Maclean, piano; Brownman All, trumpet; Bennett Young, bass; Jacob Wutzke, drums. Simcoe Blues and Jazz, 926 Simcoe St.,...**
LIVE OR ONLINE | Mar 28 to Jun 6, 2023

Oshawa. 416-389-2643 or www.touronmo.
brownman.com. PWYC.

• 8:30: Fallsview Casino Resort. Terry Fator:
On The Road Again. Fallsview Casino Resort,
OLG Stage, 6360 Fallsview Blvd., Niagara
Falls. 1-877-833-3110 or www.ticketmaster.
ca.

• 9:00: Brownstasauras Records. Nick Mac-
lean Quartet. Featuring Brownman Ali.

Friday April 14

• 11:00am: Hamilton Philharmonic Orches-
tra. Talk & Tea: An Evening with Schubert.

Saturday April 15

• 10:00am: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony.
Sorceror’s Apprentice. KWS Woodwind Quin-
tet, Stork Family YMCA, 500 Fischer-Hallman
Rd., Waterloo. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-
4711. $14. Also Apr 29 (Conrad Centre for
the Performing Arts).

Sunday April 16

• 11:00am: Toronto Symphony Orches-
tra. Relaxated Performance: Reggae Roots.

Sun April 16

JULIUS EASTMAN
Gay Guerrilla
arr. JESSIE MONTGOMERY
for string septet

ESPRIT ORCHESTRA
NEW WAVE FESTIVAL 2023
April 12 & 16
espritorchestra.com

7:00: Esprit Orchestra. New Wave Festi-
val: New Wave 2. Misia Mochizuki: Chimera,
for 11 players; Julius Eastman: Gay Guerrilla
(arr. Jessie Montgomery), for string septet.

4:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra: YPC:
Reggae Roots. Jah’Milia, vocalist; Daniel Bar-
tholomew-Poyser, conductor.

38 April & May, 2023

thehelenotone.com


8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Frank & Ella. Capathia Jenkins, vocalist; Tony DeSare, vocalist/piano; Steven Reineke, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $62. Also Apr 18 (2pm & 8 pm).

Wednesday April 19


2:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Frank & Ella. See Apr 18. Also Apr 18(1pm & 8 pm).

6:00: Alliance Française de Toronto. The Birds Concert. Evoking, through the fascination of men for birds, a certain vision of music and things. Florence Bolton, viola; Benjamin Perrot, théâtre & baroque guitar; Sébastien Marq, recorders; Clément Geoffroy, harpsichord. Spadina Theatre, Alliance Française de Toronto, 24 Spadina Rd. www.alliance-francaise.ca. $10. 416-928-3451.


Thursday April 20


Saturday April 22


8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Frank & Ella. See Apr 18.

9:00: Chamber Music Society of Mississauga. Chang. James Campbell, clarinet; Sarah Fraser Raff, violin; Angela Park, piano. Erin Mills United Church, 3010 The Collegeway, Mississauga. 416-892-8251 or www.chambermusicmississauga.org. PWCC.
**LIVE OR ONLINE** | Mar 28 to Jun 6, 2023


**8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony**. Elegance & Innovation. Mozart: Symphony No.31 “Paris”; Maimets: Double Concerto for Flute, Harp & Orchestra; R. Strauss: Le bourgeois gentilhomme. Lori Gemmel, harp; Kaili Maimets, flute; Alexander Shelley, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717. $29-$87. Also Apr 23(2:30pm).

**8:00: Music Gallery**. Emergents: Matthew Cardinal + Yolande Laroche. Curated by Sara Constant, Matthew Cardinal, modular synthesizer & electronics; Yolande Laroche, clarinet/keyboard/vocalist; Stephanie Kuse, video artist. Music Gallery at 918 Bathurst, 918 Bathurst St. Tickets at www.musicalgaller y.org/events/jayson or 416-204-1080. $10.

**8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music**. Jazz Concerts: The Great Composers: Joshua Redman 3X3 plays Ellington, Shorter & Monk. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmconservatory.com/performance.$50-$105.

**8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra**. Mandolin Magic: The Artistry of Avi Avital. Veal’adi: Mandolin Concerto in D RV93; Bach/arr: Avital: Violin Concerto in g BWV1056R; Veal’adi: Mandolin Concerto in C RV425; Bach/arr: Avital: Violin Concerto in a BWV1041 and others. Avi Avital, mandolin/leader. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $35. Also Apr 23(3pm-George Weston Recital Hall).

**9:00: Fallview Casino Resort**. Carly Pearce. Fallview Casino Resort, OLG Stage, 6380 Falls Blvd., Niagara Falls. 1-877-833-3110 or www.ticketmaster.ca.

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**Sunday April 23**

**2:00: Chamber Music Hamilton**. The Hungarian Sound with Michael Schulte and Friends. Works by Liszt, Dohnányi, Maros, Kodály, Bartók, and others. Michael Schulte, violin/viola; Aaron Schwebel, violin; Patrick Goodwin, violin; Drew Comstock, cello. Art Gallery of Hamilton, 123 King St. W., Hamilton. chambermusichamilton@gmail.com or 905-627-1627 or at the door: $35; $15(ste). Free admission to the Art Gallery of Hamilton.


**2:30: Niagara Symphony Orchestra**. The Rite of Spring. Tchaikoff: Piano Concerto No.24; Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring. Jarred Dunn, piano; Bradley Thachuk, conductor. Partridge Hall, FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 905-687-4993. $68; $60(sr); $39(arts worker with valid ID); $15(student-university or college with valid ID); $15(youth 18 and under with valid ID).

**3:00: Avanti Chamber Singers**. Conducting Matthew Shepard. Rachel Rensink-Hoff, director; Lesley Kingham, piano. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 905-667-4995. $68; $60(sr); $39(arts worker with valid ID); $15(student-university or college with valid ID); $15(youth 18 and under with valid ID).

**3:00: Oakville Chamber Orchestra**. Beethoven & The Wheel of Life. Beethoven: Turkish March (Marcia alla turca); Beethoven: Violin Concerto in D Op.61; and music by Charles Demuyck. David Rehman. 905-687-4993. $68; $60(sr); $39(arts worker with valid ID); $15(student-university or college with valid ID); $15(youth 18 and under with valid ID).


other celebratory tunes by Parry and Elgar.
Jurgan Petrenko, conductor. Christ Church Deer Park, 1570 Yonge St. 416-968-8749 or www.torontoclassicalsingers.ca. $30.
5:00: Modern Sound Collective - Con-
creamus Choir - A Place Fear Can’t Find. Sami Anouara, Living Awake, Waiting; Nicho-
las Wanastall: The River of Sleep; Emily Green: Snowfall, Snowмет; Ben Keast: 1 Reap a Long December; Hirad Moradi: Ah, Moon of My Delight, Concreamus Choir; Jennifer Wilson, soprano; Nicholas Wanastall, accompanist; Kai Leung, conductor; Katie Hatanaka, assist-
5:00: Nocturnes in the City. Cham-
7:30: Cuckoo’s Nest Folk Club / TD Sun-
set, April Verch & Cody Walters. Chaucer’s Pub, 122 Carling St., London. Tickets: 519-319-5847 or folk@iandavies.com. $25.

**Sun April 23**

**JOHN CORIGLIANO**

**Symphony No. 1**

1. Apologia: Of Rage and Remem-
brance
2. Tornarizza
3. Chaconne: Giulio’s Song
4. Epilogue

**40TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON FINALE**

*/ESPRI ST ORCHESTRA*

eopriistroe.com

- **8:00 Esprit Orchestra.** Season Finale. Max Richter: Spring from The Four Seas-
sons Recomposed; Eugene Astapov: Bur-
ial Rites - In Memoriam Marcus Gibbons; Max Richter: Winter from The Four Seas-
sons Recomposed; Chris Paul Harman: Clem-
enti sottosopra; John Corigliano: Symphony No.1. Aaron Schwebel, violin; Eugene Astapov, associate conductor; Alex Paik, conductor. Koerner Hall, TEUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or www.espritorchestra.com. $45; $45(s); $26(under 30); $25(st). Pre-
concert talk moderated by composer Alexina Louie (7:15pm).
- **8:00 Hugh’s Room Live.** The Small Glori-
showpass.com/small-glories/ $25.

**Monday April 24**

- **8:00 Rose Theatre.** Jesse Cook. 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-874-2800 or www.thero-
setheatre.ca. $15-$59.
- **12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company.** Vocal Series: Quivering Woods, Starry Sky. Queen Hezumuryango and Alex Hetherington, mezzo; Liz Upchurch, piano. Richard Brad-
shaw Amphitheatre, Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. www.
coca.ca/free-concert-series. Free.
- **Wednesday April 26**

- **12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company Instrumen-
tial Series Rebanks Family Fellow-
ship Showcase.** Artists from the Rebanks Family Fellowship and International Perform-
ance Residency Program at The Royal Con-
servatory’s Glenn Gould School. Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, Four Seasons Cen-
- **6:00: Classical Concerts at Knox.** Violin and Piano Chamber Music Recital. Gloria Yip, vio-
- **7:30: Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Toronto/Villa Charities.** Jazz Series at the Calgary Cen-
- **8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony.** Tim Baker with the KWS cert-series. Free.
- **8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony.** Tim Baker with the KWS. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717. $23-$47.
- **8:30: Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** Tchaikovsky: Variations on a Rococo Theme; Stravinsky: Song of the Night-
ingale; D'Annunzio; Purcell: Dido’s Lament; Salo-
no; Ravel: Daphnis et Chloé Suite No.2. Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello; Fabien Gabel, conductor. Rythom Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $35. Also Apr 26(8pm), $29.

**Tuesday April 25**

- **12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company.** Vocal Series: Quivering Woods, Starry Sky. Queen Hezumuryango and Alex Hetherington, mezzo; Liz Upchurch, piano. Richard Brad-
shaw Amphitheatre, Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. www.
coca.ca/free-concert-series. Free.

**Friday April 28**

- **12:00 noon: Ross Theatre.** Ross Theatre's 30th Anniversary Concert. HANDEL'S CORONATION ANTHEMS AND OTHER CELEBRATORY TUNES

**Sunday April 23, 2023**

- **10:30 am: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony.** Sorcerer’s Apprentice. Music by Dukas & Mus-
sorgsky. KWS Woodwind Quintet. Conrad Con-
cert for the Performing Arts, 100 King St. W., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717. $14, $12(child). Apr 15(3St Family YMCA).
- **3:00 pm: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony.** Higher Love: Virtuoso Arias. Arias from Handel’s Armina, Vivaldi’s Il Giustino, and other works. Samuel Marilio, male soprano. Jeannie Lamon Hall, Trinity- St. Paul’s Centre, 427 Bloor St. W. 1-833-964-
6337. From $25. Also Apr 29(2pm). NOTE DATE CHANGE.
- **7:30 pm: VOCA Chorus of Toronto.** Shining Night. An eclectic celebration of the night sky. Works by Andrew Ballouf, Elena-
dale, Nicholas Ryan Kelly, Richard Rodg-
ers, Frode Fjellheim, Morten Lauridsen, and others. Jenny Crober, artistic director; Guests: Beth Acker, collaborative pianist. Guests: Beth Acker, collabora-
tive pianist.

**Thursday April 27**

- **12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company.** Dance Series: to be held. Katherine Sem-
chuk, dancer. Richard Bradshaw Amphithe-
atre, Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. www.coca.ca/free-con-
cert-series. Free.
- **8:00 Rose Theatre.** This Is Brampton. Drive-in. 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-874-
2800 or www.therosetheatre.ca. $15.
- **8:00 Rose Theatre.** Red Barat & Sunny J. 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-874-2800 or www.therosetheatre.ca. $15-$29.
- **8:00 Roy Thomson Hall.** Exgeny Kissin, Piano. 60 Simcoe St. www.tickets.mhrth. com. From $70. 

**SUNDAY APRIL 23, 2023 4PM**

**THIS IS BRAMPTON**

**MUSIC FIT FOR A KING**

**CORONATION ANTHEMS AND OTHER CELEBRATORY TUNES**

**TOUR NO CLASSICAL SINGERS AND TORONTO CLASSICAL PLAYERS**

**Jurgan Petrenko, Conductor**

**ticketchowervisor.com**

tickets $30.00

**torontoclassicalsingers.ca**
Colleen Allen, sax; Shawn Grenke, organ; Jamie Drake, percussion. Eastminster United Church, 310 Danforth Ave. 416-947-8487 or www.vocachorus.ca. $30; $15(st).


7:30: Mississauga Chamber Singers. Han-del and Bach. Bach: Mass in g BWV 235; Handel: Chandos Anthem No.9 (O Praise the Lord with One Consent). Mississauga Chamber Singers; Chamber Orchestra; Soloists. Mississauga Chamber Singers; 151 Lakeshore Rd. W., Mississauga. 647-549-4524. $30; $15(7-18); free(under 7).


7:30: The Jeffery Concerts. Viano String Quartet. Dvořák: Allegro scherzando from Cypresses for string quartet B152; Bartók: String Quartet No.3 Sz85; Shaw: The Evergreen; Dvořák: Piano Quintet in A Op.81. Wolf Performance Hall, 251 Dundas St., London. 519-672-8800 or www.jefferyconcerts.com or jefferyconcerts@gmail.com, $40. Free(over 13) with ID. Tickets at Grand Theatre Box Office, 471 Richmond St.

7:30: Toronto Concert Choir. Glorious and Jazzy Spring Concert. Vivaldi: Gloria; Völlinger: Latin Jazz Mass. Katelyn Bird, soprano; Alex Hetherington, mezzo; Toronto Concert Choir (formerly Oakham House Choir); Toronto Sinfonietta. Calvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave. 416-453-3343. $30/35(adv); Free(under 12/TMU st).

8:00: Mississauga Symphony Orchestra. The Music of Star Wars. Arrive dressed as your favourite character from the film series and immerse yourself in the music of this iconic space-opera. Denis Mastromonaco, conductor. Living Arts Centre, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga. www.mississaugasymphony.ca or 905-306-6000. From $40.

Tuesday May 2


Wednesday May 3


8:00: Fallsvieview Casino Resort. Her- man’s Hermits Starring Peter Noone. Fallsvieview Casino Resort, Avalon Theatre, 6380 Fallsvieview Blvd.; Niagara Falls. 1-877-833-3110 or www.ticketmaster.ca. Also May 2(3pm), 3(3pm).

8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. All Haydn. Haydn: Symphony No.22 in E-flat “The Philosopher”; Cello Concerto in C; Symphony No.44 in e “Trauer”; String Quartet No.3; Symphony No.80 in C “Il Distrazzo”. Catherine Anderson, cello; David Failis, conductor; Bruce McMillan, curator. First United Church, 16 William St. W., Waterloo. 519-745-4717 or 1-888-745-4717. $37. Also May 5(Har- court Memorial United, Guelph), 6(Central Presbyterian, Cambridge).

Thursday May 4

11:00am: Encore Symphonic Concert Band. Monthly Concert. 35-piece concert band performing band concert music, pop tunes, jazz standards (2 singers) and the occasional march. Trinity Presbyterian Church York Mills, 2737 Bayview Ave. www. encoreband.ca. Free.

1:30: Women’s Musical Club of Toronto. Music in the Afternoon: Mark Fewer with Thalea String Quartet, Chris Whitley and Jeanie Chung. 416-923-7052 | wmct.on.ca plus a new work by Carmen Braden for this ensemble. Mark Fewer, violin; Thalea String Quartet (Christopher Whitley, violin; Kumiko Sakamoto, violin; Lauren Spaulding, viola; Alex Cox, cello); Jeanie Chung, piano. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-923-7052 X1. $45; free(st with ID).


8:00: Toronto Consort. Celestial Revo- lutions: The Life and Times of Tycho Brahe. Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, Jeanne Lamon Hall, 427 Bloor St. W. www.torontoconsort.org or 416-864-6337. From $33. Also May 3. Also available on EarlyMusic.TV on demand.

5:00: Toronto Symphony Orches- tra. Gimonio Conducts Messiaen’s Epic
TURANGALLA. Messiahian: Turangalla-Symph. Ph. Marc-André Hamelin, piano; Nathalie Forget, ondes Martenot; Gustavo Gimeno, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $35. Also May 5(7:30pm).

HANDEL’S wise noted. 416-598-3375. From $35. Also May 4(8pm).

FRIDAY May 5


● 7:30 Canadian Opera Company. Tosca. Music by Giacomo Puccini. Stefano La Cella, tenor (Cavaradossi); Roland Wood, baritone (Scarpia); Joel Sorensen, tenor (Spiegel). Donato Di Stefano, bass (Sacc- ristan); and others: Canadian Opera Company Chorus & Orchestra; Giuliano Carella, conductor; Paul Curran, director. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. 416-363-8231 or 1-800-363-8231 on 1-800-250-4655 tickets@ccc.ca. From $35. Also May 7(2pm), 11, 13, 19, (21pm), 23, 27(3:30pm). At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.


● 8:00 Fallview Casino Resort. Billy Idol. 6380 Fallview Blvd., Niagara Falls. 1-877-833-3110 or www.ticketmaster.ca. From $40. 


SUNDAY May 7

● 2:00 Bach Singers. Can’t Mask the Music. The Music of the Night; If Music be the Food of Love; Singing in the Rain; I Got Rhythm; Here’s to Song. Scarborough Bluffs United Church, 3739 Kingston Rd., Scarborough. Tickets: 647-831-3245 or www.belscan- tosingers.ca. $20; $5(child). Also at 7:30pm.

● 4:00 The Edison Singers. Sounds of Conflict: Folksongs & Spirituals. Noel Edison, conductor. St. Mark’s Anglican Church, 41 Byron St., Niagara-on-the-Lake. Tickets: 642-0769-0769. $45; $25(st/18 and under). Also May 7(4pm - 7:30pm) - Toronto.


● 7:00 Toronto Northern Lights. 25 Years of TNL, Neil Atchinson, master of ceremonies. Islington United Church, 2 Burnhamthorpe Rd. www.eventbrite.ca/e/25-years-of-tnl-ticket-57954637811. $30. A portion of the proceeds will support the Islington United Church youth music program.

● 7:30 Bel Canto Singers. Can’t Mask the Music of the Night; If Music be the Food of Love; Singing in the Rain; I Got Rhythm; Here’s to Song. Scarborough Bluffs United Church, 3739 Kingston Rd., Scarborough. Tickets: 647-831-3245 or www.belscan- tosingers.ca. $20; $5(child). Also at 2:30pm.

● 7:30 Canadian Opera Company. Macbeth. See April 28, also May 12, 14(2pm), 17, 2014(3pm). At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.

● 7:30 Opera by Request. L’alisér d’amore. Music by Donizetti. Brittany Stewart, soprano (Giannetta); Alvaro Vasquez Roble, tenor (Nemorino); Douglas Tranquada, bass-baritone (Dulcamara); Sebastian Belcourt, baritone (Belcore); Diana DiMauro, mezzo (Adina); Claire Harris, pianist and music director. College St. United Church, 452 College St. 416-455-2365. $20.

● 7:30: Pax Christi Chorale. Beethoven’s Silence. Jake Runestad: A Silence Haunts Me; Beethoven: Halleluja from Christ on the Mount of Olives; Beethoven: Mass in C. Pax Christi Chorale; Ellen McAtter, soprano; Tim-othy Wong, contralto; Nicholas Nicolaidis, tenor; Dion Mazzerolle, bass-baritone; Toronto Concert Orchestra; Elaine Choi, conductor. Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, 1585 Yonge St. Tickets: www.paachristichorale.org. $60; $55(elderly); $45(young adult); $20(st).


● May 6 8:00: Choir! Choir! Choir! “We Will Choir You!”: An Epic Queen Sing-along. Nobu Adilman and Daven Goldstein, creative direc- tors. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. www.centrecinthesquare.com. $34.50; $38.50.

● 8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. All Haydn: Symphony No.22 in E-flat “The Phil- osopher”; Dello Concerto in C, Symphony No.44 in e “Trauer”; String Quartet No.3, Symphony No.60 in “Il Distrauto”. Catherine Anderson, cello; David Fallis, conductor; Bruce McGillivray, curator. Central Presbyterian Church, 7 Queen’s Square, Cambridge. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4711. $37. Also May 31(First United, Waterloo), 5(Harcourt
Memorial (Queg).  
● 8:00: Sinfonia Toronto. Verdi & Franck. Franck: Piano Quintet in f (orchestra version); Tounts: Mu Qu-La (Moonlight Cake) (world premiere); Verdi: Symphony for Strings in e. Jean-Philippe Sylvestre, piano; Nurhan Arman, conductor. George Weston Recital Hall, Meridian Arts Centre, 5040 Yonge St. 416-499-0403 or info@sinfoniaToronto.com. $44, $57($r); $71($t); $71($virtual).  
● 8:00: Toronto Operetta Theatre. La Verberena de la Paloma (The Festival of the Dove). Music by Tomas Bretón. Margie Bernal, soprano; Rómulo Delgado, tenor; Stuart Graham, conductor. The Edison Singers.  
● 1:30: Toronto Chamber Choir. Musical Vision: A Brief History of Music and Blindness. Cabezón: De la Virgen; J. Rodrigo: Ave Maria; Vierne: Tantum ergo; Maria Theresia von Paradis: Selection from Zwolf Lieder; Bach: Vor deinen Thron; Handel: How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees from Jephthe. Toronto Chamber Choir; Lucas Harris, artistic director. Guests: Balance for Blind Adults, Calvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave. 416-783-1895. $20-$40.  
● 4:00: Bach Children’s Chorus. Cry Out! Eastminster United Church, 310 Danforth Ave. Tickets at www.eventbrite.ca. $25.  
● 4:00: St. Olave’s Anglican Church. Charles and the Crown. Begins with Coronation Evangel (Religious Service) followed directly by words and music with a Royal connection, presented by St. Olave’s Arts Guild to celebrate His Majesty’s life, on the day after being crowned as Canada’s King. 380 Windermere Ave. 416-769-5686 or www.stolaves.ca. Contributions appreciated.
  

Sunday May 7

● 11:00am: Xenia Concerts/TO Live. Thalea String Quartet. Designed to be autism- and neurodiversity-friendly. Seven Miniatures for String Quart and Electronics by Rory Berk, Anthony Hodgnett, Laura LaPearce, Madux Ma, Nathan Neutel, Jamie Petit, and Thomas Sindair (transcribed by Bekah Simms). Meridian Hall, 1 Front St. E. 416-896-8295 or www.eventbrite.ca/xe-xenia-concerts-presents-in-partnership-with-to-live-thalea-quartet. $5. Meridian Hall is a wheelchair-accessible venue. All listeners are welcome.  
● 2:00: Canadian Opera Company. Tosca. See May 5. Also May 11, 13, 19, 21 (2pm), 23, 27 (4:30pm). At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.  
● 5:00: Xenia Concerts/TO Live. Thalea String Quartet. A dementia-friendly concert live in and person at Meridian Hall. Meridian Hall, 1 Front St. E. 416-896-8295 or www.alz.to/event/xenia-thalea-quartet. Free. In association with the Alzheimer Society of Toronto East Baycrest Home. All listeners are welcome.  
● 5:00: Off Centre Music Salon. Jimmy Roberts Wishes Happy Birthday to Johannes Brahms. Steven Dann, viola; Andrea Ludwig, mezzo; Peter McGillivray, baritone; Jimmy Roberts, piano; Kathryn Tremills, piano. Inn Perkin, piano; Boris Zarankin, piano. Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, 427 Bloor St. W. www.eventbrite.ca/e/jimmy-roberts-wishes-happy-birthday-to-johannes-brahms-tickets-40475288571. $50; $40($r); $15($s/young adult/child).  
● 5:00: Syrinx Concerts Toronto. The Art of the Art Song. Learn about “art song” – poems set to music – through explorations with performed examples. Program to be announced. Featuring a new art song cycle by Cecilia Livingston based on poetry by Anne Michaels. Linda and Michael Hutcheon, speakers; Lawrence Wiliford, tenor; Steven Philcox, piano. Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave. 416-654-0877. $30; $20($t).  
● 3:00: Toronto Operetta Theatre. La Verberena de la Paloma (The Festival of the Dove). See May 5.  

Join Rezonance Baroque Ensemble as they celebrate the launch of their debut album.James Oswald: Airs for the Seasons

SUNDAY MAY 7, 3:30PM

St David’s Anglican Church, 49 Donlands Avenue, Toronto
Canadian, Community
and Collaboration
MAY 12 & 13 - 2023
FACTOR MUSIC OF UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
Visit GCBBF.CA for Gala Concert tickets & Festival passes!

GALA CONCERT
MAY 13, 2023
7:30PM
With works by Canadian Composers Kelly-Marie Murphy, Kristofer Maddigan & Marcus Venables.

FEATURING

PHILIP SMITH
Guest Conductor

GARY CURTIN
Euphonium Soloist

HANNAFORD STREET SILVER BAND

GALA CONCERT
MAY 13, 2023
7:30PM
With works by Canadian Composers Kelly-Marie Murphy, Kristofer Maddigan & Marcus Venables.

FEATURING

PHILIP SMITH
Guest Conductor

GARY CURTIN
Euphonium Soloist

HANNAFORD STREET SILVER BAND

OLIVE'S ANGELIC CHURCH

360 WINDERMERE AVE.
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HANNAFORD STREET SILVER BAND

OLIVE'S ANGELIC CHURCH

360 WINDERMERE AVE.
TICKETS: $14-37-2558.
PAY WHAT YOU WANT ($30 suggested)

Friday, May 28

Saturday May 13
12:30: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Star Wars: The Last Jedi - In Concert. Steven Reineke, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-596-3877. From $78. Also May 11, 13(12:30 & 7:30pm)

7:30: Upper Canada Choristers/Cantemos.
Our Voices Together: Corazones al Unísono. Cesar Alejandro Carrillo: El pajaro que espero (The Bird I Await) (world premiere) and “La Rosa de los Vientos”; Stephen Hatfield: Cantando Flores; Steven Chatman: Voices of Earth “Teasdale Love Songs”; and other works. Upper Canada Choristers; Cantemos; Hyb Won (Cecilia) Lee, piano; Laurie Evan Fraser: conductor. Visual creations by Camila Salcedo. Grace Church on-the-Hill, 300 Lonsdale Rd. www.uppercanadachoristers.org or info@uppercanadachoristers.org or 416-256-0510. $25 via Eventbrite. (Free(under 18 accompanied by an adult). Livestreamed free at www.uppercanadachoristers.org. LIVE & STREAMED.


4:00: Diapente Renaissance Vocal Quintet. Genera. Works by Byrd, Schein, Lacorcia, Lusitano, and Tomkins. Jane Fingler, soprano; Peter Koniers, countertenor; Alexander Cappellazzo, tenor; Jonathan Stuchbery, tenor, with Concreamus under the direction of Kai Leung. Calvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave. 416-671-0229 or www.etobeckko.com. $40 or PWYC from $5. Pre-concert chat at 7:15pm.

5:30: Toronto Children’s Chorus. Reflections of Light. Celebrating all our choristers have accomplished this year and looking back at the past 45 years of the Toronto Children’s Chorus. George Weston Recital Hall, Meridian Arts Centre, 5040 Yonge St. www.torontochildrenschorus.com. Performances.

6:00: Power and Passion. Mahler: Symphony 1 “Titan” Arias Christina Haldane Soprano FRIDAY, MAY 12
www.etobeckko.com

Friday, May 12


7:00: Serenade Singers. Songs for a New World. Scarborough Bluffs United Church, 3739 Kingston Rd. Scarborough. Tickets: www.serenatesingers.ca. $25/$20(adult); Free(under 12). Also May 11(12:30pm).


7:30: Sinfonia Anacaster. Vivaldi: The Four Seasons; Ravel: Bolero; Borodin: In the Steppes of Central Asia; and Stravinsky: Concerto for Violin and Piano; Brahms: Intermezzi Op.118 Nos.1 and 2; Brahms: Rhapsody in g Op.79 No.2; Ravel: Tzigane; and Franck: Sonata for Violin and Piano. Edwin Huzinga, violin; Philip Chu, piano. Historic Lethia Church, 419134 Tomato Lane, Leith. Tickets: www.sweetwatermusicfestival.ca. $40.

7:30: Canadian Opera Company. Macbeth. See Apr 28. Also May 14(2pm), 17, 20(4:30pm). At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.


4:00: Diapente Renaissance Vocal Quintet. Genera. Works by Byrd, Schein, Lacorcia, Lusitano, and Tomkins. Jane Fingler, soprano; Peter Koniers, countertenor; Alexander Cappellazzo, tenor; Jonathan Stuchbery, tenor, with Concreamus under the direction of Kai Leung. Calvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave. 416-671-0229 or www.etobeckko.com. $40 or PWYC from $5. Pre-concert chat at 7:15pm.

Friday, May 12


7:00: Serenade Singers. Songs for a New World. Scarborough Bluffs United Church, 3739 Kingston Rd. Scarborough. Tickets: www.serenatesingers.ca. $25/$20(adult); Free(under 12). Also May 11(12:30pm).


5:30: Toronto Children’s Chorus. Reflections of Light. Celebrating all our choristers have accomplished this year and looking back at the past 45 years of the Toronto Children’s Chorus. George Weston Recital Hall, Meridian Arts Centre, 5040 Yonge St. www.torontochildrenschorus.com. Performances.

4:00: Diapente Renaissance Vocal Quintet. Genera. Works by Byrd, Schein, Lacorcia, Lusitano, and Tomkins. Jane Fingler, soprano; Peter Koniers, countertenor; Alexander Cappellazzo, tenor; Jonathan Stuchbery, tenor, with Concreamus under the direction of Kai Leung. Calvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave. 416-671-0229 or www.etobeckko.com. $40 or PWYC from $5. Pre-concert chat at 7:15pm.
Sunday May 14

2:00: Canadian Opera Company. Macbeth. See Apr 28. Also May 17(20:30pm). At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.


8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Jazz Concerts: The Great Composers: Kellylee Evans & squirrel Richardson. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performances. $41-$100.

May 15

2:00: Symphony Orchestra. A Mediterranean Voyage. Chabrier: España; Sarasate: Carmen Fantasy; Berliner: Roman Carnival Overture; Mendelssohn: Symphony No. 4 (“Italian”). Corey Gemmill, violin, Barbara Weidman, piano, Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Performing Arts Centre, 440 joyce St., Burlington. 905-681-6000 or www.burlingtonsymphony.ca. $12-$46.

Tuesday May 16

12:10: Music at St. Andrew’s. Noontime Recital. Lisa Tahara, piano and students from the Faculty of Music. St. Andrew’s Presbyter-

ian Church, 73 Simcoe St. 416-592-5600 X231 or www.standrews这么多.org. Free.

12:30: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Sonte. See May 5. Also May 21(20:30pm), 23, 27(4:30pm). At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.

18:00: Concerts: The Great Composers: Kellylee Evans & squirrel Richardson. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or rcmusic.com/performances. $41-$100.

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**LIVE OR ONLINE**  Mar 28 to Jun 6, 2023

- **8:00**: Calvin Presbyterian Church. Dreamland. A night of dreamy and whimsical music. Works by Chopin, Beethoven, Debussy, Kravtchenko, and others. Jonathan Kravtchenko, piano. 26 Delisle Ave. Tickets at www.eventbrite.ca or at the door.

- **8:00**: Kindred Spirits Orchestra. Fervor. Flair & Fandango. Rimsky-Korsakov: Capriccio espagnol; Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No.2; Bruckner: Symphony No.2. Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, 10068 Yonge St., Richmond Hill. 905-604-3339 $30-$40.


- **8:00**: Midtown Stage. Nick Maclean Quartet. Featuring Brownman Ali. Nick Maclean, piano; Brownman Ali, trumpet; Bennett Young, bass; Jacob Wutzke, drums. Dryden Regional Training and Cultural Centre, 100 Casimir Ave. Dryden. 416-389-2643 or www.eventbrite.ca or at the door. See May 5. Also May 27(4:30pm). At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.

- **8:00**: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Rachmaninoff Violin Concerto + Pictures at an Exhibition. RBD Affiliate Composer: New Work (World Premiere/TSO Commission); Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto; Mussorgsky/Ravel. Pictures at an Exhibition, James Ehnes, violin; Jader Bignamini, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $35. Also May 24, 27.

- **8:00**: Bravo Niagara Festival of the Arts/Bravo Niagara! Festival of the Arts/Chamber Music Festival. Tuesday May 23.

- **8:00**: Bravo Niagara Festival of the Arts/Bravo Niagara! Festival of the Arts/Chamber Music Festival. Wednesday May 24.

- **8:00**: Bravo Niagara Festival of the Arts/Bravo Niagara! Festival of the Arts/Chamber Music Festival. Thursday May 25.

- **8:00**: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto • Pictures at an Exhibition. RBD Affiliate Composer: New Work (World Premiere/TSO Commission); Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto; Mussorgsky/Ravel. Pictures at an Exhibition. James Ehnes, violin; Jader Bignamini, conductor, Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $35. Also May 25, 27.

**June 2023**

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- **8:00**: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto • Pictures at an Exhibition. RBD Affiliate Composer: New Work (World Premiere/TSO Commission); Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto; Mussorgsky/Ravel. Pictures at an Exhibition. James Ehnes, violin; Jader Bignamini, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $35. Also May 25, 27.

**May 2023**

- **8:00**: Small World Music/The Tawoos Initiative. Fareed Ayaz & Abu Muhammad Qawwals. Narmina Afandieva, piano. 73 Simcoe St. www.eventbrite.ca. $35.

- **8:00**: Kindred Spirits Orchestra. Fervor. Flair & Fandango. Rimsky-Korsakov: Capriccio espagnol; Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No.2; Bruckner: Symphony No.2. Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, 10068 Yonge St., Richmond Hill. 905-604-3339 $30-$40.


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8:00: Toronto Bach Festival. Virtuoso Concerto. All-Bach program. Harpsichord Concerto No.1 in d BWV 1052; Italian Concerto in F after BWV 971; Concerto for Two Harpsichords in C BWV 1061. Steven Devine, harpsichord. Eastminster United Church, 310 Danforth Ave. Tickets: 416-466-8241 or www.torontobachfestival.org. $49. Part 1(2pm).

3:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. A Little Night Music. Presented by Canadian premiere of work by Ardo Ran Varres and other works. Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra; Kara-Lis Coversdale, piano; Kirke Kargi, piano; Triskele, voice & traditional instruments. Collective Arts Brewing, 207 Burlington St. E. Hamilton. 416-925-9405 or emw@emw.ca or www.royalconservatory.org.

May 27

THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER
May 27 | 12pm & 2pm

Toronto Bach Festival


8:00: Fallsview Casino Resort. Cheap Trick. Fallsview Casino Resort, OLG Stage, 6300 Fallsview Blvd., Niagara Falls. 1-877-833-3100 or www.ticketmaster.ca.


8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. A Little Night Music. Presented by Canadian premiere of work by Ardo Ran Varres and other works. Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra; Kara-Lis Coversdale, piano; Kirke Kargi, piano; Triskele, voice & traditional instruments. Collective Arts Brewing, 207 Burlington St. E. Hamilton. 416-925-9405 or emw@emw.ca or www.royalconservatory.org.

May 28

Sunday May 28


3:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. A Little Night Music. Presented by Canadian premiere of work by Ardo Ran Varres and other works. Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra; Kara-Lis Coversdale, piano; Kirke Kargi, piano; Triskele, voice & traditional instruments. Collective Arts Brewing, 207 Burlington St. E. Hamilton. 416-925-9405 or emw@emw.ca or www.royalconservatory.org.
LIVE OR ONLINE | Mar 28 to Jun 6, 2023

Chiarello, double bass; Emmanuelle Beaulieu Bergeron, cello; Theresa Rudolph, viola; Luri Lee, violin. Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, 472 Bloor St. W. www.eventbrite.ca or admin@trioarkel.com or 647-229-6918. $40.

- 7:00: INNERchamber Inc. The Oulist. Bach: Jagen ist die Lust der Götter from Cantata BWV 208; Bach: Sonata No.2, for Violin and Obbligato Harpsichord BWV 1015; Handel: Trio Sonata Op.2 No.4 HWV 388; Handel: “Total Eclipse” from Samson; Handel: “Mirth, admit me of thy crew,” from Alcibiades; Telemann: Concerto for Recorder (violin), Horn and Continuo. Julie Baumgartel, baroque violin; Andrew Chung, baroque violin; Derek Conrad, natural horn; Borsys Medicky, harpsichord; Margaret Gay, baroque cello. Revival House, 70 Brunswick St., Stratford. tickets@innerchamber.ca. $50; $10(arts workers/st). LIVESTREAM. A light meal is available to patrons in Stratford.
- 7:30: Grand Philharmonic Choir. Water: An Environmental Oratorio and Bruckner Te Deum. Grand Philharmonic Children’s Choir; Grand Philharmonic Youth Choir; Katie Clark, soprano; Marion Newman, mezzo; Jean-Philippe Lazure, tenor; Phillip Addis, baritone; Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony; Mark Vuorinen, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. Tickets & info: www.grandphilchoir.com. $27-$81; $19(st/under-30); $19(child/high-school st).
- 11:00am: Encore Symphonic Concert Band. Monthly Concert. 35-piece concert band performing band concert music, pop tunes, jazz standards (2 singers) and the occasional march. Trinity Presbyterian Church York Mills, 2737 Bayview Ave. www.encoreband.ca. $10.
- 7:30: Organix Concerts/Istituto Italiano di Cultura Toronto. Italian Arts Festival. Eugenio Maria Fagiani, organ, Basilica of Our Lady Immaculate, Guelph. 416-571-3680 or www.organixconcerts.ca. $35; $30(RCCO/CIOC). Also Jun 3(7:30pm) - Timothy Eaton Memorial Church, Toronto.
- 8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Brahms 2 + Benedetti Plays Marsalis. Marsalis: Violin Concerto (Canadian Premiere); Brahms: Symphony No.2. Nicola Benedetti, violin; Elim Chan, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-549-3375. From $35. Also Jun 1, 3.
- 7:00: Organix Concerts/Istituto Italiano di Cultura Toronto. Italian Arts Festival. Bella Unison: An Environmental Oratorio and Bruckner Te Deum. Grand Philharmonic Children’s Choir; Grand Philharmonic Youth Choir; Katie Clark, soprano; Marion Newman, mezzo; Jean-Philippe Lazure, tenor; Phillip Addis, baritone; Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony; Mark Vuorinen, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. Tickets & info: www.grandphilchoir.com. $27-$81; $19(st/under-30); $19(child/high-school st).

Thursday June 1

- 11:00am: Organix Concerts/Istituto Italiano di Cultura Toronto. Italian Arts Festival. Eugenio Maria Fagiani, organ, Basilica of Our Lady Immaculate, Guelph. 416-571-3680 or www.organixconcerts.ca. $35; $30(RCCO/CIOC). Also Jun 3(8pm) - Timothy Eaton Memorial Church, Toronto.
- 8:00: Alliance Française de Toronto. Virtuosi by the Leleu Brothers. Thomas Leleu, tuba; Romain Leleu, trumpet. Spadina Theatre, Alliance Française de Toronto, 24 Spadina Rd. www.alliance-francaise.ca. $18.

Friday June 2

- 7:30: Canadian Opera Company. Porgy & Bess. Music by George Gershwin. Libretto by DuBose and Dorothy Heyward, based on DuBose Heyward’s novel. Canadian Opera Company Theatre, 227 Front St. E. 416-363-8231 or 1-800-250-4653 or tickets@coc.ca. From $24; Also Jun 3, 4(2pm). At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.

Saturday June 3

- 4:00: Organix Concerts/Istituto Italiano di Cultura Toronto. Italian Arts Festival. Mario Ciferri, organ. Timothy Eaton Memorial Church, 230 St. Clair Ave. W. 416-549-3680 or www.organixconcerts.ca. $45; $40(RCCO/CIOC). Also May 31(7:30pm) - Basilica of Our Lady Immaculate, Guelph.
- 7:30: Canadian Opera Company. Porgy & Bess. Music by George Gershwin. Libretto by DuBose and Dorothy Heyward, based on DuBose Heyward’s novel. Canadian Opera Company Theatre, 227 Front St. E. 416-363-8231 or 1-800-250-4653 or tickets@coc.ca. From $24; Also Jun 3, 4(2pm). At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.

LEIPZIG CANTATAS
May 28 | 14pm

Toronto Bach Festival

- 4:00: Toronto Bach Festival. Leipzig Cantatas. All-Bach program. Die Eiden sollen essen, BWV 75; Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes BWV 75; Dieser Welt Licht BWV 172; Liebster Jesum BWV 172; Narrenschiff BWV 172; O L’italiana in Algeri. Heather Bambrick, soprano; Alfred Reed: Havana Moon; Richard Rodgers (arr. Howard Cable): Bewitched; Spring. Tickets: 416-466-8241 or www.torontobachfestival.org. $49.
- 7:00: Canadian Opera Company. Porgy & Bess. Music by George Gershwin. Libretto by DuBose and Dorothy Heyward, based on DuBose Heyward’s novel. Canadian Opera Company Theatre, 227 Front St. E. 416-363-8231 or 1-800-250-4653 or tickets@coc.ca. From $24; Also Jun 3, 4(2pm). At 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.

Music Toronto
Cose Celebration of Small Ensembles
June 3 at 5pm
Far From Triumphing Court
Unspoken Poetry
Colour You Like

www.toronto-music.com

WYCHWOOD CLARINET CHOIR
Sunday, May 28th, 4pm
SOUNDS OF SPRING
with special guest soloist
HEATHER BAMBRICK

St Michael & All Angels Church, 611 St Clair Ave. West
WYCHWOODCLARINETCHOIR.CA
Music from the Greatest Movies of All Time

One Presents: Polina Osetinskya - Baroque
2805 Back.indd   51

Also Jun 1(7:30pm) - Basil-571-3680 or www.organixconcerts.ca. $45; Memorial Church, 230 St. Clair Ave. W. 416-
Eugenio Maria Fagiani, organ. Timothy Eaton. 416-729-7564. $30(adv) or cash at door .

Monday June 6

3:00: Nine Sparrows Arts Foundation


Mainly Clubs

3030 Dundas West
3030 Dundas St. W. 416-769-5736
3030dundaswest.com
A large, airy space that plays hosts to concerts, events, and more, 3030 Dundas is home to a wide variety of music and a top-notch Trinidadian-Canadian food menu.

Burdock
1184 Bloor St. W. 416-546-4033
burdockto.com
A sleek music hall with exceptional sound and ambience, featuring a draft list of house-made brews.

BSM 254
254 Landsdowne Ave. 416-801-6325
bsm254.com
A cozy music venue with an underground vibe, BSM 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 acts on 2 stages.

Capone's Cocktail Lounge
1572 Bloor St. W. 416-534-7911
caponesto.com
A self-described perfect marriage of a cocktail kitchen and comfortable neighbourhood bar; with live music Wednesday through Sunday.

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

C'est What
67 Front St. E. 416-867-9499
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. 447-489-2099
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
294 College St. 416-792-4497
themettray.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.

The Grand River Jazz Society, which presents residencies and jam sessions.

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College St. Jazz Festival, continued from page 32

The inaugural CSJF is “focused on gender representation, cultural diversity, and emerging artists,” and its lineup is reflective of this mandate. Day 1 begins with pianist Jennifer Lo, appearing with her trio at Free Times Cafe. Day 2 features the vibraphonist Rachae Moukalkekk’s trio at Sellers & Newell, as well as bassist/vocalist Carlie Howell’s group, saxophonist Alison Young’s trio, and vocalist Chloe Watkinson, all at The Emmet Ray. (Also of note: Carlie Howell will moderate a panel on gender representation in jazz at Sellers & Newell in the afternoon, prior to the start of the day’s performances.) On day 3, Grapevine Duo (trombonist/vocalist Charlotte McAfee-Brunner and guitarist Jared Higgins) appears at Bar Pompette, the vocalist Laila Bial’s trio plays the College Street United Church and the festival closes with a triple bill at Revival, as Trash Panda Brass Band, vocalist Tara Moneka’s Diljah Sextet, and vocalist Queen Pepper all take the stage.

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.

IN THE CLUBS

Trash Panda Brass Band

College St. Jazz Festival, continued from page 32

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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.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS


FESTIVALS

- Estonian Music Week 2023, May 25 & 27. May 25: Mari Kulkun, Triskele, Kirke Karja Trio, and others at multiple venues in Toronto. See daily listings for details of the May 27 concert, Nordic Perspectives, by the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra; Kari-Lis Coverdale, piano; Kirke Harja, piano; and Triskele, voice & traditional instruments in Hamilton. Further information at entwoven.ca or www.estonian-musicweek.ca.

MAINLY CLUBS continued from page 51

Tavern regularly hosts indie, rock, and other musical genres on its stage.

Old Mill, The
21 Old Mill Rd. 416-236-2641
oldmilltoronto.com

The Home Smith Bar:
A chic, low-light bar with top-shelf tequila, reposadobar.com
136 Ossington Ave. 416-532-6474

Pamenar Cafe
268 Augusta Ave. 416-840-0501
http://cafepamenar.com

Café by day, bar by night, Pamenar serves some of the best coffee and cocktails in the city, with a rotating cast of musicians playing both recurring gigs and one-off shows.

Pilot Tavern, The
22 Cumberland Ave. 416-923-5716
theplot.ca
With over 75 years around Yonge and Bloor, the Pilot is a multi-level bar that hosts live jazz on Saturday afternoons.

Poetry Jazz Cafe
1078 Queen St West.
poetryjazzcafe.com
A sexy, clubby space, Poetry hosts live jazz, hip-hop, and DJs nightly in its new home on Queen Street West.

Reposado Bar & Lounge
136 Ossington Ave. 416-532-6474
reposadoar.com
A chic, low-light bar with top-shelf tequila, Mexican tapas, and live music.

Reservoir Lounge, The
52 Wellington St. E. 416-955-0887
reservoirlounge.com
Toronto’s self-professed original swing-jazz bar and restaurant, located in a historic building. Speakeasy near St. Lawrence Market, with live music four nights a week.

Rev, La
2848 Dundas St. W. 416-766-0746
https://larev.ca
La Rev offers their guests an authentic taste of comida casera (Mexican homestyle cooking), and a welcoming performance space featuring some of Toronto’s most talented musicians.

Rex Hotel Jazz & Blues Bar, The
194 Queen St. W. 416-598-2475
thesenator.com
With over 60 shows per month of Canadian and international groups, The Rex is Toronto’s longest-running jazz club, with full bar and kitchen menu.

Sauce on Danforth
1378 Danforth Ave. 416-748-1376
sauceondanforth.com
With Victorian lighting, cocktails, and an extensive tap and bottle list, Sauce on Danforth has live music Tuesday through Saturday (and sometimes Sunday).
Toronto Bach Festival

Annual Bach Lecture
May 28 | 1:30pm

University of Toronto Choral Conducting Symposium

July 4-7, 2023

Dr. Jamie Hillman
Elmer Iseler Chair in Conducting, University of Toronto

Dr. Felicia Barber
Associate Professor of Choral Conducting, Adjunct, Yale University

Dr. Darryl Edwards
Professor, Voice Studies, University of Toronto

Dr. Joy Lee
Collaborative Pianist, University of Toronto

MUSICAL THEATRE


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Ongoing, On Demand & Other

ONLINE DISCUSSION
● Apr 12 7:00: Tafelmusik. Tafelmusik: The Sopranos. Princes of the Opera World. Online conversation examining the unique timbres of countertenors and male sopranos, while exploring what these voices tell us about the full range of human expression. Moderated by Matthew White, CEO, Victoria Symphony; with Michael Maniaci, American male soprano; Kristina Szabó, Canadian mezzo, and Danny Taylor, American countertenor. www.tafelmusik.org. $5. ONLINE.

WORKSHOPS
● Apr 24 5:00: Canadian Opera Company. Youth Opera Lab: The Art of the Sword. For ages 16-28. Focused on the COC’s upcoming production of Verdi’s Macbeth and involving interactive discussion and masterclass with Macbeth Fight Director Nick Sandys and COC Teaching Artist Rennie Salewski before attending the dress rehearsal. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. www.coc.ca. $15.

OPEN REHEARSAL

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Saturday April 29
10:30 am

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Welcome to Who’s Who <at> thewholenote.com
our online directories of choirs, summer music, presenters, venues and more

A warm April welcome (with teasers to their profiles online!) to:

- Achill Choral Society
  www.achill.ca
  “We welcome diversity in our membership and in the broad range of contemporary, classical, and traditional music we perform. We value learning and growing musically and are committed to excellence.”

- Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto
  www.amadeusto.ca
  “Entering our 50th year, the award-winning, semi-professional Amadeus Choir champions the best of choral music and premieres works of Canadian and international composers.”

- Bel Canto Singers
  www.belcantsingers.ca
  “We are a four-part adult community choir, performing two concerts per year (spring and Christmas) from a repertoire of classical masters, Broadway and movie tunes, opera choruses and pop songs.”

- Cantabile Chamber Singers
  www.cantablechambersingers.ca
  “A welcoming choral community that has an emphasis on informed interpretation, innovative programming and social awareness. We welcome composers to submit new works.”

- Chorus York
  ChorusYork.ca
  “Come Sing With Us.”

- City Choir
  Citychoir.ca
  “Launched in 2010, City Choir is an exciting non-auditioned SATB choir. Repertoire includes original compositions and is very diverse.”

- Cummer Avenue United Church Choir
  www.cummeravenueuc.ca
  “Cummer Ave. United Choir provides musical leadership Sunday mornings, offering a wide variety of musical styles.”

- Echo Women’s Choir
  www.echochoroir.ca
  "Echo is a 40-voice, non-auditioned community choir in the heart of downtown Toronto, with a singing,iard, and vibrant singing culture accessible to all.”

- The Edison Singers
  theedisonsingers.com
  “The Edison Singers is an outstanding ensemble of professional singers whose energy, spirit and commitment to this choir is remarkable and truly inspiring.”

- Etoitcoperate Centennial Choir
  www.etobocentennialchairs.ca
  “Etoitcoperate Centennial Choir offers singers a rewarding community choir experience - diverse repertoire and high musical standards in a fun, warm and welcoming community of music lovers.”

- Exultate Chamber Singers
  www.exultate.net
  “A welcoming group of skilled, musical singers with a wide-ranging repertoire and a commitment to the development of singers, composers, and conductors both within Exul- tate and in the larger choral community.”

- Georgetown Choral Society
  https://www.georgetownchoral.ca/
  “Proud of its community choir history of over a half century, the GCS always welcomes new members.”

- Incontra Vocal Ensemble
  www.incontr vocalesensemble.ca
  “Encounter something unique with Incontra Vocal Ensemble.”

- Leaside United Church Choirs
  https://www.leasideunited.org/
  “Music is central to worship at Leaside United Church. The rich music program includes the Chancel Choir and the Junior Choir.”

- Metropolitan United Choir
  www.metunited.ca
  “We're a fun-loving, semi-professional and family-like liturgical and concert choir, who sing rep from Lassus to Bach to Lady Gaga.”

- Milton Choristers
  www.miltonchoristers.com
  “4-part Community Choir in Milton, Halton Region”

- Oriana Women’s Choir
  Orianachoir.com
  “Oriana explores the possibilities in choral music for upper voices, and fosters the creation of new Canadian choral music. New singers are welcome to join us at any rehearsal!”

- Pax Christi Chorale
  www.paxchristichorale.org
  “Experience the deep joys of choral singing in a diverse and welcoming community with Pax Christi Chorale.”

- Peterborough Singers
  www.peterboroughsingers.ca
  “For 2023-2024 we will be performing a Yule-tide Cheer concert, Handel's Messiah, The Songbook of Elton John, and Bach's St. Matthew Passion.”

- Serenata Singers
  Serenatasingers.ca
  “Enjoy singing in harmony? Please join our warm and welcoming choir. We rehearse on Wednesday mornings in Scarborough.”

- Tafelmusik Baroque Choir
  https://tafelmusik.org/
  “The Tafelmusik Chamber Choir, specializing in historically informed performances of baroque and classical repertoire, was formed in 1981 as a complement to the Tafelmusik Orchestra.”

- Toronto Choral Society
  www.torontochoralsociety.org
  “Please come aboard to our next concert “A Sea Symphony”, on June 4, 2023. Sail along with The Toronto Choral Society, as we take you on a musical journey on the high seas, at Eastminster United Church.”

- Toronto Classical Singers
  www.torontoclassicsingers.ca
  “Great composers, good tunes, complex sonorities, the full range of musical possibilities and a very good time.”

- Toronto Mendelssohn Choir
  www.tmchoir.org
  “The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir is proud to be one of Canada’s oldest, largest, and most recognized choral ensembles, renowned for over 125 years for delivering the highest standard of musical performance.”

- Toronto Welsh Male Voice Choir
  www.welshchoir.ca
  “Fantastic choir that brings the joy of song to many people of all ages. To learn more, please visit our website.”

- Upper Canada Choristers
  www.uppercanadachoristers.org
  “We are a diverse, inclusive mixed-voice community choir, committed to excellence, whose mandate is to nurture the love and appreciation of singing choral music in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.”

- VesniKa Choir
  www.vesnivka.com
  “We are a friendly inclusive community choir that performs Ukrainian classical, sacred and traditional folk repertoire. Join us for a unique singing experience.”

- VOCA Chorus of Toronto
  www.vocachorus.ca
  “The VOCA Chorus of Toronto is a dynamic, auditioned ensemble which performs eclectic repertoire, including Canadian premieres, in collaboration with some of Canada’s finest artists.”

- West Toronto Community Choir
  www.facebook.com/groups/westtorontocommunitychoir
  “Our vibe is fun and social, with a focus on community engagement and shared music-making. There are no auditions. We value diversity of gender identity, age, race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, education, and political perspective and are open to all.”

SUMMER MUSIC EDUCATION

- CAMMAC Music Centre
  June 25 - August 20, 2023
  www.cammac.ca/
  “Enjoy the summer vacation fun with a unique musical experience in the heart of the Laurentians. Eight one-week immersive programs feature a wide variety of classes & activities for amateur musicians of all ages and levels.”

- COC Summer Music Camp
  July 4 - July 28, 2023
  https://www.coc.ca/learn/summercamps
  “The COC is thrilled to launch Summer Music Camps! Young artists are immersed in a world of music & performing arts, working with teaching artists to hone creative skills, explore singing, composition, drama, & design, in a creative & non-competitive environment.”

- Interprovincial Music Camp
  August 20 - 25; August 26 - September 3, 2023
  www.campimc.ca
  “If you are an emerging artist 22 years of age and under, please join us for this exciting week which will include daily workshops, combo sessions and guided practice sessions by some of the country’s most recognized and active jazz musicians.”

- Kodalý Certification Program
  Levels I & II
  July 3 - 14, 2023
  https://music.uwo.ca/outreach/
  “In intensive program, participants will strengthen their personal musicianship and pedagogical skills, with content grounded in a contemporary understanding of the philos- ophy inspired by Zoltán Kodály.”

- Lake Field Music
  August 6 - 12, 2023
  www.lakefieldmusic.ca
  “A music camp for adults: play, sing, and be inspired in a collegial environment. Stay on campus and immerse yourself in workshops, ensembles, choirs, and performances.”

- Music at Port Milford
  July 9 - August 6, 2023
  Musicatportmilford.org
  “Chamber Music Academy in Prince Edward County. Music at Port Milford enters its 37th Season”

- No Strings Theatre SummerStage - CARMEN
  July 22 - August 20
  www.nostringstheatre.com
  “Announcing No Strings Theatre’s Summer-Stage 2023 VAP opera intensive at a rural farm near Orangeville, featuring George Bizet’s Carmen.”

- Stratford Summer Music 2023 Jazz Academy
  July 31 - August 5, 2023
  www.stratfordsummermusic.ca
  “If you are an emerging artist 22 years of age and under, please join us for this exciting week which will include daily workshops, combo sessions and guided practice sessions by some of the country’s most recognized and active jazz musicians.”

For more information, or to join, contact Karen Ages at 416-323-2232 x26 or karen@thewholenote.com
As a folk singer of sorts I was intrigued to read somewhere that Franz Schubert sometimes accompanied his songs on guitar. For several issues now I’ve meant to write about a new version of Die schöne Müllerin but each time I’ve run out of space, or it just didn’t seem appropriate to the theme of the column. Guitarist David Leisner has adapted the original piano score for guitar and is joined by baritone Michael Kelly in a compelling performance (Bright Shiny Things BSTC-0175 brightshiny.ninja). I wrote back in December that the lack of texts for Victoria Bond’s song settings on the album Blue and Green Music was not an issue due to Kelly’s clear diction. I’m sure if I were conversant in German the same would be true in the case of the current recording, but as I’m not I’m glad that there is a QR code linking to full lyrics and translations. Leisner’s clever adaptation of the accompaniment and his clear and fluent playing provide a transparent, yet supportive framework for Kelly’s nuanced interpretation. The sparser textures produced by the guitar allow Kelly to really shine, especially in the tender, quieter moments, without compromising the effect of the more dramatic sturm und drang aspects of the song cycle.

It seems that, like me, David Leisner got his start singing folk and pop songs, accompanying himself on guitar as a teenager. As his horizons expanded through choral singing and composition studies, he established himself as an accomplished classical guitarist and composer, with a focus on art song. On Letters to the World (Azica ACD-71353 davidleisner.com compositions-recordings) we are presented with four examples of this spanning the 1980s to 2011. The disc opens with Confiding, a cycle of ten songs for soprano and piano, featuring Katherine Whyte and Lenore Fishman Davis, with texts by Emily Dickinson and Emily Brontë, four each, and single offerings from Elissa Ely and Gene Scaramellino. The disc’s title is taken from the final song of the cycle, Dickinson’s This is my letter to the World (That never wrote to Me). Dickinson is also the source of the texts of Simple Songs from 1982, for baritone and guitar featuring Michael Kelly and the composer. Leisner chose (and rendered into English for the programme booklet) five selections from Richard Wilhelm’s German translation of Lao Tzu’s Tao te Ching for the cycle Das Wunderbare Wesen (The Miraculous Essence) for baritone and cello. Leisner says, “The songs emerged less out of deference to the melodic line and more in response to a structure established in the cello part, e.g., a repeated alternating metric pattern or a melodic theme that is repeated in the fashion of passacaglia throughout a movement.” Once again Kelly shines, in equal partnership with cellist Raman Ramakrishnan. The final track is the powerful Of Darkness and Light, written in response to the 9/11 tragedy. Leisner says, “To ‘know the light’ and ‘know the dark’ is essential, especially in times of trouble.” Of Darkness and Light uses five poems by Wendell Berry written between 1968 and 1970 which the composer found to “have special resonance in 2002 as well.” Set for tenor, violin, oboe and piano, this moving performance features Andrew Fuchs, Sarah Whitney, Scott Bartucca and Dimitri Dover respectively, drawing this intimate composer-portrait disc to a successful close.

Schubert’s songs have been subjected to many diverse interpretations and adaptations over the past two centuries. One of the most effective that I have had the pleasure to witness was Chimera Project’s Winterreise featuring bass baritone Philippe Sly as staged during the 21C festival at Koerner Hall just a couple of months before the COVID lockdown in 2020. I have just encountered another intriguing evening-long production conceived and staged by Christof Loy for Theater Basel. Eine Winterreise (A Winter Journey) features soprano Anne Sofie von Otter accompanied by pianist Kristian Bezuidenhout and a sparse cast of silent characters representing various aspects of the drama (Naxos DVD 2.110751 naxos.com Search Keyword Search Results?q=Eine%20Winterreise). Loy writes, “Anne Sofie plays the soul of Schubert in a kind of fictionalized account of the composer if he had lived to grow old rather than dying so young. Other characters gather round her, played by non-speaking actors and dancers. Like shadows from the past, inspired by Schubert’s biography. There is a double who is kind of a younger mirror image of the ‘mature Schubert’ – a melancholy soul for whom life is complex in its beauty but also in its difficulty. The other man, Schober, is based on Schubert’s friend, a reckless young man with a freewheeling lifestyle who […] a number of biographers even accuse of having taken Schubert to the prostitute who gave him the syphilis infection that killed him. In this sense, the courtesan in A Winter Journey is associated with death though conversely she’s also full of vitality. The other female character, whom we christened Viola, imparts a gentle, hopeful strength to the whole production.” Stand alone songs – the play opens with Die Sommernacht – and selections from the cycles Schwanengesaeng and Winterreise, are interspersed with solo piano works and text fragments taken from Schubert’s Mein Traum, often with dramatically choreographed accompaniment. The evening ends quietly and mournfully with the beautiful Des Baches Wiegenlied (The Brook’s Lullaby) from Die schöne Müllerin as snow falls on the darkened set and the cast slowly disperses into the night. There is a momentary respite from the gloom as von Otter steps out of character and recites Wilhelm Müller’s sardonic epilogue from that cycle of poems arresting the audience’s suspension of disbelief and bidding them a safe journey home. A stunning performance.

One of the most striking usages of Schubert’s music in another medium is Ariel Dorfman’s play Death and the Maiden which he later adapted for Roman Polanski’s 1994 mystery-drama film. But it was Schubert himself who first reinterpreted his 1817 song Death and the Maiden and used it as the theme for a set of variations in the slow movement of his 1826 String Quartet No. 14 in D Minor. It is this work which is the cornerstone of a new (digital only) release by Brooklyn Rider, a New York-based string quartet, titled The Wanderer (In A Circle Records ICR025 brooklynrider.com). The title refers to another Schubert lied that the composer incorporated into a late work, the devilishly light Wanderer Fantasy for solo piano. The album is “bound together by the dualities of memory and remembrance, melancholy and bliss, old and new, and life and death” made all the more poignant by the fact that the disc is a recording of a live performance.
in eastern Lithuania shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It opens with Aroma a Distancia, a work composed for the quartet by Gonzalo Grau. The composer lived the first 20 years of his life in Venezuela before moving to the United States. He says, “the aroma, the remembrance of my past, is what makes me who I am today. After all, it often happens when I am in Venezuela, I miss Madrid or New York, or if I’m in Boston I miss Caracas.” The brief work incorporates flavours from these various influences. Another South American transplant, Argentinian Osvaldo Golijov’s Um Dia Bom (A Good Day) “depicts the story of a life from morning to midnight and beyond, but as told to a child” with movements titled Hovering in the Cradle, While the Rain, Around the Fire, Riding with Death and Feather. Acknowledged influences include a traditional Yiddish song, a sparse painting by Basquiat of a horse carrying the Death Rider, Blind Willie Johnson’s song Dark was the Night and the spirit of the late Chick Corea. The crowning glory is a stunning performance of Schubert’s masterpiece, his penultimate contribution to the string quartet genre, especially nuanced during the variations on the tune that gives the work its name and the flamboyance of the breakneck galloping horse-like finale.

Banjo is the glue that binds the remaining discs in this column. When I was preparing for retirement from my day job at New Music Concerts four years ago, I began to collect instruments I thought I would enjoy getting to know better, including mountain dulcimer, accordion and banjo. Although I did gather some instruction books, took a few lessons and even learned a few banjo songs, I must admit that when COVID hit and my work at The WholeNote expanded into a near-full-time job organizing CD reviews to fill the void left by the empty concert halls, my best laid plans fell by the wayside.

All that is to say that I’m envious of guitarist and singer Kate Weekes who took advantage of her isolation in the Gatineau Hills during the pandemic to learn how to play clawhammer (old-timey, rather than bluegrass style) banjo and pursue new directions in song writing. The result is a new CD, Better Days Ahead (kateweekes.com), featuring ten original songs all penned by Weekes. Although not flashy, there is nothing about Weekes’ banjo playing to indicate her neophyte status; the banjo provides rhythmic and harmonic structure to the quirky songs and supports her simple soprano voice lines. She is accompanied by a trio of accomplished musicians who play nearly two dozen instruments, primarily sousaphone and other brass (Brian Sanderson), fiddles, bass and mandolin (James Stephens, who also produced and engineered the disc) and various exotic percussion instruments (Rob Graves). The arrangements are simple and straightforward, always complementing Weekes’ singing and not interfering with the clarity of the lyrics. I particularly enjoy the use of sousaphone (marching tuba) for the bass line on most songs. Highlights for me include Liminal Space about sheltering in place; the haunting title work co-written with Brenda Berezan; Floating Face Down, a cryptic and surprisingly upbeat, quasi-English ballad about the narrator’s drowning in the Thames “wearing my mother’s dress”; and Time by the Moon, a song written during a month-long banjo tune writing workshop hosted by Chris Coole during the late fall of 2021. Videos for these last two can be seen at youtube.com/results?search_query=kate+weekes. It’s well worth the visit.

One of my problems with the traditional five-string banjo is trying to get my head around the counterintuitive fact the highest sounding string is on top, whereas on every other stringed instrument I’ve played it’s on the bottom. One day about five years ago I found myself at the corner of Danforth and Broadview where I was met by the intriguing sight of a young man playing a banjo with six strings. I asked if it was tuned like a guitar, and he said yes. Well, I thought to myself, that’s cheating! I’d also like to think that I’m not too old to learn a new trick or two, so it was a five-string banjo I eventually bought. I’m still stymied though because when my ear knows a high note is called for, I instinctively pluck the first string instead of the fifth...
My mother is a big fan of the late Leon Bibb, folksinger, actor and civil rights activist – he marched at Selma with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. – and through her interest I became familiar with his son, renowned bluesman Eric Bibb. Eric’s youth was spent immersed in the Greenwich Village folk scene. Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and Pete Seeger were visitors to his home, and he was deeply influenced by Odetta, Richie Havens and Taj Mahal. Mom and I had the pleasure of seeing him perform at Hugh’s Room some years ago and my biggest takeaway from that evening was his statement “I just need one guitar… more!” Imagine my surprise when I watched a video from his new album Ridin’ (Stony Plain SPCD1472 stonyplainrecords.com) and saw him playing a six-string banjo (aka banjitar). Bibb plays it more like a blues guitar than a traditional banjo, but the snare drum-like membrane of the banjo head and the hollow round body give it a very distinctive sound.

It this sound that opens the disc in a paean to kith and kin, aptly titled Family, the lyrics of which nicely sum up the overall message of the album: “I am like you – born of a woman | I am like you – a child of God | You are like me – here to learn from History | You are like me – Family.” Bibb says, “As a songwriter, studying African American history has always been a deep well of inspiration. The true stories of my ancestors and their communities are at the heart of many of the songs on my new album. Together with co-writer/producer Glen[vin Scott], we’ve created a concept album focusing on the ongoing task of understanding systemic racism and purging it from our world.” The history lessons include songs about the 14-year-old Emmett Till, kidnapped, tortured and lynched in Mississippi in 1955 (the title track); another about the white author who underwent skin pigment transformation to write Black Like Me, and the persecution he faced from his own community as a result in The Ballad of John Howard Griffin; and the destruction of “Black Wall Street” by white mobs in 1921 in Tulsa, Oklahoma in Tulsa Town, among others. These are interspersed with traditional folk songs like 500 Miles, TumbleWeedyWorld, and Sinner

I see I have not left myself much space for the final disc, TumbleWeedyWorld, the latest from Canadian country icon Lynn Miles (True North Records TND802 lynnmiiles.ca). On this, her 16th studio album, the Juno Award-winning and three-time Canadian Folk Music Awards Songwriter of the Year is accompanied by an outstanding band featuring Michael Ball (bass), Joey Wright (mandolin/acoustic guitar), Stuart Rutherford (dobro), Rob McLaren (banjo) and James Stephens (violin). Wright’s mandolin is front and centre on one of my favourite tracks Cold, Cold Moon which features Miles’ signature octave breaks in the moving melody line. Although at times during the disc I felt that this vocal effect was a little overused, it is particularly moving and effective on Moody, where it borders on yodelling. Julie Corrigan and Dave Draves contribute harmonies on the upbeat Sorry’s Just Not Good Enough This Time and dobro and banjo come to the fore in All Bitter Never Sweet with Rebecca Campbell providing duet vocals. This traditional country-flavoured disc comes to a poignant conclusion with Miles in fine voice on the ballad Gold in the Middle.

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

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TERRY ROBBINS

With Mendelssohn Complete String Quartets Vol.2 the Quatuor Van Kuijk complete the cycle of the composer’s string quartet output. Included here are the String Quartets No.4 in E Minor Op.44 No.2, No.5 in E-flat Major Op.44 No.3 and No.6 in F Minor Op.80 (Alpha Classics ALPHA931 outherere-music.com/en/albums/mendelssohn-complete-string-quartets-vol-2).

Both Op.44 quartets receive outstanding performances, but the real gem is Op.80, the last work Mendelssohn completed before his death and written in an outburst of grief following the death of his beloved sister Fanny. Described as “a confrontation with grief” it’s a striking work in which the composer’s pain is palpable, the performance here being one of quite stunning emotional impact and remarkable sensitivity and intensity.

The CD runs to a commendable 83 minutes, giving Quatuor Van Kuijk an edge over competing sets, many of which run to three volumes. Not that they need any advantage – it’s difficult to imagine any playing coming close to this.

Three late works by the masters of Viennese classicism are presented on Haydn & Mozart, the new CD from Canada’s Rosebud Quartet and violist Steven Dann (Leaf Music LM252 leaf-music.ca).

The CD has been getting frequent airplay on CBC Radio, and with good reason, all aspects of the release being of exceptional quality. The Haydn works are his two String Quartets in G Major Op.77 No.1 and F Major Op.77 No.2, apparently originally intended as part of a set of six. They are his last complete works in the medium, two later middle movements of an unfinished D minor quartet being published as Op.103.

Dann joins the quartet for Mozart’s String Quintet in E-flat Major K614, the last of his six and from April 1791, just eight months before his death.

Beautifully recorded at Quebec’s Domaine Forget, it’s an outstanding disc.

Fine performances of the two Haydn Op.77 quartets are also featured on Haydn String Quartets Opp.44, 77 & Seven Last Words, a two-for-the-price-of-one CD set with which the London Haydn Quartet complete their much-admired survey of the composer’s mature quartets using the original published editions (Hyperion CDA68410 hyperion-records.co.uk dw.asp?dc=W13661_68410).

The String Quartet in D Minor Op.42 completes the first disc, with the second CD filled by the lengthy – over 75 minutes – Seven Last Words of our Saviour on the Cross Op.51, Haydn’s own arrangement of his orchestral original. Described as a fitting testimonial to the composer’s deep, enduring faith it compensates for the inevitable loss
of orchestral colour and power by an increased sense of intimacy. Given the subject matter it’s not always an easy listen, but its emotional impact is considerable.

In the booklet notes for the new CD Haydn Almeida Beethoven on the Spanish Eudora label the Proteean Quartet members say that since 2018 they have focused their activity on historical performance on period instruments, and that one of their major creative engines is the recovery of Spanish music heritage and its dissemination. Their contribution here is the first recording of the String Quartet in G Minor Op.7 No.1 by the Portuguese-born Juan Pedro Almeida Mota (1744–c.1817), who developed his career in Spain (EUD-SACD-2301 eudorarecords.com).

Haydn’s String Quartet in D Major Op.33 No.6 is a lovely opening to the disc, the freshness and elegance of the work conveyed perfectly through light and sensitive playing. The same performing qualities are evident in the Mota quartet – again, a light but attractive and not insubstantial work.

The beautifully clean and articulated performance of Beethoven’s String Quartet in F Major Op.18 No.1 gives the whole CD a decided consistency, with a delightfully playful touch mixed with sensitivity and insight.

The Ruisi Quartet make their Pentatone label debut with Big House, featuring music by Joseph Haydn, Matthew Locke and the young British composer Oliver Leith (Pentatone PTC 51870.40 pentatonemusic.com/product/big-house).

Finely judged performances of two Haydn works – the String Quartet No.11 in D Minor Op.9 No.4 and the String Quartet No.23 in F Minor Op.20 No.5 – open and close the disc. The brief Fantasia from Locke’s Consort of 4 Parts: Suite No.3 in F is paired with Leith’s equally brief 2020 reworking of A different Fantasia from Suite No.5 in G Minor (After Locke’s Consort of 4 Parts).

The central and largest work is Leith’s seven-movement string quartet The Big House, inspired by the 1980 book In Ruins: The Once Great Houses of Ireland by photographer Sir Simon Marsden, who specialized in black-and-white photographs of allegedly haunted houses. There’s certainly an eerie air of decay in the slow, distinctive and unusual but effective writing, albeit with very little detail.

John Wilson leads the Sinfonia of London in simply outstanding performances of English string music on Vaughan Williams, Howells, Delius, Elgar: Music for Strings (Chandos CHSA 3291 chandos.net/products/catalogue/CHAN%203291).

Vaughan Williams’ Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis for Double String Orchestra was written for the 1910 Three Choirs Festival at Gloucester Cathedral and designed to exploit the cathedral’s acoustics. The antiphonal forces – the smaller second orchestra and a featured string quartet – are captured here in stunning detail.

Herbert Howells was an organ student at Gloucester and present at the Fantasia premiere. A few weeks later he heard Elgar’s Introduction and Allegro for Strings (Quartet and Orchestra) Op.47, calling the events “two intensely timely, kindling, formative experiences.” His own Concerto for String Orchestra from 1938 was begun in 1934 as a tribute to Elgar, who had died that year, but the middle movement became an In Memoriam tribute to both Elgar and Howells’ own nine-year-old son, who died suddenly in 1935. Using the same forces as the Elgar, it’s an impressive and impassioned work that should really be much better known.

The Delius work is Late Swallows, the slow movement of his 1916–1917 String Quartet arranged by Eric Fenby in 1962–63. A rich and glorious reading of the Elgar work concludes a superb disc.

Violinist Elinor D’Melon is outstanding on her debut album on the Rubicon Classics label, pairing the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto in D Major Op.35 with Lalo’s Symphonie espagnole in D Minor Op.21, ably supported by the RTE National Symphony Orchestra under Jaime Martin (RCD 1106 rubiconclassics.com/release/reso-ellinor-d-melon-tchaikovsky-lalo).

From the lush, glowing tones of the opening of the Tchaikovsky it’s obvious that this is a player with complete technical command and a fine sense of phrasing and shaping, and nothing in the rest of the concerto or in the Lalo does anything to challenge that assumption. There is a link between the two works – Tchaikovsky’s playing through the Lalo with violinist Iosif KoteK in early 1878 led directly to Tchaikovsky composing his own concerto.

The spacious recorded sound perfectly showcases the tonal quality of the two Guarneri “Del Gesù” violins D’Melon plays here: the c.1744 “Sainton” in the Tchaikovsky and the c.1724 “Gaspar Hauser” in the Lalo.

Dream Catcher, the latest release in the ongoing survey of the works of American composer Augusta Read Thomas is the debut album by the young violinist Clarissa Bevilacqua, who was instrumental in devising the program after getting to know Read Thomas and performing her violin compositions. The complete works for solo violin are here, along with the 2008 Violin Concerto No.3 “Juggler in Paradise” with the BBC National Orchestra.
of Wales conducted by Vimbayi Kaziboni (Nimbus Records NI8109 wyastone.co.uk).

The nine solo works to date range from 1995’s Incantation to three works from 2016. The CD’s title track from 2008 is intimately linked with the concerto, being essentially the opening and closing violin sections without the orchestra.

Bevilacqua says that this album is the first of “hopefully many projects” championing works that reflect our present instead of our past. Certainly her technical prowess and interpretative skills promise great things ahead.

The Norwegian violinist Eldbjørg Hemsing makes her Sony Classical label debut with Arctic – A Musical Journey with the Arctic Philharmonic Orchestra (19439936082 eldbjorgmusic.com album/arctic).

Celebrating the matchless beauty of the largely unexplored regions of Norway and acknowledging the threat posed by climate change, the CD is full of exhilarating melodies and impressively scored soundscapes, combining elements from American film music and European neo-classical music.

The former is certainly covered by the one substantial work on the disc, the lush, cinematic six-part Arctic Suite by Los Angeles-based film composer Jacob Shea. The remaining nine tracks, mostly in arrangements by Ben Palmer, are short pieces by Henning Sommero, Frode Fjellheim, Ola Gjeilo, Einnojuhani Rautavaara, Selim Palmgren, Ole Bull and James Newton Howard, with Grieg’s The Last Spring closing the disc.

It’s all beautifully played and recorded, with Hemsing in superb form.


The two have performed together for many years, with Capuçon saying that Argerich makes him play “like nobody else makes me play.” Certainly this recital, recorded live in concert at the Aix-en-Provence Easter Festival in April 2022, more than bears that out, with a remarkable final movement of the Franck in particular bringing a stellar recital to an electrifying close.

Violinist Manon Galy and pianist Jorge González Buajasán perform an engaging recital of French music on nuits parisienne, with works by Debussy, Ravel, Poulen and Milhaud (Aparté AP306 apartemusic.com).

Debussy’s Beau soir and 1917 Violin Sonata open the disc, followed by Ravel’s Pavane pour une infante défunte and the lush and expansive early Violin Sonata M.12 from 1897, not published until 1975.

It’s Poulen and Milhaud who steal the show however, with the former’s 1934 Présage and a welcome reappearance of his fascinating 1942 Violin Sonata setting the stage for Milhaud’s 1937 Brazilian (Scaramouche) and the tour-de-force Cinéma-fantastique (after Le bouef sur le toit) Op.58b from 1919, a dazzling work that uses fragments of Brazilian songs in a rondo-like structure and includes a huge solo violin cadenza in the middle, apparently contributed by Arthur Honegger. It draws simply fabulous playing from both performers.

On the digital-only release Mozart Sonatas for Piano and Violin Vol.2 violinist Claudio Cruz and pianist Olga Kopylova perform six of the mature sonatas Mozart wrote between 1787 and 1791 (Azul Music AMDA18121 azul-music.com.br).

The title reflects the developmental stage of the sonata at the time, with the violin not yet the main protagonist. The piano is certainly much to the fore here, with a warm tone and minimal resonance, but the balance never suffers; more importantly, there is beautifully judged playing from both performers, with crystal-clear, sensitive and unafﬂicted performances of the Sonatas No.17 in C Major K296, No.24 in F Major K378, No.25 in F Major K377, No.26 in B-flat Major K378, No.27 in G Major K379 and No.28 in E-flat Major K380.

Cellist Lionel Handy and pianist Jennifer Walsh are building an impressive discography of British works for cello and piano, their previous CDs of British Cello Music and works by Ireland, Delius and Bax being followed by their latest CD British Cello Works Volume 2 (Lyrita SRCD.412 wyastone.co.uk).


In between are Delius’ 1916 three-part single-movement Sonata and the Armstrong Gibbs Sonata in E Minor Op.132 from 1951, a lovely work that draws particularly attractive playing.

On Album for the Lute – Music from the former library of Dr. Werner Wolffheim the lutenist Bernhard Hofstötter has selected a number of characteristic pieces – all but one first recordings – from the handwritten and bound manuscript collection sold at auction in Berlin in 1929, the original context and ownership of which remains unknown (TYXart TXA22172 tyxart.de/en/txa22172_album-for-the-lute.html).

All pieces in the collection are in D major (the “Kässerliche Stimmung” or imperial tuning) as opposed to the characteristic D minor tuning of the Baroque lute. Hofstötter has created three groups of selections – or “partitas” – and separated them with chaconnes in different keys and from other manuscripts. Most of the pieces are anonymous, but composers represented are Achaz Casimir Hültz, Esajas Reusner the Younger, Garin Pinel, Ennemond Gaultier, Johann Heinrich Schmelzer and the wonderfully named but otherwise untraceable Jean Berdolde Bernard Bleystein de Prague.

Hofstötter’s warm, rich tone and superb technique, together with the clean and beautifully resonant recording, make the 73 minutes of a fascinating recital simply fly by.

The free-born African American, Justin Holland (1819–1889), was not only an important figure in the anti-slavery and civil rights movements but also the most influential and significant American guitarist of the 19th century, writing the country’s first published guitar method and publishing some 35 original works and 300 arrangements and variations on popular European and American themes.

On Justin Holland Guitar Works and Arrangements the American guitarist Christopher Mallett gives us a fascinating look at a seldom-heard musician (Naxos Classics 8.559924 naxos.com Catalogue Detail/?id=8.559924).

Only two of the 14 tracks – An Andante in C Major and Variations on L. Mason’s “Nearer My God, to Thee” – are Holland originals,
with arrangements varying from standards like ‘Tis the Last Rose of Summer and Henry Bishop’s Home Sweet Home, to traditional pieces and works by little-known names like Alfred Humphreys Pease, Ferdinand Beyer, W. H. Rulison, Alphons Czibulka, Tekla Badarzewska-Baranowska and Alphonse Leduc. Seven tracks are world-premiere recordings.

Mallett’s idiomatic playing makes for an immensely enjoyable disc.

Vienna was the centre of European musical life in the late-18th and early-19th centuries, and while there were hardly any original works for the rapidly emerging classical guitar there were many arrangements and transcriptions for the instrument. New arrangements of three emblematic works of the period are presented on Mozart Haydn Schubert, with the Bosnian lutenist Edin Karamazov and the Czech guitarist Pavel Steidl playing Karamazov’s transcriptions for two guitars of two keyboard works – Haydn’s Sonata in E-flat Major Hob.XVI:49 from around 1790 and Mozart’s Fantasia in C Minor K.475 from 1785 – and Schubert’s Arpeggione Sonata D821 from 1824 (Après AP309 apartemusic.com).

Both players use modern copies of contemporary instruments, Steidl, a Bernd Kresse guitar after Johann Anton Stauffer and Karamazov, a Gabriele Lodi guitar after René Lacôte. The soft, warm sounds create beautiful and interesting tone colours, and the very effective transcriptions make for a delightful CD.

England under Elizabeth I was a dangerous place for Catholics. William Byrd was fined for not attending Anglican services, his movements monitored and restricted owing to his connections with known Catholic dissidents. Yet there’s evidence he received official dispensation to practise his faith, albeit covertly, perhaps because Elizabeth loved music and was a keyboard player herself.

Most of the music on this richly rewarding CD comes from Byrd’s later years, all composed for small groups of singers. The main offering is the 26-minute Mass for Four Voices, printed in the late 1590s with no title or composer identified, intended for secret services in clandestine chapels. This gorgeous music is gorgeously sung, from the tender, affectionate Kyrie and Gloria to the earnest, complex Credo, fervently reverent Sanctus-Benedictus and, most strikingly, the haunting Agnus Dei.

The CD concludes with the grandiose, 13-minute Tribue Domine for six voices, a work from Byrd’s younger years. The nine shorter selections include examples from Byrd’s publicly issued songbooks, music that appealed to singers and listeners of all persuasions, widely performed and appreciated. I particularly enjoyed the elegiac Retire, my soul, the jubilant Gaudeamus omnes, the prayerful Turn our captivity (Psalm 126) and the celebratory Laudate Dominum (Psalm 117).

The 12-member, London-based Stile Antico, performing without a conductor, has won raves from its worldwide tours and numerous awards for its recordings; this latest CD will
add to its well-deserved laurels. Texts and translations are included.

Michael Schulan

Nicola Porpora – L’Angelica
Ekaterina Bakanova; Teresa Iervolino; Paola Valentina Molinari; La Lira Di Orfeo; Federico Maria Sardelli
Dynamic 37936 (naxos.com/ CatalogueDetail/?id=DYN-37936)

► I’ve enjoyed my CDs of Karina Gauvin, Cecilia Bartoli and Franco Fagioli singing arias by Nicola Porpora (1686-1768), wondering why hardly any of Porpora’s 50-plus operas are being performed or recorded.

After watching this DVD of L’Angelica from the 2021 Valle d’Itria Festival, I’m even more perplexed. Porpora’s score provides nearly two-and-a-half hours of affecting melodies, enlivened by frequent changes of tempi, rhythms and instrumentation, expressing moods from despair and anger to delight. Here, it’s all brilliantly sung by a superb cast and energetically propelled by the orchestra – La Lira di Orfeo – conducted by Federico Maria Sardelli.

Pietro Metastasio’s libretto tells of the amatory anxieties of two couples; Princess Angelica (soprano Ekaterina Bakanova) and Saracen soldier Medoro (soprano Paola Valentina Molinari); shepherdess Licori (mezzo Gaia Petrone) and shepherd Tirsi (soprano Barbara Massaro). The Christian knight Orlando (mezzo Teresa Iervolino), in pursuit of Medoro, lusts for Angelica; the old knight Orlando (baritone Sergio Foresti) offers sage advice. (At L’Angelica’s 1720 premiere, Tirsi was sung by a 15-year-old student of Porpora who would go on to become the most celebrated of all operatic castrati – Farinelli!!!)

Less pleasing were this production’s ambiguous costumes; meaningless masks; a banquet table; the singers’ unattractive, era-specific visual aspects: the single set, dominated by a tall mausoleum. (At L’Angelica’s original performance, a uniquely Canadian, and specific Québécois opera that beautifully and incisively explores the title track. It has been said that, “The Giver of Stars: Six Poems of Amy Lowell.” Each of the six movements is lovingly imbued with the majesty of the composition and the beauty of the poetry. Koriath’s vocal instrument is both supple and salient – embodying attributes in this recording of modern lieder is to be beholden to her elegant pianism in a completely new light. Even though these pieces from Silent Songs by the Ukrainian composer, Valentin Silvestrov, have been part of her repertoire for almost two decades, she helps us experience them in a completely new context, thanks in part to another Ukrainian – the formidable baritone Konstantin Krimmel.

Throughout, Grimaud’s piano, of necessity, often inhabits the shadows until the music calls upon her instrument to advance into the limelight. When it does, Grimaud’s dainty fingers seem to make balletic moves over the melodies, almost as if she likes her Silvestrov lieder unhurried and stoic, bejewelled with judiciously applied ornamentation. While no one song may be singled out from this brilliant cycle for special attention, Grimaud’s playing on Mandelstam’s poem I will tell you with complete directness is stunning.

This recording also reaches dizzying heights because of the ardent nobility of Krimmel’s silken baritone as he navigates his way through these songs, inhabiting the music and poetry as if both were written expressly for him. In Krimmel’s voice and Grimaud’s hands we experience real lyric generosity and warmth – like sliding glass panels of melodies and harmonies constantly and delicately navigating truly damask-upholstered Romanticism.

Raul da Gama

These Distances Between Us – 21st Century Songs of Longing
Emily Jaworski Koriath; Tad Koriath
Naxos 8.559908 (naxos.com/Search/Keyw ordSearchResults/?q=8.559908)

► On this rather remarkable, multi-disciplinary recording, the significant works of four American “Art Song” composers is explored – both as lyricist/poets and composers. All of the contemporary artists here are award-winning – and in addition to the thrilling vocals of famed mezzo-soprano Emily Jaworski Koriath, Tad Koriath performs on piano and has also created the stunning arrangements for the collection. The concept stems from Jessica Rudman, composer of the title track. It has been said that, “These Distances Between Us charts a cycle that recognizes the precarious nature of personal connections.” Joining the Koriaths on this CD are Jonathan Santore and Craig Brandwein, who are not only composers, but also magicians of computer-generated electronics.

Included here are Edie Hill’s The Giver of Stars: Six Poems of Amy Lowell. Each of the six movements is lovingly imbued with the majesty of the composition and the beauty of the poetry. Koriath’s vocal instrument is both supple and salient – embodying...
the cornucopia of emotions arising from the material. Hill’s music has been described as “full of mystery,” which is self-evident in the other aptly titled poetic movements such as Vernal Equinox (which feels like a summoning of the spirits of lost lovers in the moist Spring). The innate lyricism of Lowell’s poetry meshes perfectly with the enchanted piano work of Tad Koriath throughout the final three poetic movements.

Next up is Santore’s mind-opening Two Letters of Sulpicia (version for voice and electronics), which utilizes the technology to enhance and support – such as digital creation of highly realistic pipe organ stops and tubular bells. Also of note is the almost unbearable beauty of Brandwein’s Four Songs of John Charles McNeill. Of particular note is Rudman’s four-movement title piece, in which Jaworski Koriath’s voice easily reaches into the nearly unplumbable depths of human longing. The collection closes with Emmy-nominated Brandwein’s breathtaking Three Rilke Songs, gilded by perfectly placed and executed electronics.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

Carols after a Plague
The Crossing; Donald Nally
New Focus Recordings FCR357 (newfocusrecordings.com)

During the long global pandemic of 2020/21, our existential states were so fraught with death, that rarely did we think of ourselves as inhabiting a living planet teeming with a thriving humanity. We may have lived our lives together, yet we were hopelessly alone. And though the deadly virus may not quite be in the rearview mirror, communities of artists like The Crossing – led by Donald Nally – continue to challenge us to move forward, beyond the ubiquitous facemask; beyond our omnipresent fear of death by pandemic.

A title such as Carols after a Plague calls for us to return to joyfulness. The carol is, after all, associated with communal singing after darkness falls, albeit to usher in thoughts of the brightness and joys of the Christmas season.

This 12-song repertoire is woven into the three movements of Shara Nova’s Carols after a Plague. I – Urgency, II – Tone-policing, and III – Resolve. This song becomes the artistic canvas for the whole album. It describes the interconnectedness of human life and is eerily reminiscent of Nova’s song from her baroque chamber opera, You Us We All. The 11 other songs come from the crème de la crème of contemporary composers, each of which thematically examines the impact of the pandemic on global society.

Through the soaring, hour-long repertoire, The Crossing, itself a living embodiment of an interconnected community superbly directed by Nally, shines as always, one glorious harmonious progression after the other.

Raul da Gama

Schumann – Symphonies 3 & 4 (reorchestrated by Mahler)
Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien; Marin Alsop
Naxos 8.574430 (naxos.com/Search/KeywordSearchResults/?q=8.574430)

Leonard Bernstein’s erstwhile student and disciple, Marin Alsop, has certainly taken a big step since I reviewed her in June 2018 with the Sao Paolo Symphony, to that holy shrine of classical music, the city of Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, Bruckner and Mahler: Vienna. At present she is regarded, as The New York Times put it, not only “a formidable musician and a powerful communicator” but also “a conductor with a vision.” Having appeared as guest conductor with the Vienna Radio Symphony in 2014, in 2019 she became the orchestra’s first woman chief conductor. This new issue completes their cycle of Schumann’s symphonies.

Although much malignes for their orchestration as being weak and uneven, typically by Wagner (but not by Brahms), the symphonies were reorchestrated by Mahler. Expanding to the size of a modern orchestra, increasing the strings, strengthening the winds and the brass, now, in stereo and digital splendour, they sound as never before. Schumann having just moved from Leipzig to Dusseldorf for a well-paying job, the “Rhenish” Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major is an exclamation of sheer joy, greeting that city on the Rhine River. Alsop drives it beautifully and we can watch her on YouTube having a lot of fun with the great outburst of the Vienna brass at the finale of the exuberant, horn-dominated first movement. This optimism carries through in the lovely Scherzo (Landler) second movement and that resplendent fourth movement, inspired by the magnificent Cologne cathedral.

With the Fourth Symphony I cherish the memory of the legendary Georg Solti conducting it here in Massey Hall c.1964. It is the most innovative of Schumann’s four. No doubt influenced by Liszt and Wagner it is composed as one single movement, the sections blending into each other with one theme cropping up like a leitmotif throughout. Alsop’s tempo is perfect and with a slight accelerando, the cycle ends triumphantly on a high note.

Janos Gordonyi

Viva Piccolo
Jean-Louis Beaumadier; Véronique Poltz
Calliope-indeSENS CAL22104 (indesensdigital.fr/?s=viva+piccolo)

The cover photo of the artists, incongruously standing in a field of poppies, Beaumadier holding his flauto piccolo in front of his left shoulder and Poltz with her bright red Schroeder-esque “piano-forte piccolo” resting on her right shoulder, suggests the spirit of fun lying behind this recording. The wildly varied repertoire indicates that there are no limits to where the fun can be had or to the capabilities of these highly accomplished musicians!

The opening tracks, Four Hungarian Dances by Brahms for example, sound so right that you could assume that they had been written by the composer himself! The fifth track, Théobald Boehm’s Capriccio 16, Op.26, a study for flute students, has been transformed into a charming recital piece, with the piano accompaniment composed by Poltz herself, as is the piano part of Joachim Andersen’s Moto Perpetuo. Beaumadier’s virtuosity in this is staggering, as it is in Benjamin Godard’s Valse, the third movement of his Suite of Three Pieces, Op.116.

The great French flutist, Philippe Gaubert, carried the French School of flute playing through his compositions represented on this disc by Deux Esquisses. Beaumadier plays these elegiac soliloquies with a tenderness that reveals both another side of his artistry and the capabilities of his instrument.

This is a most engaging recording, to be recommended to all flutists and everyone else interested in expanding their musical horizons.

Allan Pulker

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Allan Pulker
Vienna reveres her composers. I remember stroiling along the beautiful chestnut tree-lined Ringstrasse with a statue of Johann Strauss playing the violin and others of Schubert, Bruckner and more. Now imagine five of your favourite composers namely, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Schumann and Johann Strauss having been invited to some music-loving aristocrat’s Salon to fill the evening with piano playing.

Rudolph Buchbinder is the very accomplished Viennese pianist who takes us into such an evening. The pieces that follow show the light side of each composer; the purpose is to entertain, not compete. And who should we begin with if not the quintessential Viennese: Johann Strauss II to set the tone – a Concert paraphrase or potpourri from Die Fledermaus followed by the Pizzicato Polka, the very essence of good humour played with infinite charm and delicacy. Schubert is next with the March Militaire, again a rather humorous piece I last heard played by 100 teenagers collected from all over Berlin and conducted by none other than Lang Lang. Schubert is further represented by Four Impromptus, which are mandatory for any aspiring piano student. My big accomplishment was playing No.4 in A-flat Major with those rather difficult cascading runs and a grand melody emerging in between. I loved playing my heart out with the passionate grand melody emerging in between. I loved

Consolations
Antoine Malette-Chénier
ATMA ACD2 2855 (atmaclassique.com/en)

In contrast to Liszt-the-magician-of-the-keyboard’s turbulent side of his heyday, this interesting new recording shows his quiet and contemplative persona. It came about that the aging Liszt, disappointed that by order of Pope Pius IX he was unable to marry his beloved Princess Carolyne, a divorcée, he took religious vows and withdrew to a monastery near Rome. He actually lived in a cell with minimal furnishings and an old beat-up piano with the middle D key missing.

Eva Polgar, a very talented and celebrated Hungarian pianist praised for her intelligent interpretations and emotional power, here performs pieces that resonate with the deep-seated Catholicism and patriotic aspect of Liszt’s late works. This new style is most noticeable by strange uneiharmonic progressions bordering on the atonal, like the very first piece, Sursum Corda Erhebet euren Herzen (Lift up your Hearts) and the Coronation Mass, composed for the coronation of Franz Joseph I, Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary. Religion notwithstanding, his love for his homeland is manifest in the Hungarian Rhapsodies, here represented (and gracefully performed) by No.11 a quiet, gentle piece that only turns into a lively Hungarian dance at the very end.

Liszt’s wandering around the Eternal City inspired some works I love most on this album, namely Les jeux d’eaux à la Villa d’Este, an impressionistic piece depicting the play of water of the hundreds of beautiful fountains of the unbelievable Baroque gardens of Villa d’Este in Tivoli. Another lovely piece, Legend No.1, is where St. Francis of Assisi preaches to the birds, an exercise of trills and a real test for the flying fingers of our master pianist.

Liszt – Harmonies Patriotiques et Religieuses
Eva Polgar
Hunnia Records HRCD2101 (evapolgar.com)

There are perhaps no more beautiful sounds in European art music than the classical pedal harp, particularly so when the instrument is masterfully played, exquisitely recorded and gorgeously captured within a naturally resonant acoustic environment such as the Eglise St-Benoit in Mirabel, Quebec. Further, there are few more intimate musical experiences than the solo performance. Here, with the artist alone and exposed, one traverses a performative tightrope as one functions as both artist and listener, edging on the precipice of exhilarating beauty and potential pitfall. Thankfully, it is the former, rather than the latter, that is the case on this fine 2022 recording from the Quebec-based harpist, Antoine Malette-Chééenier. Principal harpist for the Orchestre Symphonique de Trois-Rivières and a graduate of McGill, the University of

Montreal, Yale and the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Lyon, France, Malette-Chénier brings experience, considerable education and training, as well as valuable artistic interpretation to Consolations, his first disc of solo harp pieces for the ATMA Classique label. In addition to achieving his “central desire... to touch souls, to communicate heart to heart” by prefiguring music that resides at the nexus of romance, Christian spirituality and beauty. Malette-Chénier has also used this platform to shine a light on the compositions of fellow harpists Albert Zabel, Charles Schuetze and Henriette Renié, programming their exquisite (and new to me) music alongside such better-known 19th-century composers as Robert Schumann and Franz Liszt. The album’s title, Consolations, comes from the 1830 Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve poetry collection, Les consolations, which provides the needed conceit for Malette-Chénier to delve into the themes of romantic spirituality and divine power that he mines so gracefully here.

Andrée Scott

There are relatively few Czech composers regularly featured within the Classical canon, and the majority of these are renowned for their large-scale orchestral and choral works. Antonín Dvořák’s symphonies, Bedřich Smetana’s Má vlast and Leóš Janáček’s Glagolitic Mass are all examples of such composers and their expansive, oft-performed music.

In addition to these great works, each of these composers also wrote a variety of piano music, featured here on Canadian Francine Kay’s Things Lived and Dreamt. With repertoire by Dvořák, Smetana and Janáček, as well as Josef Suk and Vítězslava Kaprálová, this recording provides a comprehensive overview of 19th- and 20th-century Czech piano music. Each selection on this disc is notable for its expressive power and poignancy, from Janáček’s solemn and profound Sonata 1.X.1905 – written after the composer witnessed the killing of an unarmed Czech protester by a German soldier – to the levity of Dvořák’s Humoresques, which are both delightful and ingenious little pieces. Suk’s Things Lived and Dreamt is a Schumann-esque diary portraying people, places and events through lyrical movements that express far more in three or four minutes than some composers can in 30 or 40.

Kaprálová’s April Preludes is a highlight of this recording, a stunning suite of pieces by a quite unknown composer. Kaprálová studied

André Scott

Consolations
Antoine Malette-Chénier
ATMA ACD2 2855 (atmaclassique.com/en)

In contrast to Liszt-the-magician-of-the-keyboard’s turbulent side of his heyday, this interesting new recording shows his quiet and contemplative persona. It
in Prague and Paris, passing away at the age of 25 while fleeing the Nazi occupation. Despite her young age, the April Preludes are strikingly mature and complete, demonstrating a mastery of late-Romantic technique that stretches the limits of tonality through dissonance and bitonality.

A testament to the greatness of Czech music, Kay’s recording is fertile ground for those who are interested in the Czech symphonic tradition – from Dvořák’s Humoresques to Kaprálová’s April Preludes, this disc goes from strength to strength.

Matthew Whitfield

Sonatas by Medtner; Rachmaninov; Scriabin
Kenny Broberg
Steinway & Sons 30198
(kennybroberg.com)

The music of three Russian composers – Rachmaninov, Scriabin and Medtner – all of whom worked against the backdrop of a particularly turbulent political scene, and each with dissimilar ideals, are presented here on this Steinway & Sons recording featuring American pianist Kenny Broberg. Born in Minneapolis, he was the silver medalist at the 2017 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition and won bronze at the International Tchaikovsky Competition in 2019.

Rachmaninov completed his Piano Sonata No.2 in 1913 and although the piece was well received, he revised it in 1931, shortening the length and simplifying many of the difficult passages. The original must have been daunting indeed, as technical challenges still abound from the very beginning. Nevertheless, Broberg demonstrates a formidable technique, delivering a polished and exuberant performance.

No less daunting is the Scriabin Sonata No.5 Op.53 from 1907. Scriabin, a piano virtuoso, infused his music with mysticism resulting in a thoroughly modern style which closely paralleled Symbolist literature of the period. The one-movement piece – barely 12 minutes in length – has long been regarded as among his most difficult.

A younger contemporary of Rachmaninov and Scriabin, Medtner was born in Moscow in 1880. His Sonata Op.25 No.2 “Night Wind” written in 1912 is his most extended of the genre. The score is archly Romantic with a second movement Allegro molto sostenuto, a no less demanding than the first – the night wind never ceases. The third movement Danza Festiva proves a rousing conclusion that Broberg performs with great bravado.

In all, a fine recording by a young artist from whom we can hope to hear again.

Richard Haskell

Arc II: Ravel; Brahms; Shostakovich
Orion Weiss
First Hand Records FHR1128
(firsthandrecords.com)

This FHR CD titled Arc II featuring American pianist Orion Weiss, is the second in a projected three-disc set, all of which aim to address the ways composers come to grips with the emotion of grief. A native of Cleveland, Weiss studied at the Cleveland Institute and the Juilliard School and has an impressive list of awards including winner of the Classical Recording Foundation’s Young Artist of the Year.

The disc opens with Ravel’s Tombeau de Couperin, an homage not only to the French Baroque tradition, but to fallen friends in the First World War. Weiss’ playing is elegant and thoughtfully nuanced where he artfully captures the spirit of the early clavecinists.

Mahler | Guðnadóttir | Elgar – Music from and inspired by the Motion Picture Tár
Cate Blanchett; Sophie Kauer; Dresdner Philharmonie; London Contemporary Orchestra; London Symphony Orchestra
Deutsche Grammophon 486 3431
(deutschegrammophon.com/en/catalogue/products/tar-hildur-gunadottir-12805)

Hildur Guðnadóttir – Women Talking
Various Artists
Decca B0037031-02 (shop.decca.com/artist.html?artistId=hildur_gunadottir)

Listening to and critiquing music written for film – in other words, a “soundtrack-only” project – can look forward to the third disc in the series.

Richard Haskell

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

The WholeNote Listening Room

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Better Days Ahead
Kate Weekes
For her fourth album Better Days Ahead, Kate Weekes unearths 10 original songs ranging from Appalachian-influenced murder-suicide ballads to anthemic folk-pop to whimsical waltzes.

Haydn Op. 77 & Mozart K. 614
Rosebud String Quartet
Performed with remarkable chemistry and depth, these late quartets were recorded at the Domaine Forget International Music Festival in Saint-Érènè, Charlevoix, Quebec.

Albert en cinq temps - L’opéra
Catherine Major, multi-interprètes
In this opera, based on the eponymous play by Michel Tremblay, 8 great Quebec lyrical voices portray Albertine at various stages of her life.
compact disc – especially without having seen the film(s) in question – comes with not insignificant challenges. This is something score composers and film directors think about; certainly directors Todd Field (Tár) and Sarah Polley (Women Talking), and Hildegard Guðnádottr (who is credited with composing both soundtracks). Why, even eager record labels think about this. Field knows this all too well and alludes to it in his booklet notes for Tár, positing that listening to the music for the film without having it seen it can, indeed, be an altogether unforgettable experience: “Simply sit back and listen to the wonderful artistry on these tracks” he beckons. For the record, Polley hasn’t offered an opinion on booklet notes to the disc relating to Women Talking, but it is highly unlikely that she would disagree.

Moreover, it is difficult enough to compose music; to put together a truly great soundtrack for one film, let alone two. However, the inimitable Icelandic composer Guðnádottr has done just that. Leonard Bernstein, who would know what composing for film was like, once used the words: “most awesome” to describe a celebrated effort by Igor Stravinsky for the film Oedipus Rex. He might have handed down the same judgement for Guðnádottr’s too, for she has succeeded in conveying astute ideas and observations about humanity with exacting drama and in truth, if for one, would go further and suggest that this is exactly what Aristotle demanded of art and artists in his Poetics: he regarded this exact kind of artistic integrity as a model of formal dramatic perfection. Guðnádottr’s soundtracks bring out that (Aristotelian) truth of both films with uncommon perfection.

In the case of the soundtrack for Tár, riveting drama is maintained throughout, thanks to snippets of dialogue from the film that are interspersed with the music. This is enhanced by cutting into a musical sequence, or better still, taking Cate Blanchett’s dialogue relating to musical direction during rehearsals and overlaying it on the score – particularly poignant in the rehearsals of Mahler’s Symphony No. 5 in C sharp Minor. This device is also repeated to great effect in the recording of Elgar’s Cello Concerto in E Minor Op. 85. The use of this during poignant bits of dallying, repeated phrases in the Largo movement of Tár is similarly affecting.

Meanwhile, for ardent lovers of the cello, the genius of the young cellist, Sophie Kauer shines bright everywhere, suggesting that she could hold court with the finest – Misha Maisky, Yo-Yo Ma, Steven Isserlis and Jacqueline du Pré, notwithstanding the fact Du Pré’s high watermark recording of the Elgar occupies so prominent a place (in cello literature and) on this recording. Kauer’s dolorous lines in the performance of Mahler’s Symphony No. 5 is further proof of her prodigious craft. And then there are the choice bits of Blanchett (as actor) during the Bach piece and Elissa Vargas Fernandez’s beautifully forlorn Cura Mente. I could go on ad infinitum.

The ingenuity of Guðnádottr’s score for Polley’s film Women Talking is of quite another kind. Here the composer uses a more contemporary musical vernacular – enhanced by a sweeping colour palette – to alternatively darken and brighten the despair contained within the film. For instance, Guðnádottr makes particularly emotional use of the radiant sound of bells, contrasting this with the lonesome sound of pizzicato guitar lines. This music provides us with a sense of time and place, and setting for the unfolding drama, just as (once again) the use of a desolate sounding cello takes us to a place of loneliness and foreboding.

Clearly the challenge here is not only to provide colour and context in cinematic proportions, but in two or three minutes – or sometimes in mere seconds – to express a nuanced mood or emotion and to do it in a manner that is almost symphonically dramatic and trance-like. Guðnádottr’s compositional style does all these things in both scores. Finally, both films are unmissable and so experiencing these soundtracks whilst watching them would almost certainly take you into a whole new worlds. But that is quite another story.

Raul da Gama

Steve Reich – The String Quartets

Maxime Goulet – Symphonie de la tempête de verglas (Ice Storm Symphony)
Orchestre Classique de Montréal; Jacques Lacombe
ATMA ACD2 2866 (atmaclassique.com/en)

► January 1998 - a meteorological disaster leaves millions across eastern Ontario, southern Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia without power, many for weeks. It’s recalled now in the 40-minute Ice Storm Symphony by Maxime Goulet (b. Montreal 1960). (Titles appear in French and English; I’ll give the English.)

Turmoil describes the storm with icy crackles, surging rhythms, crescendoing dissonances and pounding percussion. In Warmth, a raucous Quebec folk dance represents people finding refuge with others having access to fireplaces or electricity. Goulet wants the lights off during performances of the sombre, spookily pulsating music of Darkness to evoke “the feeling of ultimate vulnerability that seized us during those dark nights.” Returning lights, fanfares and tolling bells in Light celebrate the restoration of “normal life,” a happy ending to this vivid, colourful symphony.

Two shorter works by Goulet employ theatrical visual effects, described in the booklet. The cinematically scored, 13-minute What a Day, using ticking clocks, conflates one day with an entire lifetime, from Joyful Morning (birth) to Long Day at Work, Tête-à-Tête Evening and Serene Night (death). The nine-minute Fishing Story for clarinet (here, Kornel Wolak) and strings, inspired by Hemingway’s The Old Man and the Sea, veers from moody waves and seagull cries to repeated slapstick splashes.

These works, all commissioned by Orchestre classique de Montréal, are spiritedly conducted by Jacques Lacombe. Goulet dedicates this CD to the late Boris Brott, who conducted the premières of What a Day and Fishing Story.

Michael Schulman
In movement II, train horns transform into a polyphonic shriek of sirens. Human voices are survivors of the Holocaust describing their train trips to the death camps.

The final movement, set after the War, interweaves European and American voices aiming to recap previous stories and musical elements, valiantly trying to make sense of what happened – as many of us also are.

Marc Timar

Éliane Radigue – Occam Delta XV
Quatuor Bozzini
Collection Quatuor Bozzini CQB 2331 (actuellecd.com)

French composer Éliane Radigue has for much of her long career made electronic music, but 2004 marked a turning point. She has dedicated herself since then to composing for acoustic instruments, resulting in this mammoth work for various forces in her extended Occam cycle. These compositions were inspired by William of Ockham’s (c.1287-1347) Occam’s razor principle, which in its most succinct form states that the simplest proposition is very likely the best. Premiered by Montréal’s Quatuor Bozzini in 2018, Delta XV for string quartet is among the latest in Radigue’s Occam series.

For over two decades Bozzini has been a staunch advocate for contemporary string quartet music. They’re known for cultivating experimentation and collaboration, fearlessly nurturing an impressively large and diverse repertoire including those on the 2015 album Higgs Ocean with Toronto’s Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan.

Fascinatingly, Radigue developed Occam Delta XV through a collaborative “oral composition process” with the quartet. Dispensing with a fully notated score and relying on its oral transmission may well have been the most straightforward approach here - in the spirit of Occam’s razor – especially for a composer steeped in synthesizer music. This premiere recording of Occam Delta XV offers two distinct Bozzini interpretations. Seemingly a slowly unfurling series of stacked chords sustained throughout, the music tests the composers’ skills in ensemble intonation, microtonal beating, string harmonics and group dynamics. Bozzini’s deeply attentive performance reaches through the recording, touching this listener. As for Radigue’s work, it effectively challenges expectations of music creation, performance and listening.

Marc Timar

Ascenso
Santiago Cañón Valencia
Sono Luminus SLE-70028 (sonoluminus.com)

Cellist Santiago Cañón Valencia is no stranger to the world stage, being an award-winning performer beyond his native Colombia. This is an artist from whom sound and texture flow with ease and authenticity. Ascenso is a fantastical album filled with scenic tours through countrysides, congested cities, mountain regions and flight-paths of monarch butterflies. The album is solo cello but feels full and rich, due in part to the compositions themselves, but mainly in response to Cañón-Valencia’s chameleon-like abi

Marc Timar

What we’re listening to this month:

The Crossing
Carols after a Plague
A collection of works that respond to our experience navigating the pandemic, as well as grappling with the fraught issues of our time.

Harmonies patriotiques et religieuses
Éva Polgár
Éva Polgár’s delivers Franz Liszt’s piano music with passion and authenticity on her new album including spiritual and patriotic works in character.

Consolations
Antoine Malette-Chénier
This debut solo recording introduces original and transcribed works for harp in a program concerned with all that can console and enhance human experience.

Things Lived and Dreamt
Francine Kay
Francine Kay featured on RadioFrance, Album of the week in Ireland; Gramophone writes, ‘ardent lyricism…idiomatic and imaginative…impassioned …highly recommendable.’
merged with classical and contemporary selections curated and performed by Hlusko and a select few musical contributors. There are so many wonderful readings and performances, the collection of 26 tracks takes time to fully appreciate, and though the text and music are paired like wine to food, they each stand out on their own.

The reading of Blue Head by Assisipho Malunga with dancer/choreographer Mthuthuzeli November is a standout moving tribute to loneliness and the self as home. Pairing it with the Sarabande from J.S. Bach’s fifth solo cello suite makes an interesting thought on home through a colonialist lens, whether intended or not. Another standout for me was transgender choreographer Sean Dorsey’s reading of his original poetry, excerpted from the sound score of his full-evening production Uncovered: The Diary Project. This powerful work is both heartbreaking and illuminating and was informed and inspired by a year-and-a-half long community research process researching diaries of transgender and queer people, with original music composed by Alex Kelly. This track is so perfectly delivered it’s worth the album alone.

With readings chosen by the movement artists themselves, from dance legend Peggy Baker and a long list of award-winning dancers and choreographers, each selection is thoughtfully tied to wonderful music, reimagined as if walking through the text while listening. Whether or not you delve deeper, it’s a beautiful album.

One caveat: the album notes included do not seem to contain more than the basic credits or tracklists; for full notes, including the composers and text translations, you will need to go to the album’s website. It is worth the time to check them out properly.

Cheryl Ockrant

I and Thou
VC2
Leaf Music LM255 (leaf-music.ca)

Frank Horvat – From Oblivion to Hope
Odin Quartet
I Am Who I Am Records (frankhorvat.com)

Frank Horvat has been successfully exploring states of the human condition in contemporary times; with each new album this exploration takes on a different musical form/genre. This prolific composer keeps surprising us with diversity and an extent of musical expression, language and themes. From Oblivion to Hope, as performed by the Odin Quartet, is a gorgeous collection of Horvat’s string quartet music and his ideas. Here his message is clear: music is an important tool in raising the level of positivity and hope on this planet as well as in our individual lives. Change is possible.

Horvat’s string quartet music, covering a span of over 20 years, features compelling rhythmical elements and engaging melodies. The album follows a trajectory of personal growth – from oblivion and anxiety through awareness of the preciousness of time and love of nature to the final destination of hope. Each piece tells a story, and none has a traditional form. String Quartet No.2 is a percussive, textural ball of high energy seeking more stable expression. Four Seasons…In High Park, inspired by the seasons in High Park in Toronto and Vidvaldi’s iconic Four Seasons, contains many literal quotes but its strength lies in dismantling the original ideas into building blocks of unique compositional language. The album closes with Hope, a peaceful, harmonious rhapsody with bright colours.

Odin Quartet, a strong ensemble with close-knit synergy, is a perfect collaborator. Their sensible interpretation of Horvat’s music highlights the composer’s ingenuity.

Ivana Popovic

Theory of Becoming
Evgeni Galperine
ECM New Series 2744 (ecmrecords.com)

Minimalist in nature and deeply personal, Theory of Becoming reveals a turn in Evgeni Galperine’s musical direction. Primarily known for his gorgeous film music, Galperine turns inward on this album, shifting from compositions inspired by cinematic images and stories to music that brings in focus shades of the human condition through inner experience. This new world is grandly rich in depth and variety of ideas. Galperine uses both real and virtual instruments to create an architecture of sound, expanding colours, textures and possibilities of acoustic instruments and establishing a mixture of textural, exciting and somewhat oracular elements with electronic and manipulated sounds. This world is so visceral that each composition feels like a minimalist diraoma. It is rare to hear such a strong emotional expression in the realms of electronic music and Galperine recognizes the power of that rarity.

There is a strong imaginative element in all compositions and threads that involve magical settings supported by electronic sounds. In Loplop im Wald, inspired by Max Ernst’s paintings, we meet a magical bird called Loplop that inhabits a mystical forest humans cannot cross. Oumaumua, Space Wanderings is a sonic exploration of traveling through space in search of answers. This Town Will Burn Before Dawn, describes the aftermath of a war, destruction embodied in deep ominous sounds coming from the belly of the beast (war) and hope floating above in the string’s layers.

While Galperine creates and directs the electronics and sampling, the guest artists, Sergei Nakariakov (trumpet), Sébastien Hurtaud (cello) and Maria Vasyukova (voice), each leave their signature marks. In some aspects, Theory of Becoming is a musical/philosophical treatise on the depth of the human experience.

Ivana Popovic
Susurrus
Anthony Tan
gengseng records GS004 (anthonytan.
bandcamp.com/album/susurrus)

How does one listen to music that is not meant to be listened to? This question may seem rhetorical, if not absurd, but it is one that is presented to us when faced with the genre of ambient music. To many, ambient music is equivalent to elevator music, easy listening pop or soft jazz that pads the other ambient sounds of shopping malls, elevators and airports. In fact, the concept of ambient music was first used by Brian Eno in his 1978 album Ambient 1: Music for Airports and has since grown to encompass a range of electro-acoustic compositions.

According to Wikipedia, ambient music “is a genre of music that emphasizes tone and atmosphere over traditional musical structure or rhythm.” Anthony Tan’s Susurrus embodies this description very well, augmenting fragmented pianistic passages with real-time electronics. This is atmospheric music at its finest, and is simultaneously foreboding and calming, never resolving, but also never developing the tension that necessarily needs a resolution.

Both pieces on this recording, endlessnessness and sublime subliminal sublimate are constant paradoxes, the net result being a genre of music that emphasizes tone and atmosphere over traditional musical structure or rhythm.” Anthony Tan’s Susurrus embodies this description very well, augmenting fragmented pianistic passages with real-time electronics. This is atmospheric music at its finest, and is simultaneously foreboding and calming, never resolving, but also never developing the tension that necessarily needs a resolution.

Instead, I become astounded by Sabrina Schroeder and Maxime Goulet, Orchestre classique de Montréal, Jacques Lacombe and Andrea Young’s A Moment or Two of Panic, which at 32 minutes is more like several moments of ennui and angst. Anthony Tan’s half-hour is curiously titled An Overall Augmented Sense of Well-Being, one and a half is the cuts. All included are the somewhat briefer Rubber Houses by Sabrina Schroeder and Mauricio Pauly’s The Difference is the Buildings Between Us. A large letter “O” goes rogue on the playfully designed CD jacket, displaced from titles and composers’ names. That adds some sorely needed fun, but maybe it’s intended as a serious meditation on the difference between an oval and a circle, as suggested by the granite-shaded cover art.

I Had a Dream About This Place
No Hay Banda
No Hay Discos NHD 002 (nohaybanda.ca)

Two suppositions: music is only music to the extent that it elicits recognition and response, and not all music (not all art) is good for one. Consider these as you read why I recommend this disc. Think catharsis. Composer Eren Gümrükçüoğlu makes brilliant use of acoustic and electronic media, with strong collaborators including the excellent JACK Quartet. His ideas, once you settle into the terrain, make sense. There is pitch and sound contoured into melody, with and without electronics, as well as fixed media.

Symphonie de la tempête de verglas
Maxime Goulet, Orchestre classique de Montréal, Jacques Lacombe
Commemorating the 29th anniversary of one of the worst natural disasters in Quebec’s history, the album takes the listener into a whirlwind of music.

I and Thou
VC2 Cello Duo
I and Thou is a pensive rumination on the power of relationships to undergird the foundation for a person’s well-being: the need for meaning.

Pareidolia
Eren Gümrükçüoğlu
Turkish born composer Eren Gümrükçüoğlu’s Pareidolia presents seven of his kinesthetic works for chamber ensembles, with and without electronics, as well as fixed media.

There’s an average of 25 somewhat static minutes per cut. Whew. No hay tiempo. As the saying goes, less is sometimes more, but the reverse can also be true. Were we a civilization where meditation was taught from the cradle, perhaps this would be the music we all craved. Or rather preferred, since in that society there’d be no craving? Perhaps we wouldn’t be headed for environmental collapse. Perhaps the length of these pieces would evoke a kind of joy, like what one feels at the prospect of a free summer afternoon or a hot bath on a cold night. I admit to none of these responses. Instead, I become astoundingly furious as I listen to the patient clouds of sound drift out of my stereo.

As much as this compositional cadre, not these four but others of a similar school. Some folks like it. It takes great focus to do well, as the players do here. And even so, there will be those who, like me, would like their two hours back.

Max Christie
in Paradise Lost. Not a good place, to say the least. A demonic gathering place ain’t peaceful, it’s a harrowing funhouse!

I found myself beating time to the title track, Pureidolia, even during the intervals where metre and rhythm seem absent; rather they are partially submerged in silences that allow only some of the contours to show. When “time” is introduced explicitly, at various points in the piece (at nearly 24 minutes, by far the longest single track), the material is taut and jazzy; the silences filled, the pulse revealed. Track four, Ordinary Things, puts a small wind band with bass and percussion against fragments from speeches made by Recep Erdogan, composed as mimicry, a satiric chorus rifting alongside the autobiographer’s overblown rhetoric, forming a kind of sonic haze around the vocals. Mesmerizing.

Those step-dancing squirrels in your attic crawl space have spotted a canary, who calls out from various places as they scatter about chasing the hapless bird. That describes the spatial and rhythmic fun of the final track, Asansör Asiptapotu.

Kudos to all the performers and especially to the composer. — Max Christie

Guy Barash – Killdeer
Guy Barash; Nick Flynn
New Focus Recordings FCR355
(newfocusrecordings.com)

The marriage of text and music, like other pairings, can be problematic. This is especially true in the spoken word subgenre, as is featured on Killdeer. The poetry of Nick Flynn haunts its way through “structured improvisation” conceived by Guy Barash, with Kathleen Supové on piano, Frank London on a very threadbare trumpet and Eyal Maoz filling in on guitar. Barash handles the electronic manipulations, and the product winds its way into ever darker places. Flynn, let it be known, has seen the darkness stare back at him, and his text invites you to look into the same mirror. Clearly recited, prosaic, brooding, even angry, the text does not appear in the booklet aside from two brief excerpts. When you hear the thoughts uttered in track seven, Poem to be Whispered by the Bedside of a Sleeping Child, maybe you’ll be glad. I was.

This makes one grateful for the music. London’s insinuating whispers and cries match the mood, a pale shadow of the shadowy poetry, while Supové’s powerful sparks draw our ears away from the poet’s voice towards some kind of brightness.

Still, this is essentially a textual work, fascinating and disturbing. I will listen again, because I know there’s redemption of a kind proffered by Flynn. The text takes most of my attention, and second listening might change that or might not. The text is why I hesitate, and yet recognize: these are powerful poems. Killdeer meditates on death, and on the demons that would have us wish it on someone else. The matter is dark, the music affecting.

Felipe Téllez – Evocations
Canadian Studio Symphony
Centrediscs CM CCD 30922
(centrediscs.ca)

— Featuring the talents of Ron Cohen Mann on oboe d’amore, violinist Lynn Kuo and the Canadian Studio Symphony, the newly released album Evocations comprises new works by Colombian-Canadian composer, Felipe Téllez. Led by Lorenzo Guggenheim, the Canadian Studio Symphony was founded in 2021 for the sole purpose of performing new and engaging repertoire, making this a perfect pairing.

Originally written in 2014 and revised in 2022, the Suite Concertante for Oboe d’Amore is a five-movement suite of dances in Baroque style. In keeping with the period, Téllez uses harpsichord and oboe d’amore but mixes them with modern ideas like extensive key modulations and orchestral colours with clarinets and more prominent low brass. The technical capabilities and full range of tonal colours of the oboe d’amore are imaginatively explored, showcasing the warm tone and brilliant virtuosity of Cohen Mann.

Lovers at the Altar and Impromptu are small pieces for string orchestra used to bridge the Baroque style of the first piece with the more Romantic writing of Corti and Romanza. Corti is an orchestration of a piece composed by Téllez’s mentor and counterpoint teacher in Colombia, Manuel Cubides Greifenstein.

Romanza for solo violin and orchestra reveals Kuo’s beautiful, expansive phrasing and expressive musicality. With something for every musical taste, Evocations is sure to satisfy.

Valentin Silvestrov
Boris Berman
Le Palais des Degustateurs PDD030
(lepalaisdesdegustateurs-shop.com/boutique)

— In March 2022, just days after Russia’s invasion, Ukraine’s pre-eminent composer, Valentin Silvestrov (b.1937) left his native Kyiv for Berlin. Three months later, Boris Berman, following in-person consultations with Silvestrov, recorded this two-CD set spanning 60 years of Silvestrov’s piano music.

Triade (1962) and Elegy (1967) reflect what the young Silvestrov called “lyrical dodecaphony,” to my ears Webern crossed with Debussy. Sonata 2 (1975) juxtaposes serialism, aleatorism and late-Romantic chromaticism, including extended passages of pensive lyricism. The five-movement Kitsch-Music (1977) contains allusions to Schumann, Chopin and Brahms, all to be played, wrote Silvestrov, “as if from afar.” It’s indeed slightly “kitschy” – precious with prettiness and sentimentality, lovely nonetheless. The three movements of Sonata 3 (1979) are slow, inward-looking and disturbingly beautiful, their unsettled tonality suggesting to me an aimless, solitary stroll through a dark, deserted cityscape.

Three 21st-century works were recorded with the piano lid closed, Silvestrov desiring a soft, distant sonority. Postudium (2005) is a slow, bittersweet processional. Five Pieces, Op. 306 (2021) – three Pastoralis, Serenade and Waltz – are all gentle and sweetly dreamy. Heartfelt simplicity imbues the Three Pieces (March 2022, Berlin), Silvestrov’s musical response to the invasion. The sorrowful Elegy is followed by Chaconne, described by Silvestrov as “accepting death with dignity.” The final Pastoral ends in a mood of serenity, perhaps even hope.

Doubtlessly, these performances by Berman (b. Moscow 1948), head of Yale University’s piano department, pleased Silvestrov. They certainly pleased me.

Melissa Scott

JAZZ AND IMPROVISED

Montreux 1988
Eye Music
Independent (markduggan1.bandcamp.com/album/montreux-1988)

— Toronto-based band Eye Music’s superb 2023 debut album is an actual throwback: it was recorded live in 1988 at the Montreux Jazz Festival, Switzerland. To my ears this 35-year-old novel takes on folk-inflected jazz still sounds compellingly fresh today.

Eye Music featured the late, great violinist Oliver Schroer, guitarist Don Ross, percussionist Mark Duggan and bassist David Woodhead, all gifted musicians at the brink of substantial careers. Their inspired music on Montreux 1988 is a snapshot of a made-in-Southern Ontario musical moment. Booked on the strength of their Portastudio cassette demo, they were reportedly the
only Canadian act to play Montreux that year. Impressive enough to land a spot sight-unseen at a major European festival, why haven’t we heard of Eye Music? Part of the answer is that the group was active only between 1987 and 1989. We finally get a chance to hear what the excitement was about on this album, their Montreux concert artfully distilled into seven tracks digitalized from aging original analogue tapes.

Five titles were composed by Ross – his use of alternate guitar tunings and unique “fingerstyle” was an essential part of the group’s sound – plus one each by Duggan and Schroer. Each tune has its own character and charm, the album filled with spiky rhythms, lush harmonies and a lighthearted feel, further enlivened by imaginative virtuoso solos. The cherry on top is the sensitive ensemble musicianship of all four members.

More good news: Eye Music is reforming with a new violinist and planning live performances for the 2023 summer festival season.

Andrew Timar

Kirk Lightsey – Mark Whitfield; Santi Debraiano; Victor Lewis
Live at Smalls Jazz Club
Cellar Music CLSMF003 (cellarlive.com)

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The impressive bandleader has always been inspired by the world of Latin jazz, which led to the eventual recording and release of this album. Therrien describes her travels to Cuba: “The experience changed my life and is probably the reason why I am still a musician today. I always felt good playing Latin-influenced music, it is where I feel I can express myself the most musically.” A couple of pieces that stand out are Moment’s Notice, a rhythmically charged, spicy little ditty that instantly raises the spirits of the listener, and Mojo, featuring a fiery piano solo and funky bass line underpinning a soaring horn solo that gets you moving and grooving. A truly worthy addition to any jazz connoisseur’s collection.

Kati Killaspea

Using Lightsey is a stellar backing band featuring renowned musicians such as Mark Whitfield on guitar, Santi Debraiano on bass and Victor Lewis on drums. The album is chock-full of great renditions of classic tunes, such as In Your Own Sweet Way by Dave Brubeck and Lament by J.J. Johnson. Scintillating talent is present on this record; it’s an all-encompassing musical journey that draws the listener right in.

The musicianship and thought put into detail throughout these pieces and renditions is just marvellous. A perfect example of this is Freedom Jazz Dance, featuring rhythmically tight piano riffs, a moving bass line that underpins soaring solos and keeps the energy constantly brewing and an intricate guitar melody that just pulls you in and captivates you with those tiny nuances. In these tunes, magical feeling develops where the music completely envelops you and everything else disappears. For new and seasoned jazz lovers alike, this is one record to check out.

Kati Killaspea

Being Five
Dimitriadis/Dörner/Freedman/Parkins/Williams
Relative Pitch RPR 1181 (relativepitchrecords.com)

Collectively creating an essay in forceful improvisation, the Being Five quintet is as international as its five-part program is intense. Percussionist Vorgos Dimitriadis is Greek; bassist Christopher Williams and accordionist Andrea Parkins, American; clarinetist Lori Freedman is Canadian; and trumpeter Axel Dörner, German. Adding understated but effective electronic trappings throughout, the quintet members achieve a notable balance between the spontaneous and the synthesized. Additionally, intervallic pauses distinguish the
astute alternations between luminous solos and the shaded, sometimes menacing, group wave-form expositions.

As the session evolves, Dimitriadis stays in the background with an occasional drum slap or cymbal plink, affirming slippery clarinet peeps, or pressurized bass string slices that can be distinguished in the midst of intermit- tent crackling voltage that is also strengthened by tremolo accordion pulses. Other times, as on Amusik Bis, Freedman’s pedal point clarinet and Dörner’s portamento squeezes outline a variant of tandem lyri- cism. But it’s the concluding Freeze that most precisely defines the program. With only the occasional clarion reed bite cutting through the machine-generated buzz and hiss at first, continuous voltage drones become louder, more concentrated, stri- dent and synthesized, so that by the penul- timate sequenced sound concatenation seems almost impenetrable. That is until chalumeau clarinet purrs and inflating accordion pumps reassert the session’s acoustic side before a collective finale.

An exemplary interpretation of electro/ acoustic improvising. Being Five also demonstrates that musicians’ geographic origins mean little when creating a vivid group project.

Ken Waxman

Face à Face
Barre Phillips; György Kurtág Jr.
ECM New Series ECM 2736
(ecmrecords.com)

More of a realized experiment than a full-fledged program, the dozen brief tracks here mark veteran American bassist Barre Phillips’ first accommodation with the electronics produced by Hungarian keyboardist György Kurtág Jr. Using three stand-alone synthesizers and digital percus- sion, Kurtág burbles, drones and vibrates ever-evolving oscillations with textures ranging from the daunting to the delicate.

All the while the bassist, whose impro- visational experience goes back to the early 1960s, crafts parallel constructs that involve every part of his instrument during tracks that are timed from 90 seconds to nearly four and a half minutes. Phillips uses techniques such as col legno string bounces or pressur- ized sul ponticello bow slices to cut through the often-confined density from the machine-generated programming. Occasionally, as on Sharpen Your Eyes and Ruptured Air, more melodic suggestions are introduced with woody slaps from the bass meeting recorder- like peeps from the synthesizer on the former, and low-pitched string twangs evolving alongside high-pitched synthesized wriggles on the album describing the second title.

Overall, since Phillips can also finesse textures among other motifs encompassing measured violin-like runs and banjo-like clangs, the expanding programmed pres- sure never becomes oppressive. Genuinely fascinating, at points the disc also clari- fies how acoustic and electronic timbres can unfold face a face with each prominent in its own space.

Ken Waxman

Opera of the Unspoken: Island of Unrest
Jeanette Lambert
Independent
(jeannettelambert.bandcamp.com)

This significant and ambi- tious project is best described by the composer/ creator herself as “an experimental jazz opera that is also a musical investigation into the mysteries of an ances- tral tragedy, from World War II, as revealed through vocal rituals, ancestral tarot, free jazz and dreaming.” Jeanette Lambert was seeking a way to honour her forbears, and also tell the horrific story of her multi-racial ancestors who passed through the horrors of the war, and their ultimate survival, achieved through the spiritual strength of her female ances- tors. The tragedy originates with Lambert’s German grandfather – a civilian interned (along with his Javanese wife) by the Dutch in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) during the war. In order to manifest this epic, Jeanette called upon her own family as well as vocalists, poets and descendants of those who had also suffered the horrors of war and captivity.

In the construction of this large-scale piece, Lambert has used the structure of the Tarot to explore the truth of the Van Imhoff tragedy (the violence in Banten), and to ultimately instigate the dream-laden ancestral healing of all. The opera begins with Three of Pentacles – comprised of ancient, dreamy, diatonic a cappella chants that begin the journey. Ace of Wands follows... descriptive and poetic, and punctuated by percussive (Michel Lambert) and guitar (Reg Schwager) motifs. Lambert’s potent vocal instrument begins to relate the story through the infrastructure of the tarot, and with Dreaming of Pomelo a portrait of Indonesia begins to emerge as the tragedies loom.

On Four of Wands, gamelans and spoken word rail against the immoral incidents while military drum tattoos and vocal distortion plumb the horror. On Sorrow Unleashed, the weeping, wailing and keening of the mothers – reaching back into the mists of time – is underscored by heartrending string and flute lines. Lambert’s potent opera ends with the dream of hope and healing. This is a multi- disciplinary master work, and a journey that is essential for all free-thinking human beings. Brava.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

BirdLike
Thermo
GB Records (thermomusic.com)

This exquisite jazz recording is the result of the creative pairing of pianist/composer Mike Manny and guitarist/composer Nathan Hilts. Their duo, Thermo, manifested during the pandemic by playing/performing “together” in separate places, through the use of low- latency recording technology. Both gentlemen wear producer’s hats here, and not only have they assembled a dazzling program of tunes, but they have also created the ultimate jazz quartet with the addition of bassist Neil Swainson and drummer Morgan Childs. In addition to two of their individual compos- itions, Manny and Hilts have also served up a sumptuous jazz buffet, featuring works from icons Hank Mobley, Freddie Hubbard, Johnny Mercer, Hoagy Carmichael, Cedar Walton, Wayne Shorter and Horace Silver.

Things kick off with Avita and Tequila by Mobley. Manny and Hilts dig in here with a solid bop sensibility, and their unison lines morph into the full, satisfying quartet sound. Swainson and Childs lock in immediately and propel the action, with elegant solos from all. Next up is Betty’s Buns – a groovy, swinging original by Manny dedicated to the Cape Breton piano player and baker of delicious buns, Betty Lou Beaton. Big fat chords and a cooking melodic line define this delightful tune featuring an effortless solo by Swainson. Of special beauty is Carmichael and Mercer’s Skylark. One of the loveliest ballads ever written is performed here with sensitivity, skill and deep emotion. Manny seemingly channels the great Bill Evans without ever being derivative.

Hiltz’s composition, Fountain Scenery, is a guitar feature and a bit of a nod to Richard Rodgers’ Mountain Greenery. His sound here is warm, succint and utterly pure, reminiscent of Jim Hall. Although every track on this project is a shining bebop baulbe, other highlights include Wayne Shorter’s This is for Albert, where Manny and Hilts soar through the arrangement in synchronous motion and the listener gets dipped into some serious jazz juice! A triumph!

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

Concert note: Thermo will release BirdLike with a performance at Jazz Bistro on April 21.
Conspiracy
Tobias Hoffmann Jazz Orchestra
Mons Records MR874577 (tobiahoffmannmusic.com)

Tobias Hoffmann’s 2019 recording was the celebrated Retrospective, featuring repertoire for nine musicians. The almost nonchalant manner in which he declared that he couldn’t express his new music unless he had his “…own band to make sure that my music was performed on the highest possible level” belies the enormous undertaking of leading an ensemble as large as this expanded Jazz Orchestra.

Hoffmann calls the disc Conspiracy, which is a title filled with both whimsy and the very real suggestion that the artist – by nature a (cultural) guerrilla – engages in conspiracy to manoeuvre his way into his listeners’ sensibilities. Using a language that is informed as much by classical symphonic idioms, devices and gestures, and the enormously popular, contemporary jazzy vernacular, Hoffmann has created a recording which fuses the styles with a naturalness and authenticity that eludes many ensembles of this size and scope.

Moreover, Hoffmann’s recording is not only conspiratorial, but also compelling. In particular, the extended narratives – Conspiracy, Trailblazers, Importer Syndrome and Awakening – are tone poems rich in imagery. In each of these works – and the rest of the repertoire – we come face-to-face with performers who have interiorized Hoffmann’s singular mind and the poetics of his work, and go on to interpret it with idiomatic power and all the attendant drama, throughout the length of the disc.

Black to the Roots
Joe Bowden Project
Independent (joebowden.bandcamp.com/album/Black-to-the-roots)

The Joe Bowden Project is actually a quartet that expands to a quintet on two songs. However, thanks in part to the elegant high jinks from behind a battery of rumbling drums and hissing, splashing cymbals, percussion colourist and leader Bowden makes his Project’s music sound large as this expanded Jazz Orchestra. In which he declared that he couldn’t express his new music unless he had his “…own band to make sure that my music was performed on the highest possible level” belies the enormous undertaking of leading an ensemble as large as this expanded Jazz Orchestra.

An interesting aspect of his work is that he approaches Black music from the – almost parallel – perspectives of the American and Caribbean tributaries that flow out of the proverbial African river. The presence of the incomparable Cuban pianist Manuel Valera certainly energizes the musical excursion. Valera is an erudite composer himself and his presence and singular artistry have certainly impacted the expression of this music. Bassist Mike Downes, saxophonist Jesse Ryan and vibraphonist Dan McCarthy add their distinguished artistry to this disc.

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Raul da Gama

Axi Granite soon shows that his mellifluous aesthetics and wide-ranging stylistic tastes are born of an emphasis on melody and colour – with a little bit of off-the-wall humour baked into wholesome musical patty-cakes.

The repertoire on the album is front-loaded with opportunities for brass and reeds. Trumpeter Jim Lewis, trombonist Tom Richards and clarinetist (and saxophonist) Peter Lutek respond with vim and vigour, and virtuosity.

Granite occupies the chordal chair, his guitar an endless source of surprise as he pumps both volume and pedals throughout – literally and metaphorically. The wonder of his playing is how engagingly, artfully, flawlessly and idiomatically he pours himself into his music that is uniformly good and also quite different sounding. He leads a rhythm section that includes bassist Neal Davis and drummer Ted Warren and the three horn players in a lustrous exposition of mercurial work, full of slashing and nostalgic ideas that make this 37-minute musical romp a quite gripping experience.

Between such puckishly titled – and performed – works such as Crushing Beans, Voraacious, Misanthropic Vindalo and Many Bow’s, these musicians come together for a performance vivid in interplay and keenly attentive to these charts that appear to resonate with mysteries and wonders seemingly unique to colourful Canada in general – and Toronto in particular.

Raul da Gama

Dave Liebman
Live at Smalls
Cellar Music CMSLF004 (cellarlive.com)

This Avi Granite 6 recording, Operator, opens with two songs that ripple with chugging pulse suggesting a disc-full of funky tunes. Granite occupies the chordal chair, his guitar an endless source of surprise as he pumps both volume and pedals throughout – literally and metaphorically. The wonder of his playing is how engagingly, artfully, flawlessly and idiomatically he pours himself into his music that is uniformly good and also quite different sounding. He leads a rhythm section that includes bassist Neal Davis and drummer Ted Warren and the three horn players in a lustrous exposition of mercurial work, full of slashing and nostalgic ideas that make this 37-minute musical romp a quite gripping experience.

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Raul da Gama

Dave Liebman
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an antidote to this phenomenon, I now make a point to absorb albums in their entirety at least once or twice before reading any liner notes or one sheets.

With Atlas by Zimbabwe-born Toronto-based guitarist Matt Greenwood, all written material pertaining to it felt more like an affirmation than a barrage of new info. This is not because Greenwood wears his influences on his sleeve, or that any of his music falls short of unique, but more that it profoundly resonates with this writer’s musical tastes. Contemporary guitar in the 2020s can resemble anything from futuristic effects and textures to a neo-traditional renaissance of aesthetics from the 1950s and 60s. I can appreciate either of these extremes, which are far from mutually exclusive, but it is refreshing to hear a modern mélange of influences from across the board in Greenwood’s playing and writing.

Atlas’ opening and closing tracks Constellations and Commitment are tasteful vignettes that bookend the album, adding a sense of continuity when listening from start to finish. While the recording has the arching flow of a great concept album, each of its original tracks function on their own too. Dehyah and the album’s title track are cerebral yet heartfelt, and ballads like From Sunshine and Campfire Ghosts are unique enough to remain neighbours on the tracklist without sounding redundant.

This album is an awesome offering of art for art’s sake, eschewing causes and homages in favour of focused, sophisticated, contemporary playing. Have a listen. I trust you will find Atlas as refreshing as I do.

Sam Dickinson

The Sixth Decade from Paris to Paris
The Art Ensemble of Chicago
RogueArt ROG-0123 (roguart.com)

After almost a decade of evolution in their hometown, The Art Ensemble of Chicago arrived in Paris in 1969, their combination of free jazz and theatricality (their slogan – Great Black Music: Ancient to the Future) was greeted as the embodiment of the incendiary protests that had rocked the city in the previous year. The band was welcomed with frequent performances and multiple recording offers. Five decades later most of the original members – saxophonist Joseph Jarman, trumpeter Lester Bowie and bassist Malachi Favors – are deceased. Only multi-instrumentalist Roscoe Mitchell and percussionist Famoudou Don Moye remain. They’ve chosen to reinvigorate the band’s legacy by expanding it with a substantial number of young musicians and an even broader musical lexicon, entering their sixth decade with a 20-member ensemble for this 100-minute Paris concert from 2020.

It’s alive with potent moments, including brilliant individual instrumental performances from Mitchell and Moye, trumpeter Hugh Ragin, flutist Nicole Mitchell, cellist Tomeka Reid and trombonist Simon Sieger. True to the band’s history, however, it continues to press the envelope – musically, lyrically and culturally. The ensemble includes chamber musicians who can execute Mitchell’s Webern-esque scores; a mixed improvising ensemble that suggests Tibetan ritual music; and three percussionists and three bassists who can launch a polyrhythmic maelstrom. There is also a self-explanatory track called Funky AECO. There are concert vocalists and the spoken word calls to consciousness of Moor Mother, activist-ordinator with such groups as Sons of Kemet and Irreversible Entanglements.

Mitchell and Moye have made of their long-standing collaboration a gift to contemporaneity and the possibilities of the future. It’s as much about that promise as it is a platform for two celebrated senior warriors of music.

Stuart Broome

Si tu partais
Trio Derome Guibeault Tanguay
ambientes magnetiques AM 272 CD (actuellecd.com)

An anthology of recordings from Jelly Roll Morton to Anthony Braxton can serve as an excellent introduction to jazz, but this might serve as well: Trio Derome Guibeault Tanguay fully share the abundant joy that they take in adding their own spontaneous dimensions to this far-flung repertoire.

Stuart Broome

The New Syntax
Matthew Shipp; Mark Helias
RogueArt ROG-0124 (roguart.com)

Pianist Matthew Shipp and bassist Mark Helias are distinguished veterans of the New York City free jazz community, and this program of improvised duets is the embodiment of both their craft and their commitment. The very match of their instruments might suggest a contrast between the florid and fundamental, but their music is like no other.

Even gentler passages are often arrived at through passages of combined rhythmic force, witness Psychic Ladder or Acoustic Electric, in which taut figures give way to a spare lyricism. Conversely, Bridge to Loka moves from random dialogue to rhythmic unison. The effect can resemble shifting weather patterns, sunshine breaking through storm clouds and vice versa. The most lyrical moments, like The Mystic Garden, arise when Shipp’s melodic probes combine with Helias’s arco passages in a cello register, while The New Syntax has the two matching one another’s patterns so closely that they might be reading a score. It’s music that’s as consistently rewarding as it is demanding.

Stuart Broome

Sun Ra’s Journey featuring Marshall Allen
Tyler Mitchell Octet
Cellar Music CMSLF001 (cellarlive.com)

Sun Ra (born Herman Poole Blount) was a jazz composer, keyboard player and bandleader who was active from the
1950s to the 1980s. He was known for his claims of being an alien and many mystical allusions about space and time which could also be viewed as commentary on world politics and race.

Sun Ra’s music included the history of jazz (fragtime, swing, fusion etc.) and many avant-garde elements. I was lucky enough to see him live in Toronto in the 80s and can confirm that each performance was an event. He combined melodic jazz tunes with great ensemble playing and solos that often went outside the traditional jazz sound; he also introduced synthesizers to provide some “other worldly” sonics.

Both Tyler Mitchell and Marshall Allen played with Sun Ra for many years and Sun Ra’s journey is a homage to his bandleader and his music. Care Free is a very swinging opener which showcases some excellent trumpet work from Giveton Gelin. Free Ballad begins with electronic sounds and works into a gorgeous alto sax solo from Allen that swoops between tonal and experimental. Sun Ra’s journey is a delightful album that celebrates Sun Ra’s legacy by proving it is still alive and inspiring.

Ted Parkinson

Unwalled
François Carrier; Alexander von Schlippenbach; John Edwards; Michel Lambert
Fundacja Sluchaj FSR 22/2022
(francoiscarrier.bandcamp.com)

What an incredible ensemble. Altoist François Carrier is a tornado of concepts, ideas and interjections that refuses to cease, providing galvanizing directionality to the music. Drummer Michel Lambert provides textural structures and contrapuntal formations that expand skyward here with a profound innocence and pristine vocal. Although Jaffe died suddenly prior to this release, her vision and musicality will be celebrated with extensive tours in the U.S. and Europe featuring New York City chantuese Alexis Cole.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

Absence of You
Tina Hartt
Independent (tinahartt.com)

The instrumentation hooks you, the arrangements reel you in and Tina Hartt’s passionate performance catches you. Trust Your Heart is an arresting original composition, with Jonathan D. Lewis’ wistful strings cascading over Hartt’s evocative lyricism; equal parts yearnful and triumphant. The relationship between form and substance shines through in every note Hartt sings. Every once in a while, when the band employs silence or coordinates hits for emphasis, Hartt shapes her phrases in a way where profundity takes center stage. In lines like “I can’t touch but I can dream” from I Can Look but I Can’t Touch, that hesitation adds an exclamation point to the echo effect the music creates, bringing the idea home with great clarity.

Aside from Hartt’s consistent ingenuity as a vocalist and limitless creativity, this album is tied together by how incredible it sounds. Credit is due to Steve Dierkens for the mixing, because it adds a great feeling of intimacy and closeness to the album. There are no effects imposed on any musicians present and yet the sound is recorded with startling detail. Every element of the music feels like the most prominent aspect at any given moment, and it is this kind of clarity that lends to Hartt’s voice perfectly. From the very first track to the end, there is a singular directness of Hartt’s approach to her music, and the effectiveness of said approach cannot be overstated.

Yoshi Maclear Wall

Wildwood
Harry Bartlett Trio
Independent (harrybartlettmusic.com)

Harry Bartlett, an accomplished jazz guitarist and composer with a music degree from the University of Toronto, has played in festivals and venues across Canada and has also toured public schools to provide improvisation workshops. Although currently living and playing in Toronto, he grew up in the Pacific Northwest and the music for Wildwood was composed.

Yoshi Maclear Wall

POT POURRI
Both Sides of Joni
Janiece Jaffe; Monika Herzig
Acme Records JM001 (acmerecords.com)

There is no question that Joni Mitchell is a member of a small coterie of artists who have contributed to the very ethos of 20th century music itself (in all of its splendid diversity). Mitchell’s synesthesiac blendings of unconventional melodies, chordal structures and contemporary poetry have touched our hearts and minds, and it’s the eclectic nature of Mitchell’s work that has lent itself to a variety of tributes. With this posthumous release from award-winning vocalist Janiece Jaffe and pianist/arranger Monika Herzig, Mitchell’s work is interpreted with a fresh, jazz-oriented perspective, which includes stalwart performances from noted jazz artists Greg Ward on saxophone, Jeremy Allen on bass, Carolyn Dutton on violin and Cassius Goens on drums.

Included in this compelling recording are Herzig’s innovative arrangements of Mitchell’s most commercially successful songs, as well as some lesser-performed gems. First up is Help Me, which features a melodious, a cappella sax intro which then segues into a rhythmic, swinging musical tapestry replete with stunningly beautiful multi-track vocals from Jaffe. Jaffe’s voice is a delight to the ear. Her clear, pitch-perfect tones embrace the melody and charge it with meaning and Goens’ relentless drums and Ward’s improvisational choices propel this superb track.

The title track is rife with emotional content – exploring the nature of hindsight and regret, and Mitchell’s melancholy River (from Blue) has been cleverly arranged by Herzig. My Old Man is a total delight, warm and ebullient with well-chosen chord substitutions, fully embracing jazz motifs and featuring a solid electric bass solo from Peter Kienle and lighter-than-air soprano work from Ward. The Hissing of Summer Lawns is a triumph in every way – transporting Mitchell’s intent to a whole new dimension of free jazz featuring an energizing piano solo by Herzig. Also of special note is The Circle Game – presented here with a profound innocence and pristine
while living on Gambier Island (approximately 50 km northwest of Vancouver). Titles like Snowfall on Sword Ferns and Circle of Moss and Fire Smoke evoke the landscapes which inspired Bartlett’s music. Wildwood was recorded over three days on that same Island.

All the tunes have an atmospheric quality that is enhanced by the trio’s empathic playing. Burgess Falls is hauntingly melodic, and the guitar work combines a Bill Frisell-feel with a few country-ish riffs. Sailing Over Troubled Waters features a distorted and atonal guitar line along with swirling and bashing drums to mimic an occasionally violent storm. Wildwood is an engaging and beautiful album with Caleb Klager (bass) and Harry Vetro (drums) providing nuanced support to Bartlett’s superb guitar work.

Ted Parkinson

**Blink Twice**

**Jackson Welchner**

**Plutoid Records (jacksonwelchner.com)**

> “Let’s go grab a coffee and talk about every moment since/since we had last crossed paths.” Blink Twice is comfort music. The harmony is warm, the strings are soft, the rhythms are sweet, the lyrics are reassuring. The five-pattern-synth ostinato on the title track will bounce around your skull for hours as it soothes you into a heightened state of being. Sum of All Strings feels like the chamber movement to end all others, as it meditates on its final figure, with an abrupt fade leaving the listener time to recompose themselves. Sarah Thawer’s ride cymbal shimmers, Michael Davidson’s vibes intrigue, Thom Gill’s arpeggios envelop, while Patrick Smith, Kae Murphy and Anh Phung’s countermelodies positively delight.

Contemporary music that commands perhaps the most respect is the kind that treats the low end with the same respect it treats the mids and highs. Jackson Welchner’s arrangements are an exercise in perfect, immensely cathartic balance. The music is progressive, stylistically well-versed while being astonishingly easy to move to. Welchner’s voice is absolute velvet, while being able to consume the cosmos on the Distance. The versatility is in the consonants, and in the consonance. Nary a second of music doesn’t feel cared for and nurtured. It would be easy to come across as hyperbolic saying it, but at this point in the year, it’s hard to find many first (or second, or third…) listeners more holistically gratifying than this.

**Yoshi Maclear Wall**

| **Silent Tears – The Last Yiddish Tango** | **Something in the Air** |
| **Payadora Tango Ensemble** | **Exploring the Vibraphone’s Multiple Identities** |
| Six Degrees 657036132924 (payadora.com/silent-tears) | **KEN WAXMAN** |

> This Payadora Tango Ensemble project features guest musicians and vocalists, and executive producer/English text adapter Dan Rosenberg. It is comprised of tango-flavoured song settings of heart-wrenching memoirs, poems, testimonials and writings by female Holocaust survivors in Canada about the traumatizing violence women and children experienced during the Nazi occupation of Poland. The main lyrical sources are from Dr. Paula David’s Terrace Holocaust Survivors Group Poetry Project at Toronto’s Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care, and from Toronto-based Holocaust survivor Molly Applebaum. All arrangements are by Payadora’s Drew Jurecka.

These songs are based on the inter-war tangos which were popular in the Jewish Central European communities such as four here composed by Artur Gold (1897-1943) who was murdered in the Treblinka Death Camp. Gold’s last tango composition Nie Wierze Ci is arranged into A Prayer for Rescue, based on two 1942 Applebaum diary entries. Marta Kosiorek’s moving heartfelt vocals, Rebekah Wolkstein’s violin and Jurecka’s bandoneon countermelodies, with steady tango grooves by Robert Horvath’s piano and Joseph Phillips’s double bass are an intriguing uplifting/sad mix. Four songs are composed by Wolkstein. Her The Numbers on My Arm features Aviva Chernick’s colourful emotional vocals with words from the Terrace Group about wearing long sleeves in Canada to hide the numbers branded on Auschwitz prisoners is given tight ensemble support. The release also features guests Lenka Lichtenberg and Olga Avigail Mieleszczuk (vocals), and Sergiu Popa (accordion).

This is the most memorable release I have ever had the privilege to listen to and review.

**Tiina Kilk**

**Taking a cue from the subtle melodicism perfected by Chick Corea and Gary Burton on their series of duo discs are vibraphonist Martin Pyne and keyboardist David Beebee.** But on Ripples (DISCUS 145 CD discus-music.co.uk) the two up the ante on the disc’s dozen selections by using electric piano tones to blend with vibe sonorities. The resulting improvisations involve elastic note vibrations from the plugged-in keyboard alongside sustained aluminum bar resonations. Some tracks are balladic, taking full advantage of the ingenuity of Pyne and Jurecka’s bandoneon countermelodies, but on Ripples (DISCUS 145 CD discus-music.co.uk) the two up the ante on the disc’s dozen selections by using electric piano tones to blend with vibe sonorities. The resulting improvisations involve elastic note vibrations from the plugged-in keyboard alongside sustained aluminum bar resonations. Some tracks are balladic, taking full advantage of the ingenuity of the pianist, who also recorded the session, as he cushions the vibist’s languid, perfectly shaped single notes with tremolo comping. This is emphasized most clearly on the extended Seeking Refuge, where rhythmic interludes from the vibist are backed with sympathetic piano chording. Modernity is emphasized as well since Pyne’s single notes ring as well as relate. The vibist’s ability to create perfectly rounded notes that can almost be visualized as teardrop shaped are then hardened into sustained accents when the two play staccato and presto. Glissandi created by mallet slides are sometimes as prominent as keyboard smears. The vibist’s sustain pedal pressure and firmer strokes also frequently confirm the instrument’s idiophone heritage with concise, powerful strokes. Still these instances as on Night Music and Peg Powler are never completely percussive since the latter includes stop-time interludes and the former a sand-dance-like solo from Pyne. With neither partner exclusively soloist nor accompanist the intersectional connection is always maintained. The duo defines each sequence effectively and frequently leaves a timbral ripple in the air after the selection is completed.

**Something in the Air**

**Exploring the Vibraphone’s Multiple Identities**
More percussion is featured on Patricia Brennan’s More Touch (Pyroclastic Records PRzz pyroclasticrecords.com), where the Mexican-born New Yorker adds electronics to her vibraphone and marimba narratives as she meets textures from Cuban percussionist Mauricio Herrera, and Americans, bassist Kim Cass and drummer Marcus Gilmore. Imagine Latin Music–leaning Cal Tjader amplifying his sound with electronics. At the same time, except for the final two tracks which are built around ratcheting Afro-Cuban repercussions and a solid Batá drum pulse respectively, influences far removed from the Southern Hemisphere are interpreted by what could be called a post-Modern Jazz Quartet. Brennan’s compositions touch on reggae and contemporary notated music and can sound as Arcadian as African and relate Mexican son jaracho to American swing. Textures are tweaked with electronic drones and oscillations and Cass’ supple string stops sometimes bend notes to blend with electronic wheezes and washes. Crucially though, he and Gilmore always retain the jazz groove. Extended tracks such as Robbin and the nearly 15-minute Space For Hour are treated as mini-suites. The first moves from emphasizing adagio raps from the vibist to downshifting to a silent interlude that gradually infuses with synthesized wriggles and whooshes. These join emphasized vibie slaps to build a live-lier but still moderato connection. Silences separate sequences in Space For Hour, as Brennan’s skittering metal plinks start off unaccompanied until conga drum plops and cymbal clanks join them to outline the theme. As acoustic and electronic timbres are stretched, a vibe-bass duet limns a secondary theme at half the speed of the first. The subsequent multi-mallet-pulse from the vibist is mirrored by bass string pops and drum ruffs to toughen the line. Finally, as the results stop-time exposure is intensified with drum and percussion reverber, a reprise of the vibes-bass duet preserves the original melody.

Exception for guitars and drums there’s no overt electronics or percussion on Toronto vibist Dan McCarthy’s Songs of the Doomed’s Some Jaded, Atavistic Freakout (TPR Records TPR 014 tprecords.ca). But his disc aims to reflect the writing and over-the-top life of US Gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson (1937-2005). Probably less programmatic than McCarthy intended, the compositions and arrangements crafted for this 13-track CD, mix hints of Metal, pop, chromatic serialism and improv, adding up to a clever package of near-swinging lyricism. Negotiating the changes, besides the vibraphone’s chiming aluminum bars, are intersecting guitar riffs from Don Scott and Luan Phung, steadfast bass accents from Daniel Fortin and drummer Ernesto Cervini’s cooperative rhythms. Tracks like Some Jaded, Atavistic Freakout and Kingdom of Fear are more cinematic than others. The first includes rounded vibraphone plops that colour the exposition as the guitars turn from drums to harmonies that almost suggest a string section. On the second, an intermingling of stentorian bass stops, percussion rubs and expanded guitar string jabs create vamps that are as menacing as those on any thriller soundtrack. Others, such as Oval Farm, are more concerned with the groove. While Fortin’s recurrent bass thumps and Cervini’s paradiddle shuffles create a continuum, string stabs slide the expressive theme out further and further as McCarthy emphasizes prestissimo clanks and echoes, with cadences as rhythmic as anything produced by Lionel Hampton. A throwback, only as far as Thompson’s early 1970s heyday, buzzing guitar flanges, double bass slaps and idiophone accents throughout the session maintain equivalence between the strident and the song-like. So, an exposition such as The High-Water Mark is as straight ahead as any soundtrack, but slightly twisted with interludes of rainstorm-like resonating notes. Given 1960s recording does misfire though with a vocal version of White Rabbit that is more plodding than psychedelic. However the quintet redeems itself by the concluding Evening in Woody Creek as McCarthy and Cervini provide appropriate pops and clatters to highlight Scott’s and Phung’s tolling.

Jimii Hendrix-like flanges, which relate back to the pressurized guitar feedback on the introductory Morning In Woody Creek.

Adding horns and choral instruments, two European sessions position the vibraphone within the jazz continuum. All Slow Dream Gone (Moseorious MMPIP 128 moseorious.com) features Norwegian bassist Ingebrig Häker Flaten with Swedes, clarinetist Per Texas Johansson, drummer Konrad Agrams and vibraphonist Mattias Ståhl. Meanwhile Windows & Mirrors | Milano Dialogues (Leo Records CD LR 931 leorecords.com) is even more pan-European with a quartet of two Finns: soprano/soprano saxophonist Harri Sjöström and accordionist Veli Kujala and two Italians, trombonist Giancarlo Schiavolini and vibraphonist Sergio Armaroli.

Contrapuntal sounds, the Scandinavian session All Slow Dream Gone contains enough unselfconscious swing to be reminiscent of a Benny Goodman small group session of the 1940s or ones with Terry Gibbs in the 1950s. But while these Northern Europeans have internalized hot and cool jazz, the airy sounds they produce include an undertow of studied toughness. Sure the bassist provides an unwavering pulse and there are frequent drum breaks, but when he solos, Flaten explores techniques unknown decades ago. As for the front line, whether it’s chalumeau register scoops or clarion twitters, Johansson’s tone is never forced and produces narrative advances in high, low or middle registers. Creating a woody marimba-like sound Ståhl turns off his instrument’s motor during the selection so that the notes project a hollow sustain, more earthy than elaborate. Skin is an instance of this. Played andante and vivace with never a note out of place, the vibresonations and clarinet slurs and slithers maintain discerning motion in spite of hocketing pauses and individual interchanges with Agrams. Among the foot-tapping rhythms, maintained by the bassist’s walking, other tracks such as Slow – which isn’t – make room for the vibist’s swift, rolling glissandi and pinpointed clanks, while Gone lets the clarinetist snore and snarl his most ferocious low-pitched timbres as drum breaks and metal bar ringing keep the narrative symmetrical.

Coming from a completely antithetical perspective is Windows & Mirrors | Milano Dialogues since its ten tracks are completely improvised. Also it’s the only disc here that doesn’t include a clariphonic. This leaves expression and connection calculated through repetitive accordion tremors and resonating vibraphone clanks. For their part, the trombonist and saxophonist extend dissonant textures such as elephantine roars from Schiavolini and calculated peeps and slithers from Sjöström, as the non-horns maintain andante footing with knowing segues. If the vibist unleashes a series of elongated plunger stutters and the saxophonist replies with biting howls or slippery bites, resonating metal pitter-patter and mid-range squeeze box shudders create a stabilizing continuum. The accordion and vibes aren’t relegated to mere background work either. Throughout the two related groups of free music tropes, each instrument asserts itself for solo introductions or in duet or trio form. A track such as Windows 5 for instance, is set up with Armaroli’s metallic pops, as the theme is kept moving with plunger brass portamento and irregularly vibrated reed slithers. Another distinct strategy is displayed on Mirrors 4, as Kujala’s accordion squeezes create a beginning-to-end allegro pulse even as Schiavolini rumbles half-value slurs that widen and shake the exposition. Sound summation comes on Mirrors 3, the extended concluding track. Emphasized vibie mallet splatters and malleable accordion resonating notes join with gravelly brass breaths and reed vibrations for a climax that moves from tension-ridden to temperate, reflecting both the innovative and integral sides of the improvisations.

The conception and expression of vibraphone playing has come a long way in 100 years. On the evidence here it’s sure to keep evolving.
Old Wine, New Bottles
Fine Old Recordings Re-Released

BRUCE SURTEES

Many of you will be familiar with the epic series of operas, Der Ring des Nibelungen by Richard Wagner. Also known simply as The Ring Cycle, it’s a spellbinding 15 hours that took Wagner over 25 years to compose. With inspiration derived from Norse legend and German mythology it is full of gods and goddesses, giants, dwarves, magic mermaids, a dragon, heroes and heroines. With these operas, we are gifted with some of the most beautiful music ever written.

Four operas comprise the complete Ring cycle and while these operas are inextricably connected, they more than admirably stand alone as autonomous works. The first two of the newly remastered Solti Ring Cycle from Decca have now been released in Canada, Das Rheingold and Die Walküre and with Siegfried and Götterdämmerung to follow this summer.

The Solti Ring was recorded in Vienna between 1958 and 1965 and in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of Sir Georg Solti’s death Decca has spared no expense and remastered the original recordings for this outstanding reissue. According to Gramophone Magazine in 1999 and BBC Music Magazine in 2011, the Solti Ring is “The Greatest Classical Recording of All Time.” The original recording was an immense undertaking; it was the very first studio recording of the complete set and represented the first stereo recording of the Ring Cycle. Solti and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra completed the final recording in November of 1965.

The cast was assembled by John Culshaw, a producer for Decca, and with the release of the first opera in 1958, it appeared that the Ring Cycle would be a commercial success. Each opera was well received and fueled the production of the next one until all four had been recorded. This amounted to a whopping 19 LPs meticulously produced by a team of sound engineers led by Gordon Parry.

Contributing to the overwhelming success of Decca’s recordings was the stellar cast of singers. For Das Rheingold, Kirsten Flagstad was cast as Fricka, and Canada’s own George London as Wotan. They are joined by a cast of singers considered the very best Wagnerian voices of 1958. Each new opera that was recorded was newly cast with the most outstanding singers available at the time. Perhaps that is what is so appealing about these recordings. We are stepping back in time to hear extraordinary performances the likes of which are simply no longer feasible or possible. For Die Walküre, we have Birgit Nilsson as Brünnhilde and Christa Ludwig as Fricka among a stellar cast. This certainly contributed to the overwhelming success at that time and explains why this recording endures today.

The sound staging is a feat unto itself. I was fortunate enough to listen to a couple of the CDs through the Avantgarde Horn Speakers and tube pre- and power-amplifiers. I wanted to experience the music with the kind of gear that was considered the norm in the 50s and 60s. For my ears, this setup brought the singers right into the room and brought home what Decca was trying to achieve with these remastered recordings. Is the sound perfect? One cannot expect it to be, but it is as close as technologically possible based on the original recordings.

It has been a wonderful week of listening and immersing myself in the incredible world Wagner created. We have love and loss, passion, betrayal, revenge, ambition and a little incest. From the lovely and mischievous magical Rhinemaidens to Wotan’s singing Brünnhilde to sleep in an enchanted ring of fire, the first two operas are spellbinding.

Many years ago I travelled to Bayreuth, Germany to hear the Ring cycle at the Festspielhaus, the opera house that was commissioned specifically for this work. Completed in 1876, to this day the Bayreuth Festspielhaus is used solely for annual performances of Wagner operas. But I digress. Wagnerians will have much to celebrate and look forward to there again this summer.

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

57 Better Days Ahead
Kate Weekes

58 Haydn Op. 77 & Mozart K. 614
Rosebud String Quartet

62 Albertine en cinq temps - L’opéra
Catherine Major, multi-interprètes

63 Carols after a Plague
The Crossing

64 Harmonies patriotiques et religieuses
Éva Polgár

64 Consolations
Antoine Malette-Chénier

64 Things Lived and Dreamt
Francine Kay

66 Symphonie de la tempête de verglas
Maxime Goulet, Orchestre classique de Montréal, Jacques Lacombe

68 I and Thou
VC2 Cello Duo

69 Pareidolia
Eren Gumrukcuoglu

70 Killdeer
Guy Barash

70 Felipe Téllez – Evocations
Canadian Studio Symphony

72 Birdlike
THERMO

73 Conspiracy
Tobias Hoffmann Jazz Orchestra

77 Songs of the Doomed: Some Jaded, Atavistic Freakout
Dan McCarthy

Read the reviews here, then visit thewholenote.com/listening

thewholenote.com

April & May 2023
Editor’s Note: I’m delighted to see that Bruce was so enthralled by the performances and pristine sound on these historic recordings that this was the focus of his review. However, I think it worthy to note the packaging of these Hybrid SACD reissues, which will also be available in limited edition 3-LP Deluxe vinyl pressings. Each edition includes lavishly illustrated booklets featuring technical information on the new HD remastering and the original recording techniques, an introduction to each opera by producer John Culshaw, synopses and libretti in English & German, plus many original session photographs and rare facsimiles. You can find full details at store.deccaclassics.com.

Decca Classics has also recently released Renée Fleming – Greatest Moments at the Met (store.deccaclassics.com). These are all live performances, some of her greatest moments packed into a 2-CD set. The incomparable Fleming formally retired from the Met in 2017 at 58 years old, and this CD includes many of the incredible highlights from her illustrious career.

I’m not sure I understand how retirement works, as Fleming will sing Tosca at the Santa Fe Opera later this year and will return to the Met this spring in La Traviata. Her voice now at 64 sounds better than many sopranos half her age. But I digress again...

The chosen arias highlight her distinctive lyric soprano voice and spotlight some of her greatest vocal roles. It’s very exciting that some of these performances have never been previously released. The duets include Cecilia Bartoli, Samuel Ramey, Massimo Giordano, Susan Graham and Dmitri Hvorostovsky among others. Some 16 composers are featured including some of her best known and most beloved roles, Violetta in Act II of Verdi’s La Traviata from March, 2004 and Manon in Act III of Massenet’s opera of the same name recorded in 2006 and in 2008 accompanied by Massimo Giordano.

I’m very partial to Franz Lehár’s Merry Widow recorded in January of 2016. Happily, I saw it in February of the same year through the Live from The Metropolitan Opera HD transmissions.

I’d like to mention the outstanding performance as Marguerite in Gounod’s Faust. This recording from a performance at the Met in 1997 is one of the last times she performed this part despite it being one of her much-admired roles. In her own words, “I stopped singing Marguerite... it disturbed me that she was a victim from the first note – she never had a chance. It’s so much more interesting to me to portray women who have agency, some say in their own fate.”

The results of the Met’s outstanding orchestra and chorus, the terrific acoustics and great conductors are definitely some of The Greatest Moments at the Met. Admittedly two CDs are not enough to capture the sheer number of Fleming’s outstanding performances, but this set is an excellent addition to her discography.

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