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UPCOMING
in Volume 29 No 2, OCTOBER & NOVEMBER 2023

THE BLUE PAGES
Our 24th annual directory of music makers in Southern Ontario.

Old friends and always some wonderful new ones: meet the presenters profiled here whose creative work represents the bedrock of everything The WholeNote strives to do, and whose ongoing financial support through membership, and priceless moral support, is what keeps us going.

The Blue Pages are available year-round under the Who’s Who tab at thewholenote.com

For more information, or to inquire about including your organisation or ensemble, contact Karen Ages members@thewholenote.com

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- **February 22**  Ying Quartet
- **March 28**  St. Lawrence & Friends

**PIANO**

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VOLUME 29 NO 1 SEPTEMBER 2023

IN THIS EDITION

STORIES AND INTERVIEWS
Wendalyn Bartley, MJ Buell, Paul Ennis, David Perlman, Andrew Scott, Sharna Searle, Colin Story

CD Reviewers
Stuart Broomer, Max Christie, Stephanie Conn, Sam Dickinson, Daniel Foley, Raul da Gama, Janos Gardonyi, Richard Haskell, Tiina Kii, Kati Killaspea, Lesley Mitchell-Clarke, Cheryl Oocrin, David Olds, Ivana Popovic, Cathy Riches, Terry Robbins, Michael Schulman, Andrew Scott, Adam Sherkin, Bruce Surtees, Andrew Timar, Yoshi Maclear Wall, Ken Waxman, Matthew Whitfield

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UPCOMING DATES AND DEADLINES
Weekly Online Listings Updates
6pm every Tuesday for weekend posting

Volume 29 No. 2, October & November
Will be published
Friday, September 22 (digital)
Tuesday, September 26 (print)

Print edition listings deadline
6pm Tuesday, September 5

Print advertising, reservation deadline
6pm Tuesday, September 12

Web advertising can be booked at any time

Volume 29 will include six print editions:
September 2023 (Aug 29);
October & November (Sept 26);
December & January (Nov 28);
February & March (Jan 30);
April & May (Mar 28); Summer (May 28)

Printed in Canada
Couto Printing & Publishing Services
Circulation Statement - May 30, 2023
9000 printed & distributed
Canadian Publication Product
Sales Agreement 1263846
ISSN 14888-8785 WHOLENOTE
Publications Mail Agreement a40026682

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INTERSECTIONS

“Intersection” jumped out at me as a singularly good word with which to launch this first issue of our 29th season of doing what we do. “Crossroads” came to mind, so did “Turning Point”, and a few others, across the full spectrum from dire to hopeful.

One thing I like particularly about the word is how normal, mundane even, it often is. Intersections are, after all, not places where worlds are supposed to collide. To the contrary, they are places where avoiding collisions is one’s primary social responsibility, whether one is attempting to proceed straight ahead, or signalling a change of direction.

Don’t misunderstand though. It is not a word condemned to the mundane. In fact, in some contexts it has a certain delicious terror to it – a frisson – knowing that you have just doubled your chances of an unforeseen encounter, or have the option of changing direction yourself.

It’s this latter sense that Intersection Music & Arts Festival (IMAF) taps into for its annual marathon concert event on the Saturday before Labour Day. The idea is to put a wide range of non-mainstream music and art in some place where everyone happening to go by will run into stuff they would never have thought of watching or listening to. Or might even have crossed the street to avoid, if they’d seen it coming.

Obviously it takes major intersectionality to ensure a gratifying volume of random encounters of this kind: fortunately there is no place in the city more majorly intersectional than Yonge-Dundas Square, the festival’s home since Contact Contemporary Music presented its first all-day “Toronto New Music Marathon” there in 2007. (The “Intersection” name came along three years later.)

This year the Saturday before Labour Day falls on September 2. And, as we have been, more often than not from the get-go, WholeNote will be there, sharing a booth somewhere along the margins of the event. The printing gods being kind, we will be waving copies of this first issue of what is promising to be, for us, a significantly intersectional 29th year of doing what we do.

Oops, there’s that frisson again.

At the start of this, I said that “Intersection” had jumped out at me while searching for some unifying theme to this. Twice, actually. The other instance is a concert I write about elsewhere in the issue which is described as being “at the intersection of Music & Dance”. Think of “Music & Dance” as being a physical somewhere – like Yonge & Dundas (or 34th & Vine, for that matter). Followers of different arts arrive at the same intersection by different routes; drawn by what they knew they liked, and end up transformed by something they would never have thought of watching or listening to. Nice thought.

David Perlman can be reached at publisher@thewholenote.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For thousands of years before European settlement, T’karonto (The Meeting Place) was part of the traditional territory of many Nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit River, the Anishinabae, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, and remains their home to this day, as it now is for many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples.

This Meeting Place lies within the territory governed by the Sewatokwa’tshera’t (Dish with One Spoon) treaty between the Anishinabae, Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee – a Treaty which bound them to share the territory and protect the land. Subsequent Indigenous Nations and Peoples, and all newcomers are invited into this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship, respect and reconciliation. We are grateful to live and work here, helping spread the word about the healing power of music in this place.
Augustin Hadelich, violin, with Orion Weiss, piano
FRI., OCT. 13, 8PM KOERNER HALL
TICKETS START AT ONLY $45
Grammy Award-winning violinist Augustin Hadelich and “brilliant pianist” (The New York Times) Orion Weiss will perform two traditional sonatas, a minimalist piece written in the 80s, and other exciting works.

Generous support provided from The Michael and Sonja Koerner Fund for Classical Programming

Omar Kamal
FRI., OCT. 20, 7:30PM KOERNER HALL
TICKETS START AT ONLY $50
Performing with a Toronto all-star big band and strings, Palestinian singer, composer, and producer Omar Kamal brings together a stunning repertoire of emotional hits for one enchanting evening of standards.
The evening is dedicated to the memory of Tony Bennett.

Generous support provided from The Michael and Sonja Koerner Fund for Classical Programming
“Beautiful Gumbo”

LONG LIVE THE REX

ANDREW SCOTT

Although not yet as canonically sacrosanct to the history of jazz as NYC’s Minton’s Playhouse was, Toronto’s Rex Hotel is equally important to this city’s jazz community as both a performance venue and a musical testing ground where creative ideas and group concepts germinate and take root.

Guitarist Lorne Lofsky began playing there with such musicians as saxophonists Bob Mover and Kirk MacDonald and drummer Jerry Fuller in the late 1980s. “It’s really interesting,” he recalls, “to witness the evolution of people’s playing at The Rex. The club is not a laboratory exactly, but rather a magical place where musicians are free to try things out. From that initial experimentation, groups have formed, concepts evolved, and people have grown as players because of the playing that we did there.”

The famed Harlem NYC nightclub, Minton’s Playhouse, existed from 1938 until a fire ripped through the Hotel Cecil that housed it in 1974. It remains an important site to this day, discussed in reverential tones by jazz enthusiasts coming to pay homage at the locale where modern jazz’s equivalents of Zeus, Poseidon and Hades held court. On Monday evenings in the early 1940s, at crowded jam sessions following earlier Apollo Theatre performances, the Olympian “Big Three” were Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Christian.

As much as Minton’s was a place and physical site, it is remembered primarily as a spot of musical experimentation, ultimately becoming the metaphorical petri dish of modern jazz. As the writer Ralph Ellison explained in a 1959 Esquire article, the club’s Monday Celebrity Nights incubated ever-new musical ideas, “allowing the musicians free rein to play whatever they liked.” Yes, there were other spots where this music was developing, but it is safe to say: no Minton’s, no bebop.

Stumbling serendipitously: Like many “Temples of Sound,” to borrow a phrase from William Clark and Jim Cogan’s great book, The Rex stumbled into its place as a preeminent site of musical excellence not by design necessarily, but rather serendipity - benefitting from the happenstance of proximity. Situated at 194 Queen St W, it was located just down the street from Doug Cole’s Bourbon Street, which in the 1970s and 1980s was bringing marquee name American jazz greats to the city to perform with local rhythm sections. “A lot of musicians who were on break at Bourbon Street would come to The Rex for the cheaper booze and to have a taste between sets” remembers pianist Mark Eisenman, who considers his performances at The Rex as part of trumpeter Sam Noto’s band (with Kirk MacDonald, drummer Bob McLaren and either Neil Swainson or Kieran Overs on bass) as “among his most treasured musical memories.”

Conversely, Rex owner Bob Ross – whose father Jack and business partner Morris Myers had purchased the former Williams Hotel in 1950 as a “beer hotel” investment opportunity – would cap off his working evenings by going to Bourbon Street to unwind and hear some music. “If it swung, I was into it,” says Ross, who cites performances of Zoot Sims and Jackie Cain and Roy Krall as particularly memorable.

And so, by the early 1980s, a reciprocal ecosystem of musicians moving between Bourbon Street to The Rex Hotel was established. The Ross family business soon went from hosting musicians looking for an inexpensive drink at its bar, to hosting them on the stage that had been built on the hotel’s Queen Street side (previously the United Clothing Store that occupied the southerly portion of the building’s ground floor).

Early and exciting musical sets by saxophonist Jim Heineman and organist John T. Davis, with Mark Hundevad on drums, forged performance ground at the club.

Soon a roster of local players was rotating appearances at the club, including the brothers Lloyd (bass) and Don “D.T.” Thompson...
(saxophone), pianist Norm Amadio, teenagers Jake Wilkinson (then on valve trombone) and saxophonist Grant Stewart, trombonist Terry Lukiwski and drummer Norman Marshall Villeneuve. The roster also included saxophonist Bob Mover, who, at the behest of long-time Rex server Rob Collins, began living upstairs in the club’s second floor hotel rooms. The running joke was that a fireman’s pole should be installed from Mover’s room directly to the club’s stage.

Both living and playing regularly at The Rex, saxophonist Mover gained insight into not only the musicians who worked the weekend performance slots, but the Damon Runyan-esque characters who fraternized the establishment. Be it the erudite “Stoney” (who would apparently quote Bukowski between sips of a drink), the drummer Norman “Spike” McKendry (who recorded in Montreal with Sadik Hakim), or pianist Jim McBirnie (who was there so often that he had an unofficial bar seat. The Rex was as rich in character as it was in the musical talent it hosted.

“It was a fascinating atmosphere with a lot of soul,” says Mover, “which, for a New Yorker like me was very refreshing in Toronto the good!”

Looking to expand the club’s weekend performances to include a Tuesday evening set, Ross tapped Villeneuve and Mover to co-lead the club’s now famous and longstanding jam session, currently hosted by bassist Chris Banks. These formative sessions soon afforded young musicians the opportunity to perform regularly, learning from the established masters of this music such as Mover and Villeneuve: the latter consciously modelled his bands’ commitment to “passing it down” after Art Blakey’s Messengers, in a rite of passage as old as the idiom itself.

“It was an amazing time,” remembers trumpeter Jake Wilkinson, who by the early 1990s went from sitting in at the jam sessions to co-leading a group at the club on Wednesday evenings. “I learned a lot during those days,” remembers Wilkinson, who would rehearse after hours in the club’s basement with Mover when the older saxophonist was living upstairs.

“It was a fascinating atmosphere with a lot of soul, which, for a New Yorker like me was very refreshing in Toronto the good!” — Bob Mover

Pianist and Rex fixture Jim McBirnie took this photo in the mid-nineties: (l-r) Charlie Mountford, piano; Archie Alleyne, drums; Don Thompson, bass; Bob Mover, sax; and Pat LaBarbera, sax.
**Handling success:** As the roster of musicians performing at the club and vying for gigs expanded, so did the responsibility of booking shows. By 1989, Ross brought in Tom Tytel, who had recently earned his bartending licence and whose mother was long-time friends with the Ross family, to assist with bartending, evening managerial duties, and, eventually, booking the music. Commenting on his, and The Rex’s, track record for not only consistently showcasing top-shelf music but staying in business for some three decades, including COVID shutdowns, Tytel disavows any personal agency. “I don’t claim to know music, good from bad, but I do know what works for The Rex. I trust the people to whom Bob introduced me, and I know enough to get out of the way and stay out of all things creative that happen on the stage.”

As the decades passed and the former upstairs residence rooms flourished as renovated and revamped boutique downtown hotel suites under the watchful eye of Ross’ son Avi, the club’s booking policy expanded from those initial Heineman/Davis weekend slots, to hosting music seven nights a week, often with two or three bands performing multiple sets a night. The Rex is today valued as much for the social cohesion it facilitates within Toronto’s intergenerational and intersectional jazz community as for the destination performance spot it provides for local and out-of-town musicians, as well as fledgling student ensembles from the city’s neighbouring schools.

“It’s a mainstay, for sure,” states saxophonist Mike Murley. “It’s hung in there to not only grow over the years but evolve. I love what’s going on there now as the multi-night performances are somewhat like the old days.”

Murley’s “the old days” hearkens back to an earlier time in Toronto jazz when George’s, Meyer’s Deli, Montreal Bistro, Bourbon Street and the Bermuda Onion reigned supreme. The Rex’s new booking policy has become a creative catalyst for a new crop of younger players who can now bring visiting players to the city for extended engagements. “Having a four-night run at The Rex to workshop the material before recording with Terri Parker’s Free Spirits was really beneficial in terms of preparing the music and getting a sound together,” suggests bassist Lauren Falls.

Tom Tytel’s booking credo is that “if you leave the cooks alone, they will make you a beautiful gumbo.” The Rex, whether hosting the annual Coltrane Tribute (nearing its 40th anniversary) or showcasing an ever-new crop of diverse and talented young jazz voices, has no plans to stop cooking up enriching and soulful sounds anytime soon.

**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.**

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**Sharon Azrieli on The AMPs at Ten**

Sharon Azrieli's late father, philanthropist and developer, David Azrieli, with a mission, according to the Foundation's website, “to improve the lives of present and future generations through education, research, healthcare and the arts, mainly in Canada and Israel.”

**Canadian cultural organizations and institutions that have benefited from the Foundation’s support over the years.**

While Music, Arts & Culture is but one of the Foundation’s eight priority funding areas, I counted a mind-boggling 40-plus Canadian cultural organizations and institutions that have benefited from the Foundation’s support over the years. Many of these have been covered in the pages of The WholeNote – from the Canadian Opera Company, Sistema Toronto and Jeunesses Musicales Canada, to Concerts in Care Ontario, Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Ashkenaz Foundation. (And I have a feeling there are probably another 40 I haven’t heard about.)

In 2013, Montreal-born Sharon Azrieli had an idea for a new Azrieli Foundation program – a competition that reflected her love of music and art, and which she knew would become her “bailiwick” at the Foundation. “My first thought was ‘What doesn’t exist?’ she explained in a recent phone conversation. Not wanting to reinvent any wheels, she looked around and determined that in Canada there were already competitions for voice, for violin, for string quartet, and for piano, but that there were none for composition.

Thus, playing to her strengths – “What do I know about? I happen to know about Jewish music” – and to her deep ties to both Canada and Israel, in 2014 the Azrieli Music Prizes (AMP) were born.

The first two inaugural prizes were The Azrieli Prize for Jewish Music and The Azrieli Commission for Jewish Music, followed by The Azrieli Commission for Canadian Music a few years later. And to mark the upcoming tenth anniversary of the AMP, a fourth prize has been added for the 2024 competition: The Azrieli Commission for International Music.
Azrieli, herself, is no musical slouch. In addition to her philanthropic work, the AMP’s visionary is an operatic soprano, a cantor and a jazz, cabaret and Broadway singer. She also holds degrees from Vassar College (B.A., art history), Parsons School of Design (Associate Degree, illustration), Université de Montréal (M.Mus, vocal performance; Ph.D. music) and a Diploma in Vocal Performance from Juilliard. Clearly, she knows a thing or two about more than Jewish music, and knows what high standards look like.

As a result, the Azrieli Music Prizes are widely recognized as Canada’s biggest (and among the world’s most important) competitions devoted to music composition – synonymous with excellence, prestige and originality. Each round of the prizes has its own specific and unique focus and artistic challenges – this year’s instrumental cycle, for example, is devoted to choral music; all works, in all competition categories, must be for a cappella choir plus up to four additional instruments and/or vocal soloists. Winning commissions, we are told, will display “the utmost creativity, artistry, technical mastery and professional expertise.”

That being said, the Foundation goes to great lengths to clarify that the competition in general, and the Jewish music prizes specifically, are open to people of all ages, genders, faiths, backgrounds and traditions. As Sharon Azrieli has stated in many interviews and articles over the years, “This is one of the most important aspects of both the Azrieli Prize for Jewish Music and the Azrieli Commission for Jewish Music: you don’t have to be Jewish to write Jewish music.”

In a 2015 press release from the Foundation, she had some fun with the subject. After saying that “the whole point of the competition is that you don’t have to be Jewish,” she added, “And also, everyone is Jewish. Find your Jewish soul – anybody can be a kvetch!”

The converse is also true, she told me. “Just because you say, ‘Hey, I’m Jewish and therefore anything I write is Jewish music,’ ... No. Sorry ... it does not work that way.” Apparently, they get a number of those applications.

Azrieli “loves the question” of What is Jewish music? because she “can actually answer it,” given her background as a cantor, and her doctoral work – finding cantorial modes in the works of Verdi.
– among other things. “Jewish music is a known entity. It has absolutely known modes. Then there are Yiddish songs, there are Sephardic songs. There is klezmer – biblical themes or stories about the Jewish people. There are so many things that are legitimately Jewish music.”

Ultimately, it all comes down to “fostering greater intercultural understanding through music.” And each prize package, valued at an exceedingly generous $200,000 CAD, is a great motivator en route to achieving that goal. Included is a cash prize of $50,000 CAD, a premiere of the prize-winning work at the AMP Gala Concert, at least two subsequent international performances, a professional recording of the work for future commercial release, and publicity support. Further, the AMP Performance Fund supports ensembles in presenting public performances of winning works.

Becoming an Azrieli Music Prize winner, a laureate, is a career-boosting, if not outright life-changing, experience. Some of the extraordinary prize-winning works over the years end up in the orchestral repertoire, like the oratorio The Seven Heavenly Halls, by Brian Current, first winner of the Azrieli Commission for Jewish Music. Some even win a Juno, like Arras (for fourteen musicians), by Keiko Devaux, first winner of the Azrieli Commission for Canadian Music. According to Jason van Eyk, the Foundation’s Manager, Music, Arts and Culture, there has been a marked evolution and growth since the AMP’s inception, including “a 150% increase in the number of applicants and 145% growth in the number of countries represented.” (If you want to do the math, the first competition drew almost 100 applicants and 145% growth in the number of countries represented.) (If you want to do the math, the first competition drew almost 100 applications from over ten countries.) There have also been improvements in gender diversity. This all bodes well for the future of the AMPs, as does the fact that the last few Galas were livestreamed by medici.tv and viewed by close to 60,000 people in 65 countries!

As a philanthropist, Sharon Azrieli’s good work at the Foundation earns plaudits. As a soprano and a cantor, she also continues to enjoy the applause of appreciative concert audiences and synagogue congregations; sometimes both at the same time. This was the case during her most recent concert in Cluj, Romania, where she sang a cantorial concert in the city’s only working synagogue. “I needed to say kaddish for my father, and there was nobody to lead the service. So I ended up leading the service for them, and it ended up being just a lovely experience.”

Winding up our conversation, I asked her one of those “Who’s your favourite child?” kind of questions: of all the musical genres, which one speaks most deeply to her heart? Her answer surprised me. With a sigh followed by a hearty laugh, she replied, “Israeli folk song. Don’t forget I was raised on Israeli folk songs. I love [them]. I bet you can imagine me singing some of them.” And I could.

So, is there a genre she has yet, and would like to tackle, say for example, country music? I asked, and that answer surprised me even more. “I can’t believe you asked that . . . It’s so funny because I was just about to record a country song.” It was for a movie she was about to appear in, she explained, but which got kiboshed due to the actors’ strike in Hollywood.

She wouldn’t name the song because she still plans to record it and wants it to be a surprise. “But I’ll tell you something. It is a country song that is in the Lydian mode. If you can figure out which one it is, then call me.” Any guesses?

And what about opera? Azrieli was very candid. “It’s a young person’s ‘sport,’” she said. “It’s like being a figure skater . . . so physically hard on the body . . . there is an age limit for opera and I think I’m nearing the end.” And then she quoted Kenny Rogers’ The Gambler: “It’s an issue of ‘you got to know when to fold ’em.’” Hmmmm. Maybe the next Azrieli prize will be a “Jewish” country music commission. With her joie de vivre, I wouldn’t put it past her.

**Some dates to watch**

**Sharon Azrieli**

*September 2023: Screening of Irena’s Vow at the Toronto International Film Festival (Sharon Azriel plays the role of “Helen”)*

*October 2023: Quebec Philharmonic Orchestra, Beethoven Symphony No. 9*

**Azrieli Music Prizes**

*October 6, 2023: Album release, New Jewish Music Vol. 4*

*October 15, 2023: Sharon Azrieli performs the European premiere of 2022 AMP Jewish Music laureate, Aharon Harlap’s, Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee (Philharmonia Orchestra, Cadogan Hall). The prize-winning works by both 2022 Laureates, Rita Ueda and Imam Habibi, will also be performed.*

*November 2, 2023: 2024 AMP Laureate Announcement Event: details to be announced.*

**Sharna Searle, a former WholeNote listings editor, trained as a musician and lawyer, and currently works as a freelance writer, editor and proofreader.**
When I heard that Tafelmusik was opening its 2023/24 season with Beethoven symphonies conducted by Bruno Weil and in celebration of its 45th anniversary season, it sounded like a reunion that I could not miss,” writes Christina Mahler, Tafelmusik principal cellist from 1981 to 2019.

"Tafelmusik’s collaboration with Bruno Weil started in the early 1990s with an annual invitation to play at his music festival in Bavaria: Klang und Raum (Sound and Space). As the festival’s orchestra-in-residence for 19 years, we ended our summers in southern Germany with Bruno and his family. This relationship has greatly shaped our orchestra and helped extend our repertoire into the 19th century, because Bruno wanted to explore the classical and Romantic music periods with Tafelmusik on period instruments. Playing Romantic music on period instruments was a fairly new concept at the time, and we were able to learn and explore alongside each other.

"Bruno has said that he especially loves to play Beethoven with Tafelmusik, which makes a lot of sense to me. Beethoven is a composer who makes you work. His life was hard, with many dramatic challenges. He had a fiery, earthy and willful temperament, which comes through in his music. Playing his works on period instruments gives a clearer understanding and experience of what Beethoven wanted to say. Once we learn about the composer, use the instruments of the time, and learn about the specific styles of the period, the music becomes much more powerful. Winds and strings find their original balance. Bruno has offered us many beautiful insights. As he has said, working with Tafelmusik means exploring Beethoven as if it was newly composed music. Approaching the music as Baroque musicians, we had to expand our palette, flexing and toning our muscles to re-learn this new style. It was an exciting process for everyone including the festival’s audience. Our annual stay in Germany often ended with the making of one or more recordings. Then, returning to Toronto, we were ready for our opening concerts, sharing our repertoire discoveries with our home audience.

"It is such a thrill that Bruno is coming back to collaborate with Tafelmusik after these awful years of COVID drought. He will bring his family and some friends from our Klang & Raum years to Toronto, and it will feel like a true reunion.”

When I joined Tafelmusik in 2004, it was my incredible good fortune to be welcomed into the musical relationship between Tafelmusik and Bruno Weil, and into the middle of the Beethoven symphony recordings” says Cristina Zacharias, Tafelmusik violinist and Artistic Co-Director.

"I knew I was lucky, but I didn’t understand at that time just how rare such relationships are in the orchestral world. The atmosphere in our work together was characterized by trust, exploration and a relentless commitment to the music in front of us. The performances that resulted from this collaboration are among the most special in
my career – thrilling moments in concert halls all over the world where the magic of live performance blended with a sense of discovery and a particularly unified performance energy.

“There’s no other recording of a Beethoven symphony that parallels the audio fidelity and emotional intensity we recorded for ‘Beethoven’s 5th’ with Bruno conducting,” says BMG Classics President Simon Ibbotson. “And we believe Tafelmusik’s performance embodies the spirit of Beethoven as well.”

“Bruno’s approach is radically different from other conductors in his generation,” says BMG Classics President Simon Ibbotson. “He has a unique understanding of how to bring out the best in these musicians, which is why we were so drawn to him.”

Dominic Teresi, Tafelmusik Principal Bassoon and Artistic Co-Director, offered this:

“One of my earliest performances with Tafelmusik was Beethoven’s 5th at Klang und Raum with Bruno conducting. It was an incredibly profound and joyous experience with my new Tafelmusik family that I will never forget. Bruno brings an uncommon breadth of knowledge and emotional depth to Beethoven and I can say that performing and recording all nine of Beethoven’s symphonies with him has been one of the most formative experiences of my musical career. I am overjoyed to be opening our 45th season with Bruno and these two monumental works.”

And a postscript:

“It is an honour to return to the stage with Tafelmusik almost 20 years since our first recordings of Beethoven symphonies,” says Bruno Weil. “The musicians of Tafelmusik continue to bring such intensity, honesty and absolute delight to the music. There are few joys greater than bringing the idealism and passion of Beethoven’s music to life with my dear friends.”

The details: Tafelmusik’s 45th anniversary season kicks off with an all-Beethoven blockbuster on Sept 22 at 8pm, Sept 23 at 8pm & Sept 24 at 3pm at Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning.

**Dominic Teresi, Tafelmusik Principal Bassoon and Artistic Co-Director.**

**MJ Buell is a long time member of The WholeNote team, and an occasional writer.**
Let’s start by looking back — to a Toronto Symphony concert in January this year. Second half of the concert was the Mozart Requiem, with the full Mendelssohn Choir (TMChoir) doing the vocal honours. But what made the evening special was how the first half set the scene.

The concert opened with the sopranos and altos of the Toronto Mendelssohn Singers (TMSingers) entering in darkness, singing, a cappella, Hildegard’s haunting O Virtus Sapientiae. Two orchestral pieces followed (Mozart’s Masonic Overture and an arrangement of Beethoven’s Grosse Fugue.) And the half closed with the TMSingers’ full chamber contingent again, divided up, antiphonally, into two choirs, in Gregorio Allegri’s Miserere mei, Deus.

The evening felt like an artistic whole. As such, it spoke to the wisdom of the TMChoir’s decision to formalize the choir’s professional core as a chamber ensemble. The chamber choir offers an intimacy that is the emotional flip-side of the main choir’s power. As such it offers the potential for exploring edgier repertoire, new venues, and inspiring creative partnerships.

September 22 & 23 is a case in point. Titled “In Time: at the Intersection of Music & Dance”, the concert renews a creative partnership formed during the darkest days of the pandemic, with choreographer/dancer Laurence Lemieux’s Citadel + Compagnie. Performances take place in Jeanne Lamon Hall, at Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, – unfamiliar territory for both ensembles. The repertoire, on the other hand (Handel’s Dixit Dominus and Bach’s Christ lag in Todesbanden), is part of the musical DNA of a venue that, as home to the Tafelmusik Baroque Ensemble for decades, wears Period music like a coat of paint!

I reached out to Lesley Emma Bouza, a long-standing member of the TMChoir’s professional core, for her thoughts on the TMSingers revival.

WN: Let’s start with what makes singing in the big choir special.
LESLEY BOUZA: I love singing in big choirs. My first choir experience was in a big symphonic choir, at the University of Guelph under conductor Dr. Marta McCarthy. I fell in love with the feeling of having my voice be a part of a massive sound machine that can achieve anything from pianissimo to triple forte and beyond. I’ve been an instrumentalist and a singer in every size, shape and type of ensemble and for me the experience of singing in a large choir satisfies so many musical needs.

I love the camaraderie, and I love the feeling of letting my voice soar within this group. I love feeling how my voice blends into the group around me and how we all complement and amplify each other’s voices. The physical sensation of this type of singing is incredibly cathartic and I’ve often found myself swept up emotionally.

Art uplifted when dance & music intersect
DAVID PERLMAN
Is there anything it’s not good for? The only thing that comes to mind for me is that you need to be very aware of your technique and how your sound fits into an ensemble that large. You don’t have the same feedback of hearing yourself as in a smaller ensemble, so the temptation to push your sound out to be able to be heard yourself better is very strong and can lead to vocal fatigue quite quickly; especially with some of the repertoire that you encounter in this type of choir … Beethoven’s 9th, Carmina Burana … other large scale works with a lot of sustained fortissimo singing.

What does chamber singing offer that a big choir cannot? The opportunity to prepare music in very detailed ways. Often you’re singing only a few voices to a part, or, as in the case with TM Singers’ opportunity to prepare music in very detailed ways. Often you’re fortissimo singing.

From music that was written 200 years ago in German to music that was written last month in Arabic.

And this upcoming collaboration with Citadel? I am thrilled. Art is uplifted when different mediums, genres and cultures come together. If this art form is to survive I think we need to present it in ways that resonate with audiences that may not be drawn to the more traditional choral aesthetic. Dance is a no-brainer to pair with early music; so much of this music is built upon a foundation of dance forms. I can’t wait to see what C: C brings to incredible works that are always challenging and fun to sing; but they’ve been performed many, many times in this city in a conventional way. Adding dance sheds a new light on timeless work and adds relevance for a modern audience.
In March of 2020 – while COVID anxiety was swirling through Toronto, but just before lockdown protocols were announced and enacted – news broke that Hugh’s Room Live would be leaving their Dundas West location, having failed to come to terms with their landlord in lease negotiations. It was a major blow for the city’s club scene.

In 2001, Richard Carson opened Hugh’s Room on Dundas West, naming it in memory of his brother Hugh, a former folk musician who had dreamed of opening his own performance venue before his death from cancer in 1999. It had been an important venue, with programming that emphasized folk, blues and roots music, including performances from Buffy Sainte-Marie, Joni Mitchell and Gordon Lightfoot.

Grim though the news seemed, especially in the context of other pandemic-venue closures, the Hugh’s Room Live organization continued to present live music starting in 2021, albeit on other stages; 3030 Dundas, the Tranzac, Paradise Theatre and Revival have all functioned as partner venues to the organization, playing host to Hugh’s Room Live shows.
In July of this year, however, something very exciting happened: Hugh’s Room Live’s board of directors confirmed the acquisition of a building they had had an eye on, at 296 Broadview Avenue. Located right between Gerrard St E and Dundas St E, close to Riverdale Park, the building had originally opened in 1894 as the Broadview Avenue Congregational Church. The venue will take shape gradually; though shows are already booked for the fall, building a commercial kitchen and making the former church fully accessible will take some time and additional fundraising.

Celebrating the launch: A few existing bookings will still be happening at the aforementioned partner venues, such as Michael Jerome Brown at the Tranzac on September 15, and Jesse Ryan’s Bridges project at Revival on October 15. Meanwhile, a number of excellent shows have already been booked into the new space, with some top-notch Canadian talent.

On Sunday, September 24, the Lina Allemano Four takes the 296 Broadview stage. Allemano has long been considered one of North America’s most talented and adventurous trumpet players; her long-running quartet’s most recent album, *Vegetables*, was nominated for a 2022 Juno Award, and the group was included in *DownBeat* magazine’s annual Critics’ Poll list for Rising Star Jazz Group in the same year.

On October 11, singer-songwriter David Francey will perform an already-sold-out show. Francey is something of a mythological figure in the Canadian folk music scene; the Scotland-born, Canada-raised troubadour didn’t start releasing music until he was in his 40s, after an adult life working on rail yards, construction sites and in the Yukon backcountry. Now, firmly established, he has received numerous accolades, including a SOCAN folk music award, an International Acoustic Music Award and the John Lennon Songwriting Award.

**AND BRIEFLY**

**TUJF:** Just before school gets back in session, the Toronto Undergraduate Jazz Festival (TUJF) returns to Mel Lastman Square over the Labour Day long weekend. Though the festival is no longer the new kid on the block – the inaugural edition was presented in 2015 – TUJF is still a celebration of young jazz groups, with a strong connection to post-secondary jazz programs. This year will also see artists such as Ranee Lee, Thomas Steele, Ale Nuñez and Laila Biali performing on the main stage between September 1 and 4.

**FESTIVALS:** Outside of Toronto, there are other exciting festivals to check out. On September 8 and 9, the Sudbury Jazz Festival takes place at a handful of venues across that city. With an emphasis both on exciting shows and educational workshops, the festival will feature established artists such as Denzal Sinclaire, OKAN and Crystal Shawanda, as well as new artists like Alex Bird and the Jazz Mavericks, as well as Madeleine Ertel, winner of the 2023 Jazz Sudbury Emerging Artist program.

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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.**
I t was participating in the Toronto Improvisor’s Orchestra that offered a lifeline for electroacoustic music improviser, teacher, researcher and producer Michael Palumbo. During 2019, Palumbo was experiencing multiple crises in his life which eventually led him into performing improvised music on his modular synthesizer. “It was a form of music making where empathy is very important,” he told me during our phone interview. “I could go and play my heart out. It saved my life that year.”

A short time later, Palumbo was walking past the Hirut Cafe and Restaurant (an Ethiopian eatery on Danforth Avenue), and saw the legendary jazz saxophonist Kirk MacDonald through the window. He couldn’t resist entering and discovered some of the city’s jazz greats playing together in various combinations to packed audiences. He was determined to start up something similar for free improv musicians. Eventually, a monthly series of improvisation concerts he called Exit Points was born – held on the last Friday of every month at Array Music, 155 Walnut Avenue (in the Adelaide/Strachan area).

Each evening follows a similar format. Nine guests plus Palumbo are put together into two quintets, each performing a set. Often the performers don’t know each other beforehand and are either invited by Palumbo or request to be included. The upcoming concert on September 29 is a good example of the eclectic mix of musicians brought together. People from new music, ambient and jazz genres.

**Ticket Orders**
By phone: 416-923-7052 x.1
Online: www.wmct.on.ca/tickets
Subscriptions: $200 | Single tickets: $50
Students Free with ID

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backgrounds, a TTC busking musician, a performer who has never played with electronics before, and an inventor/music technologist.

Switchemups: One unique feature of the evening is the third set called Switchemups. This consists of four five-minute improv pieces where audience members can sign up to sit in with performers from the main show. This helps build community and encourages people to experiment with improvisation. It is one of the reasons why the series has been so successful.

Just as Palumbo himself felt cared for by members of the Toronto Improvisor’s Orchestra, he makes it a priority to care for his audiences, so education is integral to the evening. He gives listening strategies to help those who may feel lost amidst what might sound like chaos, or for those who may feel they don’t belong at such an event. One of his goals with this series is to be thoughtful about how free improvised music is presented, which means being respectful and responsible to both the audience and the musicians to create a healthy and supportive environment.

He has also brought onboard an excellent sound engineer to record the concerts onto multiple tracks which are later mixed down into a spatialized format and released on the Exit Points recording label available on Bandcamp (www.exitpoints.bandcamp.com). The series is quickly generating interest and enthusiasm from a broad spectrum of musicians and audiences from diverse backgrounds, with the lineups already booked until the spring of 2024. For the latest news, check out @michaelpalumbo_ on Instagram or visit linktr.ee/exitpoints.

TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA:

The phenomenon known as synesthesia is the focus for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra’s concerts second concert of the new season, running from September 28 to 30. Peruvian composer Jimmy López Bellido’s 2012 composition titled Synesthésie will receive its North American premiere alongside Scriabin’s The Poem of Ecstasy. Scriabin is known for his synaesthetic perception, the ability to see colours when listening to music.

The ideas for Bellido’s composition can be traced to the original commission requirements set by Radio France. The ten-minute composition was to be written in five two-minute movements, each one to be aired on the radio daily throughout one week. The following Monday, the entire piece was played. To meet the strict requirements, Bellido chose to have each movement express one of the five human senses. He writes that the overall work invites the listener to enter the world of interconnectedness, something that those who experience synesthesia do daily.
TRUE TO THE HUMAN BEING

PAUL ENNIS

Here on the island, there’s artistic blood in everybody. I mean, everybody somehow sings and dances and carves and – or plays an instrument. And there’s nothing more natural and more true to the human being than art and music. – Mahani Teave

Mahani Teave [Tay–AH–vay] – who makes her Koerner Hall debut at 3pm on October 1 as part of her first North American tour – is the sole professional pianist on one of the most remote, inhabited islands on Earth, Rapa Nui (Easter Island). There she heads the island’s only music school. She’s living a remarkable story.

Born 40 years ago to an American woman and a Rapa Nui musician, Teave spent her formative years on the far-flung island, 3,600 km from Chile. At six, Teave took ballet lessons and studied the piano; the music that accompanied the ballets became her introduction to classical music. (Among her piano heroes are Emil Gilels, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Ignaz Friedmann and Dinu Lipatti.) When the teacher left the island, Teave was nine and her considerable talent was noticeable. The family moved to Valdivia in southern Chile where she studied for six years. On her way to audition for a music school in Cologne, she attended a masterclass by Cleveland Institute of Music (CIM) faculty member Sergei Babayan (Daniil Trifonov’s mentor), whose mastery so impressed her that she chose Cleveland instead.

After studying at CIM and Berlin’s Hans Eisler Music Academy and winning the Claudio Arrau International Piano Competition in 1999 and later being selected as a Steinway & Sons artist, Teave seemed set for a sparkling international career. Instead, concerned with the lack of music training in her homeland, she returned to Easter Island, establishing in 2012 a tuition-free school for classical and traditional music.

Her story continued in 2018, when a Seattle-based software magnate and collector of rare violins visited the school where he was astonished by the enthusiastic students and Teave’s skill at the piano. Discovering that she had never made a recording, he arranged for her to make an album in Seattle, the proceeds of which go directly to her school. The result was Rapa Nui Odyssey, a recital of Bach, Handel, Chopin, Liszt, Rachmaninoff and Scriabin, as well as a traditional Rapa Nui song.
reached No. 1 on the Billboard Traditional Classical Chart.

In 2021, she appeared in an NPR Tiny Desk Concert from the school. Sitting with a flower in her hair in front of an upright piano with the hammers exposed, she played Handel and Chopin with an unadorned naturalism and clarity that touched the music’s core – no schmaltz.

Conducting a tour of the school, she explained that the structural walls were constructed from tires and earth. The building used six years of garbage left by tourists, tin cans and empty bottles. It took one and a half years to construct and is environmentally friendly – its sustainability aims to set an example for the world.

**TSO YEAR 101**

After the successful celebration of its 100th anniversary, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra looks forward to reaching new heights as its second century takes hold. The 2023/24 season opens September 20 and 21 with Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*, one of the most significant works ever written, a revolutionary piece of music that showcases rhythm to the level of a Beethoven symphony while marking the renewal and power of spring, casting its long, influential shadow over much of the 20th century.

Gustavo Gimeno, his contract extended to the 2029/30 season, is back with his own sense of rhythm, with particular emphasis on the clarity of his musical vision. Pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet is guest soloist in Gershwin’s *Concerto in F*, the composer’s marriage of jazz and classical music that was controversial in its own right in the 1920s.

Gimeno returns September 28 to 30, this time with Seong-Jin Cho (who won the memorable Chopin Competition in 2015) performing Ravel’s wondrous *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand*.

The program closes with Scriabin’s mystical *The Poem of Ecstasy*. Ravel and Gershwin admired each other. When Gershwin met Ravel in New York in 1928, he asked about studying with the French composer. Ravel reportedly replied, “Why would you want to be a second-rate Ravel when you can be a first-rate Gershwin?”

Sheng Cai is the managing editor of The WholeNote.
KINDRED SPIRITS ORCHESTRA
Kristian Alexander | Music Director

WAR AND PEACE | Flato Markham Theatre
Saturday, October 21, 2023 at 8 pm
Concert season opening night gala

Stravinsky, *Scherzo fantastique*
Lutoslawski, Concerto for piano and orchestra
Honegger, Symphony No. 3 “Liturgique”

THE GREATEST SHOW | Flato Markham Theatre
Saturday, December 9, 2023 at 8 pm

Stravinsky, *Circus polka for a young elephant*
Bartók, Concerto for violin and orchestra No. 2
Bruckner, Symphony No. 3 in D minor

AROUND THE WORLD | Flato Markham Theatre
Saturday, February 3, 2024 at 8 pm

Stravinsky, *Scènes de ballet*
Saint-Saëns, Piano concerto No. 2
Shostakovich, Symphony No. 8 in C minor

MYTHS AND LEGENDS | Meridian Arts Centre
Saturday, March 16, 2024 at 8 pm

Jordan Pal, *On the double* concert overture
Xinghai, Piano concerto “Yellow River”
Rimsky-Korsakov, *Scheherazade*

WIND SYMPHONIES | Cornell Recital Hall
Saturday, April 6, 2024 at 8 pm

Stravinsky, *Symphonies of wind instruments*
Stravinsky, Concerto for piano and winds
Hindemith, *Konzertmusik*

PER ASPERA AD ASTRA | Meridian Arts Centre
Saturday, May 11, 2024 at 8 pm

de Falla, *Three-cornered hat* suites Nos. 1 and 2
Chopin, Concerto for piano and orchestra No. 2
Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5 in E minor

ROMANTIC EVENING | Meridian Arts Centre
Saturday, June 22, 2024 at 8 pm

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS | Glenn Gould Studio
Saturday, June 29, 2024 at 8 pm

Franck, *Symphonic variations*
d’Indy, *Symphonie sur un chant montagnard Français*
Bizet, Symphony in C

905.305.7469 FlatoMarkhamTheatre.ca 855.985.4357 TicketMaster.ca 905.604.8339 KSOrchestra.ca
LISTINGS@THEWHOLENOTE.COM
Event listings are free of charge to artists, venues and presenters.

This issue contains event listings from September 1 to October 10, 2023.

IN THIS ISSUE

- Live and/or livestream (date-specific daily listings for performances, workshops, etcetera)
- Directory of alternative venues (mainly clubs mostly jazz)
- Ongoing, On Demand and Other (not tied to a specific date)

HOW TO LIST

1. Use the convenient online form at thewholenote.com/applylistings
2. Email listings to listings@thewholenote.com. Please note, we do not take listings over the phone.
3. Use the online listings database.

Music performs, installation artists and visiting contemporary and experimental.

Friday September 1

- 8:00: Intersection Music & Arts Festival. William Basinski with special guest Kuuma. St. Anne’s Anglican Church, 270 Gladstone Ave. Tickets and more info TBA.

Saturday September 2

- 2:00: Intersection Music & Arts Festival. All-day Music Marathon. Featuring local and visiting contemporary and experimental music performers, installation artists and vendors. Yonge-Dundas Square, 1 Dundas St. E. Tickets and more info TBA.
- 7:30: Tranzac Club. Lewis/Furlong /Perera/Swankie. Talman Lewis, cello; Andrew Furlong, double-bass; Nilan Perera, guitar; Laura Swankey, voice. Tranzac Club, Southern Cross Lounge, 292 Brunswick Ave.
- 8:00: Fallsview Casino Resort. Rod Stewart. 6380 Fallsview Blvd., Niagara Falls. 1-877-833-3110 or www.ticketmaster.ca. From $115.

Sunday September 3


Monday September 4


Tuesday September 5

- 12:00 noon: Play the Parks Concert Series. 14 Hours: College Park Courtyard, 420 Yonge St. www.downtownyonge.com/playthe parks. Free.

Wednesday September 6

- 12:00 noon: Play the Parks Concert Series. 14 Hours: College Park Courtyard, 420 Yonge St. www.downtownyonge.com/playthe parks. Free.

Thursday September 7

- 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, 2137 Bayview Ave. www. encoreband.ca. $10.
- 7:30: Canadian Opera Company. Opera’s Greatest Hits. COC artists share popular selections from the company’s upcoming season in this one-hour concert, featuring classic favourites and rare gems including Beethoven’s Fidelio, Puccini’s La Bohème, Mozart’s Don Giovanni, and Janáček’s The Cunning Little Vixen. Canadian Opera Company Orchestra and Canadian soloists. George Weston Recital Hall, Meridian Arts Centre, 5040 Yonge St. www.ticketmaster.ca. From $29.
- 8:00: TD Music Hall. The Binder Brothers: This Is It! His Final Tour 2023. 10268 Yonge St., Richmond Hill. $55 (general admission).
- 8:00: North York Central Library. Open Mic at the Library: North York Edition. Music, poetry & storytelling. Are you a musician, poet, or storyteller? If so, then you are invited to share your talents at the North York Central Library Open Mic. Guitar, piano & djembe provided. 7 minutes for each performance. For adults, teens, and seniors. North York Central Library Auditorium, 5120 Yonge St. Sign-up is at 8:30pm. For more information, contact the Language, Literature & Fine Arts Department at 416-398-5639.
- 8:00: Rainbow Centre for the Performing Arts. Teresa Carpio in Concert. 10268 Yonge St., Richmond Hill. www.tickets.rncentre.ca. From $29.
- 8:00: TD Music Hall. The Binder Brothers: This Is It! His Final Tour 2023. 178 Victoria St. www.tickets.mhrth.com. General Admission $30 (members).

DEADLINES

Weekly Listings Update and Just Ask: Eligible listings received by 6pm Tuesday each week, will be included in the following Sunday’s e-letter, and simultaneously posted to our searchable online listings database.

Print: Our next print issue, Volume 29 no.2 covers October and November 2023. The print submission deadline for that issue will be Tuesday September 5.

Placement:

Listings are received every day and published in all media for which they are received in time.

- WEEKLY LISTINGS UPDATE (e-letter & online)
- JUST ASK (searchable online listings database)
- PRINT (see list of 2023/24 publication dates on page 9).

REGISTRATION AND CONTACT

- Register for the Weekly Listings Update at thewholenote.com/newsletter
- All other inquiries about WholeNote listings should be addressed to John Sharpe, Listings Editor at listings@thewholenote.com.

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REGISTER FOR THE WEEKLY LISTINGS UPDATE

at thewholenote.com/newsletter

2:00: CCMAC Ottawa Region. Choral Concert. John Rutter: Requiem; Harry Somers: Divina Ambrosiae: 0: salutans hostia. CCMAC Summer Choir; Jessica Belanger, soprano; with professional orchestra; Lisa Webber, artistic director; Ian Guenette, keyboards. St. John Chrysostom Church, 295 Albert St. Arnprior. 613-625-8800. $25; $10(s/t); Free(12 and under).

Monday September 11


Tuesday September 12


5:00: Fallsview Casino Resort. Ricky Nelson Remembered Starring Matthew and Gunnar Nelson. Fallsview Casino Resort, Avalon Theatre, 6380 Fallsview Blvd., Niagara Falls. 1-877-833-3110 or www.ticketmaster.ca. From $45. Also Sep 13(3pm), 10(12:30pm) & 8:30pm.


Wednesday September 13


5:00: Fallsview Casino Resort. Ricky Nelson Remembered Starring Matthew and Gunnar Nelson. Fallsview Casino Resort, Avalon Theatre, 6380 Fallsview Blvd., Niagara Falls. 1-877-833-3110 or www.ticketmaster.ca. From $45. Also Sep 11(3pm), 12(3pm) & 8:30pm.

5:15: Trinity College, University of Toronto. Evensong. Traditional Anglican choral music. Trinity College Chapel Choir; Thomas Bell, director of music; Peter Bayer, organist. Trinity College Chapel, University of Toronto, 6 Hoskin Ave. 416-978-2522 or www.trinity.utoronto.ca/discover/about/chapel/music. Free. Evensong is sung in the beautiful Trinity College chapel each week during term time.


7:30: Toronto Consort. Canoe: A Two-Act Opera. Preview. See Sep 15. Performances Sep 15(7:30pm), 16(12:30pm & 7:30pm).

8:00: Masssey Hall. Gov’t Mule: Peace Like a River World Tour. With Big Sugar. 178 Victoria St. www.ticketmaster.ca. From $53.


Thursday September 14


9:00: Brampton On Stage. This Is Brampton Showcase. New Music, Country Music, R&B, Hip Hop, Jazz, B-Jazzed, Bluebird Brampton, Crate Clash, Drivewire, Flower City Slam, and others. Rose Theatre, 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. www.tickets.brampton.ca or 905-674-2800. $10.

Friday September 15

9:00: SweetWater Music Festival. Sound Journey. Sound healing is one of the oldest and most natural forms of healing on our planet. The power of sound can restore one’s mind, body, and spirit back to a state of balance. Join us for a healing meditation featuring Deva Munay, a frequent collaborator of Edwin Huizinga’s. Historic Leith Church, 41914 Tom Thomson Lane, Leith. www.sweetwatermusicfestival.ca. Free.

10:30am: SweetWater Music Festival. Mozart for Munchkins. Geared towards kids aged 1-5 Step into a world of enchantment and musical wonder for a captivating classical music experience designed especially for kids and families. Our talented musicians will weave musical tales for the violin and cello transporting young and old alike to lands filled with imagination and emotion.

Monday September 16

9:00am: SweetWater Music Festival. Sound Journey. Sound healing is one of the oldest and most natural forms of healing on our planet. The power of sound can restore one’s mind, body, and spirit back to a state of balance. Join us for a healing meditation featuring Deva Munay, a frequent collaborator of Edwin Huizinga’s. Georgian Shores United Church, 997 4th Ave. E., Owen Sound. www.sweetwatermusicfestival.ca. Free.


2:00: Toronto Consort. Canoe: A Two-Act Opera. See Sep 12 Performances: Sep 16(7:30pm).

2:30: SweetWater Music Festival. Classical Jam Shin. Bring your instruments and join us for a classical jam session of Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No.3. Local musicians are invited to play along with featured SweetWater musicians led by Artistic Director

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Sunday September 17


1:00: Harbourfront Centre. Canadian Opera Company at Harbourfront Centre. Presenting highlights from the COC’s upcoming season—featuring classic favourites and rare gems including Beethoven’s Fidelio, Puccini’s La Bohème, Donizetti’s Don Pasquale, and Cherubini’s Medea. Canadian Opera Company Orchestra and Canadian soloists. Harbourfront Centre, Concert Stage, 253 Queens Quay W. www.my.harbourfrontcentre.com/ overview/39788. Free admission with registration. Also Sep 16(7:30pm) & 17(1pm).


Monday September 18

7:00: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. NEXUS Celebration. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750 or www.music.utoronto.ca. Free.

Tuesday September 19


Wednesday September 20

12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company. Free Concert Series: Meet the Ensemble Studio. Each artist will introduce themselves by singing one of their favourite arias. Don’t miss this opportunity to hear some of Canada’s most exciting rising stars in a program of operatic gems. Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio. Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. www.coc.ca/free-concert-series. Free.
Friday September 22

11:00am: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Master Class: Jordan de Souza, conductor. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3760 or www.music.utoronto.ca. Free. Limit of 6 free tickets.


8:00: Flato Markham Theatre. The Last Waltz - A Musical Celebration of The Band. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. 905-305-7469; www.flatomarkhamtheatre.ca. $60.

8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. A Night at the Movies. Rota: The Godfather; John Williams: Music from Star Wars; and other works. Evan Mitchell, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717. $29-$87. Also Sep 23.

8:00: Massey Hall. Janelle Monae: Age of Pleasure Tour. 179 Victoria St. www.ticketmaster.ca. From $80. Also Sep 21.

Saturday September 23


2:30: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Building the Score. Have you ever wondered how a film soundtrack comes to life? Step by musical step, our family-friendly concert (complete with projected film clips) takes us through the process, from initial concept to full orchestral score. Conductor Evan Mitchell and the orchestra show us how music heightens the action while enhancing every aspect of our favourite movies. Evan Mitchell, conductor; Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717. $29-$87.


Directed by Bruno Weil
Tafelmusik

Joseph de Souza, conductor

BEETHOVEN 4 & 5

Directed by Bruno Weil
Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre
tafelmusik.org


8:00: Flato Markham Theatre. The Music of Pink Floyd by Critical View. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. 905-305-7469; flatomarkhamtheatre.ca. $34.52-$54.52.


Ritz Schzerzo (world premiers); Schumann: Piano Concerto; Mendelssohn: Symphony No.3 “Scottish”. Tony Siqi Yun, piano. FirstOntario Concert Hall, 1 Summers Ln., Hamilton. 905-526-7756; boxoffice@htcpo.org. $20-$80. 8:30 pm pre-concert talk.


8:00: Acoustic Harvest. The Friends of Fiddler’s Green. St. Paul’s United Church (Scarborough), 200 McIntosh St., Scarborough. www.acousticharvest.ca or 416-795-7564 or www.ticketscene.ca/events/44950/.

8:00: Flato Markham Theatre. The Pink Floyd by Critical View. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. 905-305-7469; flatomarkhamtheatre.ca. $34.52-$54.52.

8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. A Night at the Movies. Rota: The Godfather; John Williams: Music from Star Wars; and other works. Evan Mitchell, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717. $29-$87. Also Sep 22.


Inaugural Recital
ON THE NEW ORGAN CONSOLE

TICKETS: $25

Directed by Bruno Weil
Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre
tafelmusik.org


With Organist David Briggs

Search for: David Briggs Inaugural Recital on www.eventbrite.ca

stjamescathedral.ca

With Organist David Briggs
Fri, Sep 22, 2023 7:30PM
St. James Cathedral
106 King St E, Toronto
Tickets: $25

For more information visit tmchoir.org

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service with Byrd’s music, followed directly by an illustrated music feature to mark the 400th anniversary of his passing in 1623; presented by Robert Busiakiewicz, the former music director at St. James Cathedral. Mil- lar Piano Duo: Gregory and Lisa Millar, piano. 350 Windermere Ave. www.youtube.com/ StOlavesAnglicanChurch or 416-769-5866. Contributions appreciated.


7:30: FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. Decades of Bond. Rebecca Noelle, Michael Hannah Sr., vocalists. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre Partridge Hall, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 905-688-0722; boxoffice@firstontariopac.ca. $40-$52.

7:30: Massey Hall. Rae Lamontagne. With special guest Tomberlin. 178 Victoria St. www.ticketmaster.ca. From $43. Also Sep 25.


Wednesday September 27

12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company. Free Concert Series: Mostly Mozart. UofT Opera presents a concert of beloved operatic ensembles by Mozart, augmented by works inspired by the man widely recognized as “one of the greatest composers in the history of Western music.” Students from UofT ensembles by Mozart, augmented by

Thursday September 28

12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company. Free Concert Series: What is Gaga? Join a dynamic introduction to Gaga, Ohad Naharin’s world renowned movement language, as Fall for Dance North brings his famous work KAMUYOT to their upcoming ninth annual festival, performed by Charlotte Bal- let. Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. www.cco.ca/free-concert-series. Free.


7:30: Burlington Performing Arts Centre. Leisa Way’s Oqry Gold. Wayward Wind Band. Burlington Performing Arts Centre - Community Studio Theatre, 440 Locust St. Burlington. 905-681-6000. $49.50; $44.50 (member). Also Sep 29, 30(2pm & 7:30pm), Oct 1(4pm).

8:00: Flatmark Markham Theatre. Sultans of String: Walking Through the Fire. The Rez, A Beautiful Darkness, Black Winged Raven, Our Mother The Earth, and Nînîhîko (Bance). Alyssa Delbaere-Sawchuk, Marc Menilîn, Shannon Thunderbird, Don Ross, Leela Gilday, and others. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. 905-305-7469 or www.flatmarkhamtheatre.com. $68(regular); $78(prime); $15(YFF).

8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. The Poem of Ecstasy. Jimmy López Bellido: Synthesiêhe (North American Premiere); Ravel: Rapsodie espagnole; Ravel: Piano Concerto for the Left Hand; Scriabin: The Poem of Ecstasy. Seong-Jin Cho, piano, Gustavo Gimeno, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-368-3675. From $35. Also Sep 29(7:30pm), 30(8pm).

Friday September 29


7:00: Westben. Fall Festival: Kris & Dee. The Campfire, 6698 County Road 30 N. Canada’s TWELFTH CARILLON has been installed at YORKMINSTER PARK!

And we have planned a weekend of celebration. Friday, September 29 to Sunday, October 1

With special guest Dr. Andrea McCrady, Dominion Carillonneur from the Peace Tower in Ottawa.

Friday at 7:00 pm: YP Speakers Series Lecture Saturday at 4:00 pm: Inaugural Recital

Saturday at 11:00 a.m. Dedication and Recital

Sunday at 11:00 a.m. Dedication and Recital

Saturday at 11:00 a.m. Dedication and Recital

Sunday at 11:00 a.m. Dedication and Recital

Sunday at 11:00 a.m. Dedication and Recital
Music Performance to the TRC’s 94 Calls to Action. Sultans of String; Alyssa Delbaere-Sawchuk, fiddler; Marc Merilainen, singer/songwriter), Shannon Thunderbird, singer/songwriter; Don Ross, guitar; and others. Avendale United Church, 194 Avenue Rd., Toronto. www.straford-symphony.ca/Walking_Through_Fire. $45; $15(st); Free (under 12).


● 8:00 | TO Live. Lakecia Benjamin and Phoenix Quartet: Jubilation. Lakecia Benjamin, saxophone. George Weston Recital Hall, Meridian Arts Centre, 5040 Yonge St., Toronto. www.tolive.com or 416-366-7723 and 1-800-708-3375 or boxoffice@tolive.com. From $30.


Saturday September 30

● 10:00am | Weston. Fall Festival: Sounds in Nature. Enjoy a magical autumn morning amidst the ancient splendour of colourful forests, peaceful streams, and turning leaves. Ben Finley & Friends. Willow Hill Amphitheatre, 6688 County Road 30 N., Campbellford. 1-877-883-5777 or www.willowhill.com. $55; $53(st with valid ID; students); $10(under 35); $52(arts workers with valid ID); $24(youth under 18 with valid ID); $46(under 35); $52(arts workers with valid ID); $100(Diamond). Also Sep 27 (8pm), 28 (7:30pm).

● 11:00am | Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Walking Though the Fire: A Trailblazing Musical Response to the TRC’s 94 Calls to Action. Sultans of String; Alyssa Delbaere-Sawchuk, fiddler; Marc Merilainen, singer/songwriter), Shannon Thunderbird, singer/songwriter; Don Ross, guitar; and others. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, Partridge Hall, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. www.toronto.com/tbch4y4t or 905-688-0722. $75; $29(st univ/college with valid ID); $40(youth under 18 with valid ID); $45(adult under 35); $52(arts workers with valid ID); $100(Diamond). Also Oct 1(7:30pm).

● 1:00pm | Yorkminster Park Baptist Church. Carillon Dedication and Recital. Dr. Andrea McCrady, Dominion Carillonneur from the Peace Tower in Ottawa. 1585 Yonge St. www.yorkminsterpark.com. Free. Donations accepted.

● 2:00 | Burlington Performing Arts Centre. Leisa Way’s Opry Gold. Wayward Wind Band. Burlington Performing Arts Centre - Community Studio Theatre, 440 Locust St., Burlington. 905-689-6000. $48.50; $44.50; $44.50; $30(auditorium; students with valid ID); $24(youth under 18 with valid ID); $75(adult under 35); $52(arts workers with valid ID); $100(Diamond). Also Oct 1(7:30pm).

● 2:00 | Niagara Symphony Orchestra. Indigenous Artists and Sultans of String. Walking Though the Fire: A Trailblazing Musical Response to the TRC’s 94 Calls to Action. Sultans of String; Alyssa Delbaere-Sawchuk, fiddler; Marc Merilainen, singer/songwriter), Shannon Thunderbird, singer/songwriter; Don Ross, guitar; and others. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, Partridge Hall, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. www.tinyurl.com/bdch4y4t or 905-688-0722. $75; $29(st univ/college with valid ID); $40(youth under 18 with valid ID); $45(adult under 35); $52(arts workers with valid ID); $100(Diamond). Also Oct 1(7:30pm).

Sunday October 1

● 11:00am | Yorkminster Park Baptist Church. Carillon Dedication and Recital. Dr. Andrea McCrady, Dominion Carillonneur from the Peace Tower in Ottawa. 1585 Yonge St. www.yorkminsterpark.com. Free. Donations accepted.


● 2:00 | CAMMAC Toronto Region. Mozart’s Sinfonia concertans; Das traditionelle Irische Lied: Robert Schumann and others. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, Partridge Hall, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. www.tinyurl.com/bdch4y4t or 905-688-0722. $75; $29(st univ/college with valid ID); $40(youth under 18 with valid ID); $45(adult under 35); $52(arts workers with valid ID); $100(Diamond). Also Oct 1(7:30pm).


Tuesday October 3


12:30: Yorkminster Park Baptist Church Noonday Organ Recital. Ian Whitman, curator; Thomas le Thanh, organ. 1585 Yonge St. www.yorkminsterpark.ca. Free.


1:00: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Tuesday Noon Series: Fourth Year Singers In Performance. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750 or www.music.utoronto.ca. Free.


8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Pops: The Doo Wop Project. The Doo Wop Project, vocal group; Steven Reineke, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $47. Also Oct 3.


### September 2023

**MAINLY CLUBS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hirut Cafe and Restaurant</td>
<td>2050 Danforth Ave. 416-551-7560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A major destination for delicious and nutritious Ethiopian cuisine, with monthly jazz residencies and jam sessions.</td>
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<th>Venue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home Smith Bar – See Old Mill, The</td>
<td>296 Broadway Ave. 416-533-5483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dedicated listening room with an intimate performing space, great acoustics, and an attentive audience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jazz Bistro, The</td>
<td>251 Victoria St. 416-363-5299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In an historic location, Jazz Bistro features great food, a stellar wine list, and world-class jazz musicians in airy club environs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jazz Room, The</td>
<td>Located in the Huether Hotel, 59 King St. N., \ 226-476-1565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A welcoming music venue dedicated to the best in jazz music presentations, and home to the Grand River Jazz Society, which presents regular series throughout the year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lula Lounge</td>
<td>1585 Dundas St. W. 416-588-3037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto's mecca for salsa, jazz, afro-Cuban, and world music, with Latin dance classes and excellent food and drinks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manhattan's Pizza Bistro &amp; Music Club</td>
<td>951 Gordon St., Guelph 519-767-2440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An independently owned neighbourhood restaurant boasting a unique dining experience that features live music almost every night of the week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mezzetta Restaurant</td>
<td>681 St. Clair Ave. W. 416-658-5687</td>
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<tr>
<td>With a cozy atmosphere and a menu of Middle-Eastern cuisine, Mezzetta hosts music on Wednesday evenings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monarch Tavern</td>
<td>12 Clinton St. 416-531-5833</td>
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<tr>
<td>With a cafe/cocktail bar on the main floor and a pub with microbrews upstairs, Monarch Tavern regularly hosts indie, rock, and other musical genres on its stage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old Mill, The</td>
<td>21 Old Mill Rd. 416-236-2641</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Home Smith Bar: With a stone-lined room and deep, plus seating, The Home Smith Bar provides elevated pub food and cocktails along with straight-ahead live jazz.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oud and the Fuzz, The</td>
<td>21 Kensington Ave. 647-283-9136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Armenian bar and live music venue, The</td>
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MAINLY CLUBS

Pamenar Café
258 Augusta Ave. 416-940-0501
http://cafeapamenar.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. 416-823-5716
thepilot.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 Café
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
reposadobar.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 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 W. 416-558-2475
there.ca
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
1376 Danforth Ave. 416-748-1376
sauceondanforth.com
With Venetian lighting, cocktails, and an extensive tap and bottle list, Sauce on Danforth has live music Tuesday through Saturday (and sometimes Sunday).

The Senator Winebar
249 Victoria St 416-364-7517
thesenator.com
An intimate, upscale French-inspired bistro for dinner or drinks, with wine and cocktails.

Smokeshow BBQ and Brew
744 Mt. Pleasant Rd 416-901-7469
Smokeshowbbqandbrew.com
A laid-back venue with an emphasis on barbecue and beer. Smokeshow hosts cover artists and original music Thursday through Sunday, with Bachata lessons on Tuesdays and Karaoke on Wednesdays.

Tranzac
292 Brunswick Ave. 416-923-8137
tranzac.org
A community arts venue dedicated to supporting, presenting, and promoting creative and cultural activity in Toronto, with live shows in multiple rooms every day of the week.

We Transform Lives Through Music

Music education enhances children’s mental health and academic learning yet is absent in many schools and faces elimination in many more.

Our children are hungry for the benefits that music provides. For 20 years our programs have inspired children to want to learn music and to make music with others. Help us plant the musical seeds our children need to grow.

MUSICAL THEATRE

Kensington Market Jazz Festival

Stonebridge Wasaga Beach Blues.
Sep 15-17. www.wasagabeachblues.com. Jordan John, Durham County Poets, KC Roberts and the Live Revolution, Ben Racine Band, and others. $15 per day / $40 for 3 days / $100 VIP pass for 3 days / Free(under 12). Stonebridge Town Centre.

SweetWater Music Festival.
Baroque and Beyond. Sep 12-17. Guest Musicians: SDHH Ensemble (piano-percussion duo), Lori Gemmel (harp), Tom Allen (host), Daniel Taylor & Ellen McInteer (vocalists), and others. Owen Sound, Meaford, and Leith. www.sweetwatermusicfestival.ca.

FESTIVALS

Choralairs. Singers in all voice parts are welcome as in-person rehearsals resume (with masks & Covid safety protocols) on Tuesdays. Rehearsals are 7pm-8:45pm at Edithvale C.C. 131 Finch Ave W. Toronto. Please contact Elaine at 905-751-8416 or choralairs@gmail.com to let us know if you are coming. Check out our website at: www.choralairschoir.com.

Chorus York, Richmond Hill. Welcoming singers in all voice parts, with masks & COVID safety protocols. Every Tuesday from 7:30-9:30 p.m. at the Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church (Wallace Hall), 10066 Yonge St., Richmond Hill. Please contact Mary-Lou at 905-684-7922 if you wish to sit in on a rehearsal. Check out our website www.choryork.ca for more information about the choir.

Etobicoke Community Concert Band.
Full rehearsals every Wednesday night at 7:30pm. 309 Horner Ave. Open to all who are looking for a great band to join. Text Rob Hunter at 416-876-1730.

North Toronto Community Band.
Openings for drums, clarinets, trumpets, trombones, French horns. Rehearsals held at Willowdale Presbyterian Church 38 Ellesrie Ave. (just north of Mel Lastman Square). Monday evenings 7:30-9:50 pm. Contact ntcband@gmail.com.

Strings Attached Orchestra, North York. All string players (especially viola, cello, bass) are welcome. Mondays 7 to 9 p.m. from Sep to Jun. Email us first at info.stringsattachedorchestra@gmail.com to receive music and other details or visit our website at www.stringsattachedorchestra.com for more information.


Chorus York, Richmond Hill. Welcoming singers in all voice parts, with masks & COVID safety protocols. Every Tuesday from 7:30-9:30 p.m. at the Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church (Wallace Hall), 10066 Yonge St., Richmond Hill. Please contact Mary-Lou at 905-684-7922 if you wish to sit in on a rehearsal. Check out our website www.choryork.ca for more information about the choir.

EtoBICOKE Community Concert Band. Full rehearsals every Wednesday night at 7:30pm. 309 Horner Ave. Open to all who are looking for a great band to join. Text Rob Hunter at 416-876-1730.

North Toronto Community Band. Openings for drums, clarinets, trumpets, trombones, French horns. Rehearsals held at Willowdale Presbyterian Church 38 Ellesrie Ave. (just north of Mel Lastman Square). Monday evenings 7:30-9:50 pm. Contact ntcband@gmail.com.

● TTY Theatre. Pinkalicious the Musical. Recommended for ages 4+ - Wychwood Barns Park, 76 Wychwood Ave. www.ttytheatre.com/onestage. From $25. Also shows at 12_ noon & 3:30pm: Sep 16, 17, 23, 24, 30, Oct 1, 7, 8, 14, 15, 21, 22.

ONGOING EVENTS

● Trinity College, University of Toronto. Evensong. Traditional Anglican choral music. Trinity College Chapel Choir; Thomas Bell, director of music; Peter Bayer, organ scholar. Trinity College Chapel, University of Toronto, 6 Hoskin Ave. 416-978-2522 or Trinity College. Free. Evensong is sung every Wednesday starting Sep 13 at 5:15pm in the beautiful Trinity College chapel during term time.

● Encore Symphonic Concert Band. Monthly Concert Band Concert. The first Thursday of every month at 7:15am. 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.

ONLINE EVENTS

● Arts@Home. A vibrant hub connecting Torontonians to arts and culture. Designed to strengthen personal and societal resilience through the arts. www.artsatohome.ca.

● North Toronto Community Band. Openings for clarinet, trumpet, trombone, tuba and auxiliary percussion. Rehearsals held at Willowdale Presbyterian Church 59 Eglinton Ave. (just north of Mel Lastman Square). Monday evenings 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Contact ntcband@gmail.com.

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

PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

● Sep 8 6:00: North York Central Library. Open Mic at the Library: North York Edition. Music, poetry & storytelling. Are you a musician, poet, or storyteller? If so, then you’re invited to share your talents at the North York Central Library Open Mic. Guitar, piano & djembe provided. 7 minutes for each performance. For adults, teens, and seniors. North York Central Library Auditorium, 5150 Yonge St. Sign up at 5:30pm. For more information, contact the Language, Literature & Fine Arts Department at 416-395-5639. Free. Also Oct 13, Nov 10, Dec 8.

● Sep 18 2:30: SweetWater Music Festival. Classical Jam Sesh. Bring your instruments, for a relaxed jam of Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No.3. Local musicians are invited to join featured SweetWater musicians led by Artistic Director Edwin Huizinga. Anyone who plays a string instrument, at any level of expertise, is welcome to be a part of this fun, community-building experience in a comfortable, welcoming environment! Print your own part and bring your own stand. Harmony Centre, 890 4th Ave. E., Owen Sound. www.sweetwatermusicfestival.ca. Free.

WORKSHOPS & MEETINGS


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Isabel Bernaus conductor
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info@jubilatesingers.ca
www.jubilatesingers.ca
Array Space, 155 Walnut Ave. www.arraymusic.ca. $10 at door.


● Sep 22-24. North American Guild of Change-Ringers. Annual General Meeting and Ringing Course. St. James Cathedral, 108 King St E. This will be a time for peak attempts, dinners, social events and ringing. To register and for more information please visit www.nagcr.org.

Search listings online at thewholenote.com/just-ask

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classad@thewholenote.com
Jumping the gun a wee bit, I’d like to start with a world premiere recording of Leonard Bernstein’s “long lost” *Music for String Quartet* (1936) that will not be released officially until September 8 (Navon Records nv6577 navonarecords.com). Composed by an 18-year-old Bernstein during his studies at Harvard, the piece has been “steadfastly shepherded from its re-discovery to this historic release” by former Boston Symphony Orchestra librarian John Perkel who discovered it in the Library of Congress. The two-movement work lasts just over ten minutes, beginning with an extended angular, though melodic, dance-like fast movement followed by a brief and somewhat mournful slow one. It’s not clear whether this latter, recently found in the Library of Congress, was intended as a final movement – if it ends somewhat inconclusively with a pizzicato pattern fading into oblivion. Complete or not, this is an interesting addition to the string quartet repertoire and an important key to understanding the young Bernstein who would go on to become such an iconic figure in American music. It is convincingly performed by violinists Lucia Lin and Natalie Rose Kress, violist Danny Kim and cellist Ronald Feldman. Kress and Kim are also featured in the violinists Lucia Lin and Natalie Rose Kress, violist Danny Kim and cellist Ronald Feldman. Kress and Kim are also featured in the violist Danny Kim and cellist Ronald Feldman. Kress and Kim are also featured in the contemplative duet *Elegies for Violin and Viola* by Aaron Copland, a musical mentor, collaborator and dear friend of Bernstein’s.

Sticking with American music for string quartet, *Bright Shiny Things* has recently released *Shatter*, three world premiere recordings performed by the Verona Quartet (BSTD-0186 brightshiny.ninja). The works include Julia Adolphe’s *Star-Crossed Signs*, Michael Gilbertson’s *Star-Crossed Signs*, Michael Gilbertson’s *Star-Crossed Signs*, Michael Gilbertson’s *Star-Crossed Signs*, Reena Esmail’s *Ragamala*, which features Hindustani singer Salli Oak. It is this latter four-movement work that opens the disc and comprises almost half its length. *Ragamala* interweaves Eastern and Western traditions. Each movement opens the same way, inspired by Esmail’s experience of attending concerts in India, with traditional drones here provided by the string quartet. Each movement is based on a different raag: *Fantasie (Bihag); Scherzo (Malkoana); Recitative (Basant)*; and the *Rondo (Jog)* all sung by the sultry Oak over the lush textures of the strings. Adolphe’s *Star-Crossed Signs* juxtaposes issues of empowerment and the assertion of dominance with a yearning for connection. The movement titles, *DELTA X-RAY* and *KILO KILO* come from nautical signal flags used by ships at sea, which the composer’s father used in his early paintings. The first, which means “keep your distance” and “watch for my signals,” is quite aggressive in contrast to the second, “I wish to communicate with you” in which the composer says “the strings gently reach for one another, enveloping and folding each line in a kind of dance.” Gilbertson’s *Quartet* was in progress during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, after which it became a personal reaction to those events. Feeling the need to compose something comforting, Gilbertson chose as the basis for the first movement *Mother Chords* a gesture like the pulsing chords that open Sibelius’ *Second Symphony*. The second movement *Simple Sugars*, which Gilbertson describes as “carbs that are metabolized quickly and provide an immediate rush, but no nutritional substance” is an allusion to the movement’s restless energy. The Verona Quartet rises to all the challenges of these diverse works.

From quartets to octets now, in a manner of speaking. My first exposure to Steve Reich’s music for multiple instruments of the same family was *Vermont Counterpoint* for solo flute and an ensemble of ten flutes, or pre-recorded tracks of the piccolos, flutes and alto flutes as performed by the soloist, this latter being the case in the 1982 Ransom Wilson EMI release. In 2003 Reich composed *Cello Counterpoint* for eight cellos on a joint commission for Maya Beiser (who will appear later on in the column). On the recent *New Focus Recordings* release 8-Track (FCR373 newfocusrecordings.com) we are presented with Ashley Bathgate’s layered realization of the work, along with new compositions in the same format by Canadian/Icelandic composer Fjöla Evans and Americans Emily Cooley and Alex Weiser. Evans’ *Augun* was inspired by a traditional Icelandic song and features overlapping motives to create shimmering, undulating textures. Cooley tells us that composing *Assemble* was like “assembling a sort of puzzle;” only at the end do the pieces come together in one voice. Weiser’s *Shimmer* unfolds through gradual and dramatic changes, in a waxing and waning of the canonic relationship between each cello and the soloist. This is the closest in minimalist spirit to Reich’s original which concludes this inspired disc. Bathgate’s technical control and musicality shine through each of these contrasting works within a common context, resulting in a mesmerizing recording. My only concern is that the two most similar sounding works, Weiser’s and Reich’s, are placed side by side. I would have preferred the disc to begin with *Cello Counterpoint* thus presenting a context for the project.

Kate Ellis’ *Strange Waves* is a digital release that takes this same approach to the cello ensemble, but this time presenting an extended six-movement work by collaborating Irish composer Ed Bennett (Ergodos Records ergodos.bandcamp.com). Ellis has been a member of Crash Ensemble, Ireland’s leading new music group, for the past two decades and currently serves as its artistic director. *Strange Waves* is a predominantly ambient work with the multiple cellos blending in a dreamlike texture of glissandos and drones creating a foggy haze into which field recordings from the County Down coast and Ireland’s northernmost island, Rathlin in the North Atlantic, are subtly integrated. A truly meditative experience.

*Infinite Bach* is Maya Beiser’s very personal take on the iconic *Suites for Solo Cello* by Johann Sebastian Bach (Islandia Music Records IMR012 islandiamusic.com/releases). In the words of Beiser, best known for her work as an avant-garde cellist, “I spent 2022, my 60th year of life, immersed in recording, and rerecording, deconstructing
and decontextualizing, experimenting and exploring sounds, reverberations, harmonics in my converted barn in the Berkshires, Massachusetts, engaging with Bach’s cello Suites. Having dedicated the past 35 years to creating new music, work that reimagines the cello on a vast canvas in multiple disciplines, I radically departed from the conventional classical cello sound. Yet, the Suites were ingrained in my daily practice. Even as I was getting ready to perform a new work by Steve Reich, Louis Andriessen, or David Bowie, I would still begin every day playing a movement from the Suites. Over the years I was experimenting with the process of unlearning the doctrine I was taught about this music, until last year when I took the time to relearn it anew. The result takes some getting used to, sounding at times as if recorded from a different room, with extreme reverberation sometimes supplemented with sympathetic drones and overlays, and some radically altered tempos. I also find the arrangement of the suites surprising. Spread over three discs (itself not unusual) Beiser has chosen to pair the suites according to major and minor tonality, the G major and C majors (nos.1 and 3) on the first disc, the D minor and C minor (2 and 5) on the second and the E-flat major and D major (4 and 6) on the last. While my initial reaction was that this was too much of the same mood on each disc, I eventually came around to appreciate the continuity. And once I let myself let go that this was too much of the same mood on each disc, I eventually

Although Infinite Bach is available in Full Dolby Atmos Spatial Audio via Apple Music and in an Immersive Binaural Mix for enhanced headphone listening, I must say the plain old-fashioned CDs sound pretty good on my old stereo system too.

Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir is another cellist who has made the Bach Suites “her own,” re-interpreting them, although in a much less radical way than Beiser. In the liner notes to Marrow – The 6 Suites for Solo Cello by J.S. Bach (Sono Luminus DSL-92263 sonoluminus.com) she says “There is an Icelandic saying, ‘mergur málsins,’ which directly translates to ‘the marrow of the matter,’” and these Suites, to me, speak directly to the essence of being human. As for many cellists, these Suites have been my steady companion throughout my life with the cello, first as a vehicle to learn counterpoint, style, and harmony, then as material with which to explore personal expression and interpretation, and today they are a mirror, reflecting the deeper truth of the human experience, revealing more layers of meaning each time I come back to them.” Thorsteinsdóttir feels Bach “pushes the boundaries of the expressive and technical possibilities of the instrument with each succeeding Suite.” As she began playing the Suites as a set, she heard a dramatic through-line begin to emerge, finding the first “innocent” and the second as a “first taste of bitter disappointment,” in the third a “renewed optimism,” the fourth “bold and brash,” with “dark tragedy” in the fifth and “glorious redemption” in the sixth. To clearly illuminate this arc, she presents the Suites without the printed repeats so that we may more closely follow this universal storyline.” This also has the advantage of making it possible to present them all of a piece, in one sitting. The two CDs of this set clock in at 90 minutes, and present the suites in numerical order conserving the original major-minor-major groupings. The performance is exhilarating and makes for a satisfying, if intense, listening session.

The final selection also features solo cello, but in a very different context. In a trip down memory lane, Portrait (mikeherriott.com/bwg_gallery/discography) featuring cellist Ofra Harnoy and her life partner trumpeter Mike Herriott, takes me back to my days as a music programmer at CJRT-FM. Harnoy’s RCA discs of Haydn and Vivaldi concertos (several of which were world premiere recordings) with the Toronto Chamber Orchestra under the direction of former CJRT music director Paul Robinson were staples of our library. The current disc with the H&H Studio Orchestra, a hand-picked ensemble of Toronto’s finest studio musicians, features many of the jewels of the operatic repertoire that were often heard during CJRT’s exhilarating all-hands-on-deck fundraising campaigns. These vocal treasures have been masterfully arranged by Herriott and feature cello and trumpet alternating in the solo roles. All the performances are outstanding and my only quibble is that overall mood, lyrical and slow moving, is a bit too similar from track to track. That being said, it’s still a marvellous journey, which ends with Harnoy’s moving transcription for cello and trumpet of Larry Adler and Itzhak Perlman’s languid duet arrangement of the iconic Summertime.

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

What we’re listening to this month:

The WholeNote Listening Room

Hear tracks from any of the recordings displayed in this section:

Plus Watch Videos Click to Buy

8-Track
Ashley Bathgate
Cellist Ashley Bathgate releases a recording of works inspired by Steve Reich’s Counterpoint series.

A Left Coast
Tyler Duncan and Erika Switzer
The album is a heartfelt tribute to the place we call home – British Columbia. Our connections to BC’s communities, geography, and spirit, continue to nourish us as artists.

Basta parlare!
Les Barocudas
The award-winning period ensemble returns with a joyful album exploring the dynamic, experimental musical style that swept 17th century Italy.
ATTACHED STRINGS

TERRY ROBBINS

Violinist Tianwa Yang and pianist Nicholas Rimmer are absolutely superb on the incredibly challenging George Antheil Violin Sonatas Nos. 1-4, a recital of remarkable ability by the New Jersey-born pianist/composer who left America for Europe as a 21-year-old in 1922 intent on becoming “noted and notorious” – and succeeded (Naxos 8.559937 naxos.com/
CatalogueDetail?iid=8.559937).

Antheil met Stravinsky in Berlin and in 1923 followed him to Paris, where the first three sonatas were written, commissioned by Ezra Pound for his mistress, the American violinist Olga Rudge. Sonata No.1 shows the unmistakable influence of Stravinsky’s Les Noces (premiered the night Antheil arrived in Paris) and the earlier Rite of Spring. The single-movement Sonata No.2 is a dazzling collage of ragtime, popular melodies and folk songs. Stravinsky’s influence is back, albeit with a more melodic feel, in Sonata No.3, also a single movement.

Sonata No.4 is from 1947, long after Antheil had moved back to the United States. Although built on Baroque and classical forms the rhythmic, mechanistic style of his Parisian sonatas is still discernible.

In 2021/22 the American violinist Maria Ioudenitch won first prize at the Ysaye International Music Competition and both the Tibor Varga and Joseph Joachim International Violin Competitions, the latter also landing her the Warner Classics Prize that led to her debut Songbird CD with pianist Kenny Broberg (Warner Classics 5419737407 mariaioudenitch.com/listen).

Her “journey through song” is a selection of short works by Robert and Clara Schumann, Fanny Mendelssohn, Nadia Boulanger, Amy Beach, Tchaikovsky, Medtner, Rachmaninoff, Glinka and Richard Strauss. The one substantial work is Schubert’s four-movement Beach, Tchaikovsky, Medtner, Rachmaninoff, Glinka and Richard Strauss. The single movement. Sonata No.1 is back, albeit with a more melodic feel, in Sonata No.3, also a single movement.

Schumann is represented by his Sonata for Violin and Piano No.1 in A Minor Op.105.

Alfred Schnittke also lived in Germany but studied in Vienna; included here is his Suite in the Old Style. The final work is the Romance Op.23 by the American Amy Beach, whose tenuous link to Vienna is that she apparently “visited once.”

Warm, stylish playing, fine ensemble and a lovely recording quality make for a highly enjoyable disc.

On The Living American the excellent violinist Timothy Schwarz continues to champion American music with a diverse collection of works by seven of today’s leading American composers, including five recording premieres; the pianist is Charles Abramovic (Albany Records TROY1930 albanyrecords.com).

There are three solo violin works: Fantasia on Lama badda yatasana by Steven Sametz; Jessie Montgomery’s Rhapsody No.2; and Reena Esmail’s Raag Charukeshi from Drushan, a blend of Indian and Western classical music that explores grief in various forms.

The third movement of Jennifer Higdon’s String Poetic is here, as is Avner Dorfman’s wide-ranging single movement, Sonata No.1. The three entertaining pieces by musical theatre composer/pianist Joseph Goodrich were written for and premiered by Schwarz, as was the Sametz work and the final work on the CD, Denis DiBlasio’s Australian Sketches, in which the duo is joined by bassist Douglas Mapp and drummer Doug Hirlinger.

Cellist John–Henry Crawford and pianist Victor Santiago Asuncion celebrate the composer’s 150th anniversary on Voice of Rachmaninoff, an album that explores the vocal nature of his music through original works and transcriptions (Orchid Classics ORC100241 orchidclassics.com).

The Cello Sonata in G Minor Op.19 anchors a recital that includes transcriptions of the Vocalise Op.34 No.14, two songs, a piano Prelude, the 19th variation from the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini and Fritz Kreisler’s arrangement of the theme from the slow movement of the Piano Concerto No.2.

Crawford’s warm cello sound is perfectly suited to Rachmaninoff’s expansive, long-breathed melodies, ably supported by Asuncion in the often extremely difficult piano parts.

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On All Roads, the Shea-Kim Duo of violinist Brendan Shea and pianist Yerin Kim explore music by composers connected to the city of Vienna “in increasingly distant ways” (Blue Griffin Recording BGR643 shea-kimduo.com/shop-1).

Beethoven moved there from Bonn; a beautifully expressive performance of his Sonata for Piano and Violin No.3 in E-flat Major Op.12 opens the disc. Robert Schumann is represented by his Sonata for Violin and Piano No.1 in A Minor Op.105.

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What we’re listening to this month:
It’s a digital-only release and fairly brief at just under 25 minutes, but Shostakovich/Prokofiev – Violin Duos with violinists Julia Fischer and Kirill Troussov and pianist Henri Bonamy is well worth a listen (Orchid Classics ORC100234 orchidclassics.com).

The Shostakovich work is his Five Pieces for Two Violas and Piano, short miniatures in a much more light-hearted vein than is often the case with this composer. The Prokofiev is his Sonata for Two Viols, a typically spiky but tuneful work with a high degree of difficulty.

An interesting trivia note: Troussov’s violin is the 1702 “Brodsky” Stradivarius that Adolph Brodsky played at the December 1881 premiere of the Tchaikovsky concerto.

The booklet essay for the Escher String Quartet CD of quartets by Leos Janáček and Pavel Haas notes that while programmatic and autobiographical quartets date back to Beethoven nowhere have they been more prominent than in the Czech lands, and the three works here are all of a highly personal nature (BIS 2670 SACD bis.se).

Janáček’s voice in his later compositions is unmistakable, overflowing with raw emotion and passion. His 1923 String Quartet No.1 “Kreutzer Sonata” was inspired by Tolstoy’s novella about marriage and adultery, but it’s in his 1928 String Quartet No.2 “Intimate Letters” that his unrequited love for the much younger Kamila Stosslova finds full expression, perfectly captured by the Escher Quartet.

The 1925 String Quartet No.2 “From the Monkey Mountains” by Pavel Haas recalls a memorable stay in the beautiful Czech Moravian Highlands, with reminiscences of an early love affair. Colin Currie handles the ad lib percussion part in the remarkable A Wild Night final movement.

Two glorious chamber works are featured in outstanding performances on Mozart String Quintets K515 & 516, with violist Antoine Tamesit joining the Quatuor Ébène (Erato 5419721332 warnerclassics.com/release/mozart-string-quintets).

The two quintets, No.3 in C Major and No.4 in G Minor were written a month apart in April and May of 1787, with the extra viola – a favourite instrument of the composer’s – adding a warmth and richness to the heart of the music. The release blurb refers to K515 as being “radiant and energetic, exuding elegance and grace,” which is also a perfect description of the playing here, which gets to the emotional heart of this remarkable music.

Beautifully recorded, it makes you wish for a complete set of the five mature quintets.

The Japanese violinist Fumika Mohri is the soloist in the Violin Concertos Opp.2 & 7 by Mozart’s exact contemporary the remarkable Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, with the Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice under Michael Halás (Naxos 8.574452 naxos.com/CatalogueDetail/?id=8.574452).

The Concerto in G Major Op.2 No.1 and the Concerto in D Major Op.2 No.2 were published in Paris in 1773, and the Concerto in A Major Op.7 No.1 and the Concerto in B-flat Major Op.7 No.2 in 1777, although issues with the sources suggest a much earlier composition date. The editions here are by Allan Badley, who also wrote the excellent booklet notes.

Comparison with Mozart is perhaps inevitable, but these showcases for Saint-Georges’ virtuoso technique are attractive and engaging works, described by Badley as “rich in melodic invention and displaying at times a striking degree of originality.” Performances are beautifully judged throughout a delightful CD.

Beethoven and Beyond is the impressive Deutsche Grammophon debut CD by the young Spanish violinist María Dueñas, recorded live in Vienna’s Musikverein with the Wiener Symphoniker under Manfred Honeck (4863512 deutschegramophon.com/de/katalog/produkte/beethoven-and-beyond-duenas-12950).

Dueñas says that in the Beethoven concerto “you have to reveal yourself. And that can only be done through sound.” And what a sound she produces: a crystal clear, bright and glowing tone full of warmth. All three cadenzas are her own, but she cleverly ends the CD with terrific performances of first movement cadenzas by Spohr, Ysaÿe, Saint-Saëns, Wieniawski and Kreisler for fascinating comparison, filling out the recital with an original work by each composer. Ysaÿe’s Berceuse Op.20 and Kreisler’s Liebeslied are from the live concert; Saint-Saëns’ Havanaise Op.83, Wieniawski’s Légende Op.17 and Spohr’s Adagio from his Symphonie concertante No.1 with harpist Volker Kempf are studio recordings.
Kazakh violinist Aiman Mussakhajayeva is the superb soloist in world-premiere recordings of works for violin and orchestra on Lowell Liebermann Violin Concerto Op.74, with Tigran Shiganyan leading the debut recording of the Kazakh State Symphony Orchestra (Blue Griffin Records BGR6.45 bluegriffin.com).

The 2001 concerto is an expansive, emotionally engaging and immediately accessible work that should really become a mainstay in the repertoire. Liebermann made violin and string orchestra arrangements of his two chamber concertos from 1989 and 2006 especially for this recording, and is the pianist in the Chamber Concerto No.1 Op.28a.

The gorgeous 2011 Air for Violin and Orchestra Op.18 ends a CD of finely crafted and attractive contemporary works for violin and orchestra, all brilliantly presented by Mussakhajayeva on her 1732 Stradivarius violin.

Describing his new CD The Blue Album guitarist Pablo Sainz-Villegas says that blue stands for a particularly intimate mood, an atmosphere of reverie and relaxation (Sony Classical1968779092 pablowsainzvillegas.com).

There’s certainly nothing challenging in a recital of brief pieces by Weiss, Couperin, Domenico Scarlatti, Sor, Debussy, Satie and Brouwer, together with Tárrega’s arrangement of Radig’s La Paloma, Stanley Myers’ Cavatina and Ryuichi Sakamoto’s Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence.

Bland snippets of Philip Glass and Max Richter seem completely out of place on an album supposedly featuring “some of the most beautiful and most heartfelt melodies ever written” — an enormous stretch — but no matter. There’s clean, efficient playing — perhaps somewhat lacking in character — all resonantly recorded.

VOCAL

Canciones de mi abuelito
Antonio Figueroa; La Familia Figueroa
ATMA ACD2 2856 (atmaclassique.com/en)

➤ This recording is a master work, created in celebration of the paternal Figueroa Grandfather (Don José Figueroa), through the veil of the potent 1950s/1960s “Golden Age” of Mexican music composed by noted 20th-century Mexican composers. Featuring the vocal work of dynamic tenor Antonio Figueroa, the talented Figueroa family performs on a variety of instruments throughout and includes Anton Virquis on voice/violin; Esteban Duran on voice/violin and arrangements; Tomy Figueroa on voice/trumpet; Manuel Figueroa on vihuela (he’s also artistic adviser); José-Luis Figueroa on voice/guitar; Alexandre Figueroa on voice/guitarron and José Figueroa on voice. Grandfather José first visited Canada as a performing mariachi during Expo 1967, and eventually emigrated to Montreal with his 11 children, beginning a thrilling cross-cultural relationship. It wasn’t long before Mariachi Figueroa became a family business.

Mariachi music and particularly the “Cancion Ranchera” is an emotional genre by which Mexicans express the raw pain of a broken heart. The stirring opener, Paloma Querida (José Alfredo Jiménez) features Antonio’s superb, limitless and communicative tenor. Every track here is a cultural and musical gem — rendered with authenticity and skill. Highlights include the lihesome Martha (Mosés Simón), Dime Que Sí (Alfonso Esparza Oteo) with supple trumpet and violin work. El Pastor (Los Cuates Castilla) with its gymnastic, stratospheric melodic line brilliantly negotiated by Antonio and Diez Años (Raphael Hernandez) a stunningly arranged gem of Musica Mexicana. The closer of this compelling collection, Ojos Tapatios (Jose F. Elizondo & F. Menendez) is an exceptional and deeply moving example of authentic Mexican music — performed to perfection by the entire ensemble.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

Bach – Six Motets
Ottawa Bach Choir; Lisette Canton
ATMA ACD2 2836 (atmaclassique.com/en)

➤ Founded in 2002 by Dr. Lisette Canton, the Juno Award-winning Ottawa Bach Choir (OBC) is an ensemble which specializes in the performance of early music, with a particular emphasis on the works of Johann Sebastian Bach. Their latest release, titled Six Motets, is a monumental effort featuring Bach’s choral motets, noted for their complexity, profundity and breathtaking beauty.

This recording begins with a thrilling rendition of Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied, BWV225, which launches at breakneck speed through passages of virtuosic counterpoint and driving rhythmic patterns, eases into a luxurious aria and returns with fiery energy for the conclusion. Such focus on rhythm and clarity is a defining feature of this entire disc, which brings Bach’s music to life in an illuminative and vital way.

Perhaps the most exceptional excerpt of OBC’s Six Motets is the monumental Jesu, meine Freude BWV227, an 11-move ment work for five-part chorus that spans a tremendous range of moods and affects. Here the choir offers a masterclass in precision and execution, but never at the expense of musicality. The opening chorale is well-paced, expertly phrased and subtly expressive, the devilish “Trotz dem alten Drachen” is one of the best this reviewer has encountered, and the lyrical “Gute Nacht, o Wesen” is hauntingly beautiful.

In a market saturated with recordings of Bach’s famous motets, it could be challenging to rationalize yet another addition to the catalogue, yet this effort from the OBC holds its own as one of the finest on record. There is not a weak point present and, whether familiar or not with these legendary works, Six Motets is highly recommended listening for all.

Matthew Whitfield

A Left Coast (A Heartfelt Playlist from British Columbia)
Tyler Duncan; Erika Switzer
Bridge Records 9574 (bridgerecords.com)

➤ In their booklet notes, baritone Tyler Duncan and pianist Erika Switzer, both B.C.-born, call this CD “our heartfelt playlist for the place we will always call home: British Columbia.”

The “playlist,” drawn from seven of their R.C. “friends and colleagues,” begins with two songs by Iman Habibi, set to Edward FitzGerald’s translations of two quatrains by Omar Khayyam. The vocal lines are earnest and emphatic, the piano parts flavoured with hints of Persian exoticism.

Jean Coulthard’s Three Love Songs are appropriately edgy and irritable, as they’re set to poems from Louis MacKay’s collection, The Ill-Tempered Lover. In three highly dramatic songs, Jocelyn Morlock’s Involutary Love Songs, with verses by Alan Ashton, traces the narrator’s development of love from repression through tormented denial to blissful, sensual ecstasy.

Melancholy lyricism infuses Melissa Hui’s...
song Snowflakes (poem by Longfellow) and Leslie Uyeda’s Plato’s Angel, four songs set to what Uyeda calls “some of the most introspective” poems by Lorna Crozier but, writes Uyeda, “I do not mean them to be depressing!” (They’re not.) For real depression, listen to Jeffrey Ryan’s Everything Already Lost, commissioned by Duncan and Switzer. Ryan’s sombre music matches the gloomy moods of four poems by Ian Zwick, with repeated references to “night” and “darkness.”

Stephen Chatman’s very pretty Something like that, one of a set of Eight Love Songs written for Duncan, injects some welcome, warm sunshine into this CD’s ever-looming storm clouds. Is B.C. weather always like this?

If colonialism is the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods, music articulates the disparities it creates between races, classes and individuals. As current scholars, curators and musicians are working to decolonize Western art music’s academies and organizations, this revisiting of 18th-century works inspired by music from India, or performed there, is most timely and welcome.

“Hindustani airs” were popular with the traditional music or as trade music; Oswald’s connection to the traditional music of the tunes in his Caledonian Pocket Companion, 12-volume dancing master and then publisher of the 12-volume Caledonian Pocket Companion. It’s from this collection of “Scotch” airs that many traditional musicians know him. Oswald is mistakenly given credit for some of the tunes in his Caledonian, but when you hear his own music you can understand why. Having played and sung with violinist and fiddler David Greenberg in his 1990s project Piutri a Baroque, which pushed the genre boundaries of this repertoire, I recognize the movements in his Seasons which might be based on or inspired by traditional tunes. For example, Cousuip: III could make a fine reel if you added a bit more swing and stress on the backbeats; and with some swagger, Daisy: II could be a square dance jig.
British residents of Calcutta in the late 18th century, resulting in transcriptions for harpsichord. At the same time, Indian nobles such as King Serfoji II of Tanjore appreciated European classical music. For this reason, both repertoires are represented here, beautifully recorded in a reverberant space that might evoke an English hall or the Indian king’s palace.

Transcriptions could not take into account the tuning, modes, timbres and style of Indian musical practices, and the airs were adjusted for Western tastes and instruments. Given this, Christopher Palameta and Notturna show sensitivity and great musicality in their performance of the pieces that at the time, celebrated the “exotica” of borrowed melodies: Sakia, a Rekhta (Mera peura ab ia re), and a Terana (Dandera vakee). But by beginning the album with a captivating cut featuring sitar and tabla, Palameta and Notturna place the non-European music in the foreground and thus effect what Palameta calls an “interplay and aesthetic appreciation of two equally sophisticated musical traditions.”

**Jean Baur Chamber Music**

Elinor Frey; Accademia de’ Dissonanti

**Passacaille 2023** (elinorfrey.com)

**Theme: Variation**

David Rogosin

Leaf Music LM251 (leaf-music.ca)

Do you remember in the movie *Amadeus* when the young boy Mozart sits down at the clavichord and for the delight of the Emperor and embarrassment of Salieri, quickly improvises half a dozen variations on a tune by the latter, ending up with something completely different? Well, Mozart is duly represented on this remarkable disc by brilliant pianist and scholar David Rogosin, a professor of piano from New Brunswick, who endeavours to trace the variation genre for the past 400 years, from early music (Gibbons) through the Baroque (Handel), the classical (Mozart, Beethoven) and the Romantic (Chopin) to the present, ending up with a special composition by Rogosin’s friend Kevin Morse, *12 Variations on a Fantasia by J.S. Bach*.

Rogosin calls this an “exploration” and this is his third recording of similar explorations of various aspects of musical composition. What amazes me is his ability to capture the essence of each different period and interpret it with flawless technical brilliance.

The journey begins in the 16th century with Orlando Gibbons and it’s interesting to follow how the form develops from the simple to the complex, delving into the character and emotional aspect of the themes, proving the variation format to be the most difficult way of composition, testing the composer’s inventiveness to come up with something different with each variation.

Traditionalist as I am, I was most impressed with Beethoven’s magisterial 32 Variations which amply illustrates how far it is possible to deviate yet never abandon the theme and firmly hold a composition together. Chopin’s Berceuse (actually a set of variations) is also a very good choice; Rogosin plays with a beautiful soft legato, the mark of a master pianist.

**Around Baermann**

Gili Loftus; Maryse Legault

Leaf Music LM265 (leaf-music.ca)

Carl Maria von Weber’s success came from knowing his strengths and, I’d argue, his shortcomings as well. He didn’t try to be Ludwig II, but he killed it writing over-the-top operas (showing Wagner how), and he killed it as a touring pianist alongside such virtuosi as clarinettist Heinrich Baermann. He gave up writing symphonies after two early attempts, and turned his attention to operas, concertos and chamber music, including a ton of great stuff commissioned by Baermann.

Clarinetist Maryse Legault joins forces with Gili Loftus (pianoforte) on the recent release of pieces written by, for, or during Baermann’s heyday. Legault’s mouthpiece (I suspect) is wood instead of (modern) hard rubber, which could account for her inconsistent tone; it would be tough managing two different fibrous materials as they interact with the local weather. She can really play the ten-keyed period clarinet (a copy of one played by Baermann) with assurance and subtlety, but sometimes her volume distorts colour and pitch. Most convincing is the *Andante con Moto from Weber’s Grand Duo Concertante, Op.48*, where Legault assumes the proper role as diva, reaching high and low for expression. Bravo also to Loftus for making such tasteful decisions on all the tracks. The *Grand Duo* is her tour de force.

My main beef is that not all the material warrants attention. Champions of Felix Mendelssohn won’t use his early *Sonata* to bolster their argument. And a tossed-off filler (per Legault’s informative liner notes) like Weber’s Variations on a Theme from the opera *Sylvana*, Op.33 takes too long to type, let alone listen to. They’d have done better to include in its place a charming selection accessible only online: *Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano*, by Caroline Schleicher-Krähmer, a clarinetist/composer of the same period with otherwise no known connection to Baermann.

Clever cover photos reference another great Romantic artist, Johannes Vermeer.

**Janos Gardonyi**
Breaking Barriers
Yanet Campbell Secades; Tanya Charles
Iveniuk; Marlene Ngaliessamy; Ontario Pops Orchestra; Carlos Bastidas
Independent (ontariopops.com)

Was it Arthur Fiedler who said that there are only two kinds of music: the good kind and the boring kind? Well, there is certainly no boring kind of music here. This CD features the Ontario Pops Orchestra (OPO), a band founded by Carlos Bastidas, born in Colombia, who is also its conductor and music director. Apparently as a child Bastidas was so impressed by Fiedler and the Boston Pops that this gave him the inspiration of becoming a conductor. The orchestra features one of the most diverse professional orchestras in Canada, organized on principles of inclusiveness and multiculturalism. Recorded at Toronto’s prestigious Jeanne Lamon Hall, Trinity–St. Paul’s Centre, Breaking Barriers is their debut recording of orchestral and concerto pieces featuring three soloists and the music is by no means boring.

The ambitious program begins with Mozart’s notoriously difficult (Great) G-Minor Symphony No.40, a challenge for conductor and ensemble alike, performed with flawless grace. Later the hackneyed Eine Kleine Nachtmusik is played with such freshness, joy and enthusiasm that it feels like we’ve never heard it before.

I was absolutely enchanted by the selection from Vivaldi’s Four Seasons, the second violin concerto “Summer” inspired by the languor and laziness of heat interrupted by violent gusts of wind. The soloist is Tanya Charles Ivaniiuk who plays with terrific intensity and virtuosity, totally immersed like a truly great artist. The last movement, the famous Storm, involves the whole orchestra in frantic virtuoso violin playing. Later we hear soloist Yanet Campbell Secades with Bach’s A Minor Violin Concerto and Marlene Ngaliessamy with Vivaldi’s Bassoon Concerto in E Minor, also in very fine performances.

We foresee a great future for this orchestra; they are already becoming popular in Toronto, giving open air concerts with Latin American music that includes singing and dancing with enthusiastic and participating audiences. Bravo OPO!

Janos Gardonyi

Schubert – Architect
Mathieu Gaudet
Analekta An 2 9188 (analekta.com/en)

Schubert’s Piano Sonata in C Minor D858 was one of three he composed in 1828 during the last months of his life. For whatever reason, it wasn’t published for another ten years, and it lay neglected for most of the 19th century. Today, the piece is recognized as a prime example of his mature style – closely aligned in spirit to Beethoven who Schubert revered – and it’s one of two sonatas presented on Mathieu Gaudet’s Architect, the eighth in the series of Schubert’s complete sonatas.

The piece is formidable in length – roughly 36 minutes in total – and like the majority of Schubert’s sonatas, is a skillful essay in attractive melodies and carefully constructed details right from the dramatic opening movement. As seen in the previous recordings of the series, Gaudet approaches the score with an understated virtuosity, very much letting the music speak for itself. The frenetic and spirited finale is a true tour de force – not dissimilar in mood to the lied Erkönig – and Gaudet easily handles the technical challenges, effectively tying all four movements of this lengthy work into a cohesive whole.

Coupled with this work is the Sonata No.9 D575 in the curious key of B Major completed in 1817. In contrast to the dramatic intensity of D858, this piece is all joviality. Gaudet’s highly expressive performance is solidly assured, perfectly conveying a joyous spirit throughout. An added bonus is the inclusion of the Two Scherzos D593 which are a light diversion between the two larger works, helping round out a most satisfying program.

Richard Haskell

Sheng Cai plays Rachmaninoff
Sheng Cai
ATMA ACD2 2861 (atmaclassique.com/en)

Representing a third disc with ATMA Classique, pianist Sheng Cai offers an all-Russian program of Rachmaninoff’s own performance practice. Such sensitivity is refreshing; it aids Cai as he carves his pathway through familiar musical woods. These interpretations tend towards a personalized, even intimate concept, considered and sincere. Pianistically speaking, the damper pedal should be used judiciously but Cai employs it all too sparingly. While some might welcome such an absence of sound, this listener yearned for more resonance: yet more red-hot reverb to tug at the Russian heartstrings.

The less familiar half of this record is comprised of novel Rachmaninoff: an attractive transcription from the opera Aleko, (penned by Sheng Cai himself), and a curious polka by German composer Franz Behr. This piece was beloved by Rachmaninoff’s father, Vassili (“Wassily,” in German transliteration). In homage, Rachmaninoff made this arrangement in 1911, “to W.R.”

Cai’s knack for transcribing is notable here, demonstrating how compelled Rachmaninoff devotees truly are to synthesize such non-piano works for the public at large.

Adam Sherkin

Femmes de Légende
Élisabeth Pion
ATMA ACD2 2890 (atmaclassique.com/en)

Québécoise Élisabeth Pion’s debut CD offers an unusual but rewarding program of mostly French, mostly miniature piano pieces. Over a 15-year span, French composer Mélanie Bonis (1858-1937) depicted seven women from myth and literature. Though not conceived as a set, they were grouped as Femmes de légende by a clever publisher. Clever, too, are Bonis’ musical portraits: Mélisande (sensuous), Desdémona (wistful), Ophélie (perturbed, despairing), Viviane (charming), Phoebe (delicate, elusive), Salomé (wildly unstable) and Omphale (mysteriously dramatic). The six pieces of Henri Dutilleux’s Au gré des ondes are early works, still influenced by impressionism and neoclassicism. The three up-tempo pieces – Claquettes, Mouvement perpétuel and Étude – are rollicking, rambunctiously jocular – sheer fun!

Presented here are all the solo piano works completed by Lili Boulanger before her tragically early death, Debussy’s imprint evident throughout. The austere Prelude in D-flat Major is redolent of church bells and incense. Trois morceaux includes two garden strolls – the overcast, nostalgic D’un vieux jardin and the sunny D’un jardin clair; the cheerful Corrège ends the set. At nine minutes, by far the CD’s longest work, Boulanger’s Theme and Variations in C Minor recalls Debussy’s
La cathédrale engloutie, with weighty, powerfully tolling chords.
Debussy himself is represented by a scintillating performance of L’isle joyeuse. Rounding things out are the grotesque, un-lullaby-like Berceuse by Thomas Adès (one of Pior’s teachers), arranged by Ades from his opera The Exterminating Angel, and Pion’s own Balcony on a Wednesday Night – slow, sentimental and almost jazzy.

Michael Schulman

Saint-Saëns Volume Four – Duos for Harpsichord & Piano
Miloš Milivojevic; Simon Callaghan
Nimbus Records NI 8111 (chandos.net/products/catalogue/NI%208111)

The harmonium, for which the works here were originally written and/or arranged, was developed and refined in France in the second half of the 19th century. Its subsequent popularity resulted in many compositions for solo harmonium, duets with piano and larger ensembles, as well as arrangements of other works. The modern classical accordion easily replaces the harmonium as it creates a similar sound in almost the same way, by pressing the buttons/keys and moving the bellows to push air over vibrating metal reeds. Both instruments’ singing reed sounds perfectly match the vibrating, at times more percussive, sound of the piano strings.

Playing the harmonium part on classical accordion is the renowned Miloš Milivojević, and playing piano is Simon Callaghan. Both also arrange here. Camille Saint-Saëns’ Six Duos Op. 8 for Harpsichord and Piano (1858) is beautiful. The Scherzo fast piano part features Callaghan’s amazing playing of the repeated notes within its melodic lines, accompanied by lush accordion chordal transitions. Chorale opens with a very Romantic piano part showing off Callaghan’s amazing ability to create dramatic balance between hands. The alternating accordion lines are breathtaking, especially when both instruments play together, leading to a softer closing extended cadence. A calming Cavatina has slow piano chords under Milivojević’s superb bellows-controlled lush held note “singing” accordion melody, from high held notes to lower contrasting ones. Three other Duos, and works by Guilmant and Franck are also included.

The Milivojević and Callaghan duo performances are tight, balanced and expressive.

Tiina Kiiik

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY

The Water Cycle & Tango Inoxidable
Organum Vulgarum Independent
(michalenshelev.bandcamp.com/album/the-water-cycle-tango-inoxidable)

Canadian-born musician/teacher/composer Amichai Ben Shalev was raised in Israel and lived in Buenos Aires from 2005 to 2020 where he graduated in 2012 from the Manuel de Falla Conservatory specializing as a bandoneon soloist under the tutelage of Rodolfo Daluisio. His career there included collaborations with contemporary tango composers and international appearances. In 2020 Amichai moved to Montreal and in 2022 founded the contemporary music ensemble Organum Vulgarum for bandoneon and string quartet/quintet to explore this instrumentation’s sonorities.

Amichai’s seven-movement contemporary composition The Water Cycle, is inspired by the continuous movement of water on earth and in the atmosphere. Heat opens with ascending string intervals moving to higher bandoneon held notes, with faster lines as the water gets warmer, to an amazing closing with a held high note and a slightly rippling ending. Evaporation has lower pitched held notes, fades and swells creating musical evaporation. Chill has sharp “freezing” bandoneon accents contrasting with longer “puddle” strings. Precipitation features pizzicato string raindrops, low held note thunder blasts, and bandoneon bellows shakes increasing the storm effect. Brilliant tight ensemble playing and interpretation of Amichai’s reflective “watery” music reminiscent of summers at the lakeside.

Amichai expresses two common tango aspects, “Desolado” (solitary and sad) and “Reo” (rough) throughout his Tango Inoxidable. His virtuosic playing is featured here as bandoneon bellows create a wave effect, followed by dramatic string lines and bandoneon rhythms. Quieter remorseful bandoneon lines lead to intricate musical conversations with the strings.

The Organum Vulgarum instrumentalists’ performances meld together memorably, at times amazingly, almost sounding like one instrument. Amichai’s sonorities explorations are unforgettable.

Tiina Kiiik

Montréal Musica
Marc Bourdeau
Centrediscs CMCCD 32023 (cmccanada.org/product-category/recordings/centrediscs)

Like so many things in life, the inverted U-shaped curve best represents the ideal balance of exposure and mystery within a solo recording. Too much unveiling leaves nothing to the imagination in its fulsome exposition. Conversely, an unwillingness to unmask and musically disclose (the so-called “warts and all”), can come across as coy and not revelatory enough to strike a personal connection between artist and listener. But, when the forces align and an appropriate balance is struck, there is often magic contained within the performance that follows. Such is the case with Montréal Musica, a fine new recording by respected pianist, chamber musician and pedagogue Marc Bourdeau on Centrediscs, the record label of the Canadian Music Centre.

Spanning nearly a century of Canadian composition linked together not by style, genre or epoch, but rather uniformly tethered to the island of Montréal where Bourdeau calls home, this excellent 2023 release is notable for both its beautiful fidelity and acoustic capture of the instrument, as well Bourdeau’s bold decision to be stylistically agnostic and take on a mixed bag of intriguing repertoire whose only point of connection is the geographic origin of the composers. Although on the surface there may be little that unifies the music of Claude Champagne and Oscar Peterson, in the skilled hands of Bourdeau, the angles are found despite the stylistic discrepancies, and repertoire and artistry coalesce nicely to form a compelling and unified musical statement. Other composers represented include François Morel, André Mathieu, Jacques Hétu, John Rea, Denis Gougeon, Rachel Laurin and Marc-André Hamelin.

Andrew Scott

Colin Eatock – Choral and Orchestral Music
Sinfonia Toronto; Soundstreams’ Choir 21
Centrediscs CMCCD 31023 (cmccanada.org/product-category/recordings/centrediscs)

Following up on the Canadian Music Centre’s release of Colin Eatock: Chamber Music in 2012 (CMCCD 17812) this second volume features Eatock’s orchestral and choral works in performances by Sinfonia...
Toronto conducted by Nurhan Arman and the Soundstreams’ Choir 21 under the direction of David Fallis.

A baker’s dozen of Eaton’s choral works are on offer here. A number of them are based on sacred texts: The Lord Is Risen!, Three Psalms and Benedictus es: Alleluia are straightforward, major key settings in a largely syllabic and homophonic style, conventionally adorned with fleeting imitative passages, serene modulations and an abundance of sighing suspensions. Cast in a similar vein, the secular selections exhibit a somewhat darker tone and feature settings of texts by well-known authors Walt Whitman, Amy Lowell, Christina Rossetti and the exceedingly obscure 16th-century poet Francis Kemplemarsh.

The extended opening track, a setting of Whitman’s Ashes of Soldiers, is an expansion of a work that also appeared in Eaton’s previous chamber music disc, heard here in a setting for string orchestra and harp with an extended instrumental introduction featuring a beautifully played introspective clarinet solo by Kornel Wolak followed by soprano Lynn Anoush Isnar’s sensitive interpretation of the text. Only the final selection of the disc is purely instrumental, a delightfully quirky Sinfonietta for chamber orchestra in three concise movements that are by turns bumptious, plangent and just plain silly, all tied together by a chromatic four-note garland seemingly based on transpositions of the B-A-C-H motive or yore (and perhaps the analogous D-S-C-H motive as well in light of the galloping Shostakovitch-style rhythms of the finale).

All performances were expertly recorded at Toronto’s sonically legendary Humbercrest United Church by Robert DiVito. The clarity of diction is superb throughout.

Paul Foley – Sometimes the Devil Plays Fate
Mary Beth Nelson; Dominic Desautels; Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra; Gemma New
Centrediscs CMCCD 31423 (cmccanada.org/product-category/recordings/centrediscs)

This release features a fine ensemble of musicians from the Hamilton Philharmonic under the superb leadership of Gemma New, with mezzo-soprano May Beth Nelson singing the title track. The chamber ensemble comprises string and woodwind quintets, plus trumpet, trombone, percussion, keyboards and harp. The undertaking was accomplished in the impossibly short timeframe of two days last September, a fact all the more astonishing given that New was rehearsing Saint-Saëns’ Organ Symphony with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra during the same week.

Poems by Dane Swan provide text for Sometimes the Devil Plays Fate (which is a line from one of the two: Epitaph 8; Eclipse), along with an excerpt of a poem by Charles Mingus (also called Eclipse). Frehner shows a subtle appreciation for the themes expressed, repeating sections and giving them different musical treatments. The ensemble provides a commentary behind the incantation, sometimes syllabic, sometimes lyric. Nelson’s mezzo colour is perfectly suited to the dark material. Sometimes the balance is off, to the detriment of depth of sonic field. Recording this complex music under these time constraints might be to blame. Regardless, Frehner is a skilled orchestrator and knows exactly how to set players and voice in complementary strengths.

Voluptuous Panic is the intriguing title of the work filling the final two tracks: Escape Velocity and Saltarello – Proxima Centauri; Frehner captures vertiginous sensation, often employing a “circus band” aesthetic. The middle cut is a piece I know and love: Cloak; Concerto for Clarinet and Ensemble (2016, revised 2022). Soloist Dominic Desautels gives a hyper-dramatic reading of the piece. The revisions work well, making me want another shot at it myself.*

Max Christie

Editor’s note: Max Christie was the soloist in the premiere of Cloak with the New Music Concerts ensemble under Robert Aitken at Betty Oliphant Theatre in December, 2017.

Robert Lemay – Lignum et Spiritus
Stephen Tam; Anthony Thompson; Ron Cohen Mann; Kevin Harris; Yoko Hirota
Centrediscs CMCCCT 12323 (cmccanada.org/shop/cmccct-12323/)

Composer Robert Lemay has, in a recording he calls Lignum et Spiritus, attempted to fuse four kinds of woodwinds instruments with the piano and enlisted pianist Yoko Hirota to facilitate this fusion with four instrumentalists. The performing artists include Stephen Tam (flute), Anthony Thompson (clarinet), Ron Cohen Mann (oboe) and Kevin Harris (bassoon) respectively for works titled Point d’équilibre, Shared Visions, Play Off and Au courbe-à-courbe.

Lemay’s intention to “fuse” two musical instruments suggests an attempt – albeit both scientific and intellectual – not so much to inextricably bind, but to allow the two fused entities to create something new. The attempt, he says is non-pedagogical. He means for the music to organically redirect the physical nature of each of the individual instruments – wood or Lignum – by exerting a spectral force, which suggests breathing a new spirit into the sonic nature of the instruments, hence the Spiritus in the title.

Each pair of instruments produces alternating timbres that magically create new organic-sounding variations. Lemay’s imaginative creations and Hirota’s inspirational pianism preside over duets which are mystical Schoenbergian odysseys that create new musical space transformed by vertical (pitch) and horizontal (rhythm and permutation) forces.

Raul da Gama

Transformation – Interactive works for piano
Megumi Masaki
Centrediscs CMCDVD 29322 (cmccanada.org/product-category(recordings/centrediscs)

Japanese-Canadian Megumi Masaki is an internationally renowned pianist, multimedia performing artist, educator and curator who was recently appointed Director of Music at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. The DVD Transformation features her performing three interactive Canadian compositions for piano and new technology, each composed in collaboration with Masaki. A project documentary follows.

Orpheus (1) by T. Patrick Carrabré (composer, live electronics) and Margaret Atwood (poetry); for piano, toy piano, synthesizer and voice, challenges the Orpheus myth as a love story. Electronic sound washes open, then Masaki’s musically played simple lines and white snowflake-like specs on the blue backdrop. Faster accessible music, keyboard lines, spoken poetry, electronic rumbles/washes and backdrop scenes add excitement.

Piano Games by Keith Hamel (composer, software designer, live computer operator) for piano, hand tracking and live interactive video which responds to the piano sounds and hand positions, making each performance different. Backdrop lightning-like flashes and swirls match Masaki’s outfit colours. Hostile loud sounds and exploding lights to calming softer sounds and slower swirls to the pianist’s physical gestures, this is gaming chamber music!

Dōshite? どうして? by Bob Pritchard (composer, SHRUG designer, live computer operator) for piano, voice and movement honours the over 21,000 Japanese Canadians sent to internment camps in 1942 during WWII. Use of spoken text from Tsukiyu Muriel Kitagawa’s book This is My Own (editor Roy Miki’s permission), a film featuring black and white photos from this time and piano music including Japanese song fragments “is offered
as a form of apology”.

Masaki and each composer talk about their musical and technological creative process and working together in the informative Transformation Documentary Film.

The music, visuals and hi-tech interactions on Transformation are indeed unforgettably transforming.

Tiina Kiik

...and the Lord Hath Taken Away
The Holy Gasp
Independent (theholygasp.bandcamp.com)

► If, like me, you had neither heard of, nor listened to, The Holy Gasp before, the mere thought of approaching this album would be to expect something spiritually inclined.

After all an ensemble called The Holy Gasp... well, what other kind of music would the ensemble make? Moreover, the album is titled ... and the Lord Hath Taken Away, a direct quote from The Book of Job, of the Bible’s Old Testament spoken by the afflicted man himself at the height of his long suffering.

However, as it turns out, the ensemble’s frontman, Toronto-born poet, composer and vocalist of repute, Benjamin Hackman – knowledgeable as he as about scripture – is also a wonderfully free-thinking musician who can wield his impressive tenor voice and move easily between a kind of opera recitative, he’s-a-jolly-good-fellow klezmer, and vocalist of repute, Benjamin Hackman – frontman, Toronto-born poet, composer and vocalist of repute, Benjamin Hackman –

Raul da Gama

Za Klavir: For the Piano
Nina Platiša
Independent (ninaplatisa.com)

► Elemental and concise – most under three minutes – the 27 pieces of Za Klavir: (For the Piano), composed between 2018 and 2022, are subtly spiced with piquant sprinkles of Balkan folk idioms. Engagingly varied in tempo, rhythm and mood, they share unadorned melodic lines and sparse accompaniments, often only simple pedal points.

Belgrade-born composer/pianist Nina Platiša, now based in Guelph, came to Canada as a three-year-old in 1994. Responding to my email query, she wrote: “When I was young, my mom taught my sister and me Balkan folk songs... As I began to compose the solo piano pieces that would eventually make up this album, the music to which I felt the closest connection was often the simplest, pieces with simple melodies and harmonies akin to those of Balkan folk music – unpretentious and transparent. They seemed to issue from me naturally.”

Save for the concluding Sputnik (Companion) No.1, the pieces are numbered, not named. In an interview posted online, Platiša described three of them, beginning with the solemn No.7, “I saw an image of it being played at the funeral of my grandfather or great uncle. I pictured my family and friends dancing to No.20 at my family’s slava (saint’s day) and I saw myself playing No.25 for a newborn baby.”

I was particularly enchanted by the delicate, melancholy beauties of Nos. 5, 11, 14 and 19, reminiscent of Satie’s haunting Gymnopédies. I found Za Klavir compelling listening throughout; you may, too.

Michael Schulman

Emilie Cecilia LeBel – field studies
Jane Berry; Cheryl Duvali; UltraViolet; Ilana Wapner
Redshift Records TK530 (emieliebel.ca/discography)

► Prolific Canadian composer Emilie LeBel has roots in the contemporary concert music scenes in Toronto and Edmonton. Recorded in both cities, field studies features five chamber works composed between 2016 and 2022.

It’s tempting to describe LeBel’s accomplished and mature compositional language as postminimalism. On closer listening however, it’s in turn austere, serene and sonically challenging, but also lush and lyrical. It embraces solitary long tones as well as complex harmonies and microtonal gestures. This vast territory questions any neat “minimal” pigeonholing.

Another sonic signature is LeBel’s ingenious use of coloured noise, exploiting the vast spectrum between conventional instrumental tone and white noise. In even if nothing but shapes and light reflected in the glass for alto flute, baritone sax and electronics, “tactile transducers on prepared snare and tom drums” supply the sonic grit. They provide a textural counterpoint to the two wind instruments’ built-in wind sounds as well as to their more typical lyrical voices.

Nor is LeBel afraid of boldly combining inherently contrasting instruments. For example, evaporation, blue is scored for the unlikely paring of piano and harmonica, both played with conviction and delicacy by Toronto pianist Cheryl Duvali.

LeBel’s considerable orchestration chops are aided by her close attention to the strengths and limitations of instruments and voices. Beautifully played by Ilana Wapnik, further migration for solo violin illustrates the former, while drift for voice and chamber ensemble animated by Jane Barry’s relaxed voice, the latter, I wouldn’t be surprised if an opera is in LeBel’s future.

Andrew Timar

Sources
Louise Campbell
Redshift Records (redshiftmusicassociation.bandcamp.com/album/sources)

► Ambient soundscapes can be fascinating. It’s a mystery to me that some can also be listenable, out of context, like the material on this new disc. That’s a long-winded roundabout compliment to the creator of Sources, multi-disciplinary clarinetist Louise Campbell. Full disclosure: I too am a Campbell, of the Irish variety, so call me biased at an odd angle.

The clarinet on these four tracks is rarely heard without many layers of electronic manipulation applied. Campbell’s playing is equal to the material she writes without ever being showy. The point is not to highlight the instrument nor the player, but to distill the sounds she generates into evocations. The first track, Songbird, is a psychodelic dawn chorus set in Georgian Bay. Swift (an elegy to her late father) evokes tiny watery moments at the edge of Le Fleuve St. Laurent. Briefly, Campbell allows her sound to stand unclothed by electronic reverb and echo, a breathtaking moment. Playing Guitar Gear rocks on Campbell’s hometown of Montreal. It’s the most dynamic piece, and while I don’t get what it’s about, it’s fun.

The first three tracks each last around ten minutes, and the fourth, People of the Sea, balances the length exactly at 33 minutes. Also a music therapist, Campbell allows one to wander about within the sounds. I found myself hearing it accompanying my thoughts on a range of things (including editing other reviews) and when I checked in it was mostly finished. At some point a single line became several, and a stationary colour became something like a melody. The texture is pebbled, not granular but bumpy, like distressed beach glass. The
final minute or so is an open harmony, a major sixth resolving gradually to an open fifth over an evocation of surf. Amen. Quite beautiful.

Max Christie

Describe Yourself
Christopher Whitley
Redshift Records TK529
(redshiftmusicsociety.bandcamp.com/track/describe-yourself)

Six contemporary pieces for violin by living composers who also happen to be fellow Canadians make an interesting artistic choice. Add to that remarkable Canadian violinist Christopher Whitley performing on the 1700 “Taft” Stradivarius violin and we get an album that is beaming with adventure, potency, depth and ingenuity. Multi-talented Whitley interprets, collaborates, vocalizes,contrasts, draws and carries the various extended violin techniques and melodies with the utmost conviction, all the while staying centred in the resonance and beauty of the pure sound. He is a sound magician with a deep understanding of composer’s intentions.

Some of these pieces are oriented toward exploration of the fundamental violin sounds, others more experimental. What they have in common is the array of open spaces left for existential sound. Kara-Lis Coverdale’s Patterns in High Places is successful in creating a continuum of musical pathways that are both soothing and probing. Nicole Lizée’s Don’t Throw Your Head In Your Hands is a pure joy to listen to; a beautiful cinematic canvas underneath violin solos is created through unconventional sound manipulations using old karaoke tapes. The album closes with In Bruniquel Cave by Fjóla Evans, its atmosphere so mysterious and dark that we might feel we entered a secret chamber to hear the time passing.

A violnistic and compositional chamber of curiosities, Describe Yourself makes its mark through a grand execution of imaginative writing.

Ivana Popovic

Difficult Grace
Seth Parker Woods
Cedille CDR 90000 219
(cedillerecords.org)

The work contained in cellist Seth Parker Woods’ Difficult Grace almost defies classification. This is an album of live theatre, performance art, electronics, spoken word and poetry, political awareness, storytelling, ambient music and gorgeous cello playing. The overall cohesiveness contained is a theme of commitment to art, and if you were lucky enough to catch Woods’ March 2022 Toronto performance of this album you will be familiar with what a great work of art it is.

The scope of the works contained is wide and deep. Beginning with Frederic Gifford’s 1915 Difficult Grace, one is immediately captured for the entirety of the album. Based on the poetry of Dudley Randall’s Primitives the verbal and musically sonic transformation is easily accessed. The delivery by Woods is a performance on its own. Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson’s third movement Lamentations from his Black/Folk Song Suite reflecting the African-American experience is solo pizzicato throughout and aptly described in the title Calvary Ostinato.

Monty Adkins’ 1972 Winter Tendrils is a luscious melodic track, followed by Nathalie Joachim’s 1983 The Race 1915, one of the album’s most powerful works. Inspired by visual artist Jacob Lawrence’s images of the historic African-American migration beginning in 1915, it features excerpts from issues of the important Black newspaper The Chicago Defender, published in that pivotal year citing the oppression and atrocities facing millions compelled to travel uncertain journeys. The spoken text and solo cello rise above the undercurrent of the train-like electronic ostinato, driving the piece to its powerful conclusion.

Alvin Singleton’s 1970 work Arogoru (from the Twi language meaning “to play”) is a motivic, gestural piece followed by another of Joachim’s, Dam Mwen Yo. The final piece is Ted Hearns’s Freefucked (2022). A complex and yet straightforward suite of songs showcasing poems by Kemi Alabi, from their poetry collection Against Heaven, which really completes this fantastic journey with the use of electronics, vocal processing and solo cello. The suite is dynamic and full and could be listened to in parts or in whole. Each movement is stunning. It helps to follow the poetry included in the accompanying booklet but the music stands without it. This whole piece is awesome.

Cheryl Ockrant

JAZZ AND IMPROVISED

Live at the Village Vanguard
Kris Davis Diatom Ribbons
Proclastic Records PR 28/29
(krisdavis.net)

Emigré Canadian pianist/composer Kris Davis here commemorates a landmark appearance at New York’s Village Vanguard with this two-CD set by a quintet form of her group Diatom Ribbons, ranging through a program that includes both compositions by celebrated jazz composers and several of her own works that sometimes incorporate the voices of a few singular influences. Essentially heterodox, broad-based and witty, the music is anchored by drummer Terri Lyne Carrington and bassist Trevor Dunn, while Val Jeanty contributes turntables and electronics and Julian Lage, perhaps the leading jazz guitarist of the day, matches the blistering virtuosity and manic playfulness that Davis brings to piano, prepared piano and arturia microfreak synthesizer.

The occasion is clearly one to celebrate and the performance is carnival-esque in mood and variety. The opening Alice In the Congo, composed by Ronald Shannon Jackson, has roots in both funk and electronic fuzz. Layers of time, stratus clouds shifting, streaks of water moving through air, frost on metal, children speaking. Colours of purple, grey and green. Sparkle and dust. Layer under layer under layer. Windows open and close, breezes blow through, curtains move. Empty walls fill up with images and empty out again. Conversations rise and fall. This album is a masterful creation, a demonstration of visually listening peripherally with a third eye, of noticing and letting go.

Never feeling preachy or heavy, these four beautiful tracks morph between mindful and wild, a flowing sonic movement that feels unrushed but is never still. This is a magical space to enter without the wastefulness of extraneous noise or volume. The fourth track, Similar Speeds, is a rather mesmerizing visualization of subtle stretching of mis-timing, reminiscent of the metal ball toy Newton’s Cradle.

Professor of composition at Northwestern University, DMA pianist and multi-instrumentalist Lee Weisert has collected a brilliant team of collaborators to build his journey with. Allen Anderson on modular synth, Nicholas DiFusignio, violin, Jonathon Kirk, electronics and Melissa Martin, vocals. This is an album to listen while doing nothing else.

Cheryl Ockrant

Reccees
Lee Weisert
New Focus Recordings FCR366
(newfocusrecordings.com)

The album Reccees is a fantastic sonic journey of melting ice, acoustic piano, degraded tape and voices, a kind of hustle and bustle mixed with water droplets and
and free jazz, and Jeanty’s contribution adds hip-hop before Davis solos with wild keyboard splashes and runs. Other pieces from the contemporary repertoire include Gert Allen’s The Dancer and two distinct versions of Wayne Shorter’s Dolores.

The bulk of the set consists of Davis’ own compositions, some acknowledging more influences, Nine Harts referencing works by Eric Dolphy and Conlon Nancarrow and the comically lumpy VW overlaying an archival radio interview with Sun Ra. Composers’ voices are even more prominent in the three-part, 34-minute Bird Suite. The Bird Call Blues segment references both bird song and Charlie Parker with the voices of Olivier Messiaen and Paul Bley, while Karlheinz Stockhausen discusses “intuitive music” on Parasitic Hunter.

Somehow Davis manages to merge all of these diverse elements into a coherent and original whole – at once pulsing, comic and touching – that’s a brilliant representation of the range, freedom, energy and inclusivity that jazz can achieve.

Stuart Broomer

Balladextrous
Sienna Dahlen; Bill Coon
Cellar Music CMR060322 (cellarlive.com)

Guitarists and vocalists share a unique bond when coexisting as a duo, and the exposure present without a rhythm section contrasts ominous vulnerability with ample space to thrive. Vocalist Sienna Dahlen and guitarist Bill Coon double down on this sparseness with Balladextrous, and make the most of this intimate, dreamy format.

My favourite duo albums throughout history tend to playfully eschew traditional roles of melodic interpretation and harmonic accompaniment, and Balladextrous walks this line brilliantly. Coon’s chordal work and melodic content never leave listeners unsure of song forms or harmony, but he wisely avoids bludgeoning anyone with the kinds of dense accompaniment weaker guitarists may hide behind in this context.

Dahlen has a playful sense of rhythm and phrasing that is both confident and interactive. This is a treat to hear applied to jazz standards, as it breathes new life into classic repertoire. Consciously or intuitively, the duo treats upbeat numbers like Happy Talk and I’m In The Mood for Love with a playful vibe, while sticking more to the bare-bones structures of pieces like Too Late Now and I Get Along Without You Very Well. Contrasting choices like these may not be predetermined, which is yet another testament to the intuition these two musicians possess.

Give Balladextrous a listen through quality headphones with your eyes closed, then try it again tomorrow while ironing or meal-prepping. This album promises to elevate in all contexts!

Sam Dickinson

Let It Shine! Let It Shine!
Denzal Sinclaire
Cellar Music CM111621 (cellarlive.com)

Singers Denzal Sinclaire and Dee Daniels take us to church with their new offering, Let It Shine! Let It Shine! Produced by the renowned jazz bass player, John Clayton, and recorded over several days while the band and crew were living together in a house outside Calgary, the love that went into this project is palpable. With gospel being the predominant style, the Hammond B3 by organ master Bobby Floyd is a centrepiece of the album, but all the players have their moments, such as Herlin Riley’s tambourine flair on some of the spirituals and Nick Tateishi’s groovy guitar work on God, Be In My Head.

Sinclaire’s signature warmth and gently swinging style is a nice contrast to Daniels’ powerful vocals, yet they blend beautifully on their duets. I confess I wasn’t very familiar with Daniels’ work before listening to this album and what a force she is. Her intensity is perfect on the blues-tinged If He Changed My Name while her emotional range is showcased on Sometimes It Snows in April. Sinclaire does a wonderful lilting reimagining of Rou, Rou, Rou Your Boat and a simply gorgeous take of Blessings Upon Blessings. But where the group really seems to hit its groove is on the traditional spirituals like This Little Light of Mine and Every Time I Feel The Spirit. When they let loose and the choir kicks in, I defy even the staunchest non-believers to sit still and not sing along.

Cathy Riches

Senza Reza
The Schwager/Oliver Quintet
Cellar Music CMR030123 (cellarlive.com)

While F. Scott Fitzgerald may have opined that there are no second acts in American life, apparently there are second, third and even fourth acts possible in the lives of Canadians, particularly if the Canadian in question is the talented and thankfully, still meaningfully recognized and among us, Phil Nimmons. With Volume 2-Generational, The Nimmons Tribute, under the skillful direction of Sean Nimmons (composer, arranger, producer, pianist and grandson of the now centenarian Phil), again aligns the Nimmons name with musical excellence and uncompromising artistry. And while the artistic conceit of the project is clear, do not be fooled into thinking that the album is the work of an ersatz cover band. Quite the opposite is true in fact, as this recording again shines a light on the ongoing relevance of Nimmons’ music.

Continuing the legacy work that began with 2020’s To The Nth, this 2023 recording treats an appropriately reverential path in its careful handling of Nimmons’ canonic music now interspersed with new compositions by the younger Nimmons, whose fine original contributions to this recording do much to further the legacy of the family name. Supported by an impressive multi-generational cast of jazz musicians representing some of the finest players in Toronto, it is clear that either as a pedagogue (mainly at the University of Toronto, but also dating back to his work at the Advanced School of

On sterling repertoire Schwager and Oliver can be heard firing on all cylinders throughout the kinetic-energy-filled music on this album. The ensemble also features the liquid harmonics of pianist Nick Peck, and sizzle and rolling thunder with bassist Rene Worst and drummer Ernesto Cervini. Together, these musicians meld melodies, harmonies and rhythms into songs with a preternatural roar from one chart to the next, giving no quarter and taking no prisoners.

No wonder that producer Luigi Porretta titled this album Senza Reza, Italian for “no surrender.” This powder-keg music explodes out of the gate with the incendiary Another Happening. There is no letup as the quintet negotiates the fast and oblique-angled rhythm changes of Rushbrooke. This magnificently frenetic pace continues throughout, changing to elegiac only for Tender Love. The musicians on Senza Reza present an edge-of-the-seat experience from end to end, brilliant in both long-limbed soli and in ensemble.

Raul da Gama

Volume 2 – Generational
The Nimmons Tribute
Independent (nimmonstribute.ca)

Much can be said about both guitarist Reg Schwager and saxophonist and flutist Ryan Oliver. Suffice it to say that both musicians have paid their dues in and around Canada and elsewhere with demanding bandleaders. In many respects their wide experience and well-documented discographies make them ideally suited to this ambitious project called Senza Reza.

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Raul da Gama

Volume 2 – Generational
The Nimmons Tribute
Independent (nimmonstribute.ca)
Concert note: The Nimmons Tribute will perform at Aeolian Hall in London, Ontario on November 23.

The Toronto Project
The Composers Collective Big Band
Independent (christianovertownmusic.com/ccbb)

Christian Overton has been a long-term journeyman, paying his proverbial musical dues in ensembles of varying size and celebrity from the city of Toronto and elsewhere. In addition to his renown as a virtuoso trombonist, Overton also runs a music publishing company and is an almost ubiquitous presence in Toronto’s musical scene. This has led to his being at the helm of this creative ensemble – The Composers Collective Big Band – modelled in the spectral shadow of his mentor, trombonist Rob McConnell and the legendary Boss Brass. The Collective now pays tribute to the city of Toronto.

The Composers Collective comprises 19 rather successful musicians plus six celebrated guests. While such a large group of artistic voices could rub uncomfortable shoulders with one another, the differences in style – sometimes subtle, often striking – enhance the overall impact of this superbly crafted and affecting miniatures making up The Toronto Project. Engaging pieces like the cinematic West Toronto Ode, the tongue-in-cheek Non-sequitur and post-modern Spadina, draw you inexorably into their sound-world as voices from subway announcers draw you into their subway narratives.

Torontonians and visitors to the teeming multi-cultural city will be able to put visuals to the miniatures that, collectively, act as a soundtrack for the city. The repertoire includes music by other commendable Canadian composers, capturing atmospheres in music that glows, expertly balanced and alive to Toronto’s unique rhythmic and harmonic nuances.

Andrew Scott

undoundone
Christof Migoné; Alexandre St-Onge
ambiences magnetiques (actuellecd.com)

In the final static seconds of undoundone, as the muffled distorted vocalizations cease and the imaginary entity imprisoned in the microphone concedes to an all-encompassing windscreen, a switch is flipped. This can be interpreted in the figural, as an indicator of change or a fixed transition between states. In this case however it is a computer switch, more specifically a spacbar; as implied by the bluntness of the attack and the timbre of its softer rebound. This is a demarcation device shared with Jay Electronica’s 2020 release Rough Love, opting not to edit out the rough of a decisive spacbar click. Electronica uses the spacbar as a mark of finality, to emphasize that his verse was recorded on a laptop in a single take. It can be either refreshing or jarring to a listener when an artist steps off their pedestal to show this level of vulnerability in the creating process.

Christof Migoné and Alexandre St-Onge’s last ambient pas de deux as “undo” is filled with increasingly brazen spacbars. As if on the heels of a late arrival Neons aléatoire dans le hasard inessentiel begins with the tail end of a sonic happening, initially akin to a wiry bass string being plucked from a singed shoe. Therein lies the beautiful irony of this project: endless sonic detail to obsess over, the definitive is ultimately undone.

Kati Killaspea

Ars Transmutatoria: Orange, Iku-Turso & Primati Primi
Michel Lambert
Jazz from Rant
(michelambert.bandcamp.com)

On Michel Lambert’s website, one can embark on a virtual audiovisual tour of the entire Ars Transmutatoria experience spanning from the Rouge, Bleu, Bronze and Orange volumes, available individually or as a deluxe boxed set, and subsequent works expanding on the series. Lambert explains “Ars Transmutatoria is the process of work! Collecting plants, creating scores, work with improvisers, etc... It is an ongoing process with new works to come.” The art gallery format is interesting because intuitively, for a piece to be exhibited alongside other works it demands to be confined to a space; one that allows for distinct statements to be made but requires a level of physical stasis and order. However, in reality this web application is a beautifully liberating way to engage with Lambert’s work, in that it allows for beholders to take a guided tour or roam free on their own accord while equipped with a concise user interface. The museum itself colour-codes all the rooms, which helps illuminate Lambert’s original multi-disciplinary concept of strikingly visual scores, helping listeners abstractly yet thoughtfully navigate between conceptual zones in their mind.

Orange may not be the final room in the tour, but it represents the end of the beginning for this sprawling project. It is perhaps the most ethereal experience of the colour saga. While all volumes up to this point have explored different corners of the Lambert network’s prismatic textural universe, Orange others.” These tunes were born in the depths of the pandemic and provided ample time for self-reflection, which is why the repertoire is inspired by the journey of looking deep into oneself and finding the music within.

The record features innovativeness through the use of sampling and modernistic melodies, and a hint of Shepherd’s trademark funk-jazz-soul sound through the use of rhythmic bass lines and drum riffs, a perfect example of this combo being the track Time. Further, what leaves an impression on the listener is how each musician’s unique style of playing both shines on its own and blends together seamlessly, with most songs being recorded separately due to restrictions during the pandemic. The result is what Shepherd lovingly deems “a Frankenstein album that’s very different from what I’ve done before.” A great album for the funk and modern jazz lover.

Yoshi Wall

Three Things
Elizabeth Shepherd; Jasper Holby; Michael Occhipinti et al
Pinwheel Music PM106CD
(elizabethshepherd.com)

Looking for the perfect mix of tunes to accompany these beautiful summer nights? Velvet-voiced vocalist and pianist Elizabeth Shepherd brings a perfect hodgepodge of mellow grooves and feistier melodies on her latest release. Those who have followed Shepherd’s musical journey throughout her various albums know that she is a genre-traveller, bringing a little bit of a different theme to each record. This one takes a foray into the slightly more “religious” aspect of music, depicting “a personal faith that uses music to look beyond oneself, to express gratitude, and to connect – with the divine and with
is a deep dive into the emotional power of resonances. Liner notes here take particular pride in the album’s incorporation of the booming low-end warble of the maikotron contrabass, which could very much devour all it touches, and Lambert unleashes teeth-clattering fury out of its deep drone. However, when transferring registers there is a distinctly phlegmy break in its sustained tones, allowing for it to envelop Raoul Bjorkenheim’s flyby guitar harmonics rather than engross. In this sense, this almost offers a thesis for the first leg of Ars Transmutatoria; painting around the lines rather than purely within, resembling that elusive duet-based sketch in the companion art for Un Jour dans la Forêt. Iku-Turso and Primati Primi mark the beginning of a new era. Lambert says: “The visual scores for those two releases are a bit different. There are 12 of them divided in two recording sessions. One took place in Helsinki, Iku-Turso and the other in Rome, Primati Primi.” Gone are the monochromatic motifs of yesteryear; enter zoomorphism. Resurrected are the poetic pivot points from Rouge, with Iku-Turso proving the Jeanette Lambert’s profoundly tuneful approach to conveying language and image is better than ever. For a specific example, note the musicality of the ng sound in Self-Distancing, in which the word fries as it decays, creating an illusory effect that obscures the phrase’s ending while conveying the universal feeling of lingering on a thought longer than expected. Lambert is all melody while rapper/ poet Beamer(!) is decisive, comping rhythms, painting thick lines around Michel Lambert’s trembling snare patterns like if the Orange maikotron could burn books with a tongue so precise it proves that words can briefly take a different color. 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**Goldstream**

Julian Gutierrez’s Project Goldstream Independent (juliangutierrezproject.bandcamp.com/releases)

Duality is a strong theme throughout this album, not only from a genre-based perspective but also in an imaginative way. Gutierrez explains that the music reflects “...nature, both the landscapes of my homeland... and the beauty and poetry that emanate from the landscapes of Canada, my host country.” This duality is especially noticeable in pieces such as Canard Gouteux, where the rhythmic influence of his Cuban roots, seen in Martel’s bass line combined with the groove of drummer Axel Bonnaire, is blended with the alternating mellow chord progressions and blazing piano riffs of Gutierrez, reflecting more of the Canadian, tempered side within the chords. Featuring a full lineup of stellar international musicians, the prolific pianist’s vision for this album is propelled to new heights. Jazz lovers looking for a foray into a pleasant musical landscape, this is for you.

**Pot Pourri**

Taraf Syriana
Omar Abou Afach; Naeem Shanwar; Noémy Bruan; Sergiu Popa
Lula World Records LWR029 (lulaworldrecords.ca/taraf-syriana)

Following the well-known saying “if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em,” why beat the summer heat when you can make the best of it with this fiery, scintillating mix of tunes? Cuban-born pianist Julian Gutierrez brings the best of both Latin and jazz music on his latest album, melding the two worlds together flawlessly. He adds his own twist to the record, arranging the collection of songs for a big band which brings a whole new, expansive sound to the repertoire. All tunes are originals penned by Gutierrez and arranged by both him and bassist Jean-François Martel. Duality is a strong theme throughout this album, not only from a genre-based perspective but also in an imaginative way. Gutierrez explains that the music reflects “...nature, both the landscapes of my homeland... and the beauty and poetry that emanate from the landscapes of Canada, my host country.” This duality is especially noticeable in pieces such as Canard Gouteux, where the rhythmic influence of his Cuban roots, seen in Martel’s bass line combined with the groove of drummer Axel Bonnaire, is blended with the alternating mellow chord progressions and blazing piano riffs of Gutierrez, reflecting more of the Canadian, tempered side within the chords. Featuring a full lineup of stellar international musicians, the prolific pianist’s vision for this album is propelled to new heights. Jazz lovers looking for a foray into a pleasant musical landscape, this is for you.

**Of What Remains**

Melissa Pipe Sextet
Odd Sound 005-28 (melissapipe.com)

Sporting a highly appropriate name for a reeds player, Montreal-based baritone saxophone/bassoonist Melissa Pipe’s disc is refined chamber jazz with an emphasis on darker textures. That’s because timbres arise not only from Lex French’s trumpet, Geoff Lapp’s piano and Mill Hong’s drums but also from lower tones encompassing Solon McDade’s double bass, Philippe Côté’s bass clarinet and tenor saxophone plus Pipe’s larger horns. It deepens even more when Michael Sundell’s contrabass is added on three tracks.

Most notable of these is the multi-sectional lici, aisi that moves slowly over drum rumbles and a walking bass line before portamento trumpet and saxophone breaks give way to a mellifluous double bassoon expression that moves up the scale while the pulse stays horizontal. Eventually reed stress turns to decorations as drum rim shots and piano comping complete the piece. More overt chamber jazz affiliations arise on a track like Day, where a dramatic undercurrent which harmonizes a snarling bassoon ostinato with plunger trumpeting remains constant as keyboard clinking outlines the balladic theme.

Other tracks such as La part des anges and Apotheek, are arranged with a light West Coast jazz feel, yet they’re also distinctive. That’s because these otherwise straightforward-foot-tappers that climax with modal blends of baritone saxophone smears and sparkling pianism are interrupted when French intersects Maynard Ferguson-like skyscraper-high triplets into the mix.

This sophisticated and promising debut leads us to anticipate her realization of the next musical Pipe dream.

Ken Waxman
side of the ensemble.

This Taraf Syriana release is perfect, uplifting music.

Tiina Kirk

**Little Bit a ‘ Love**

Denielle Bassels

Independent (deniellebassels.com)

> Vibrant and fresh are two descriptors that are worn easily by delightful and innovative vocalist, tune-smith and arranger, Denielle Bassels. With the release of her second studio project, Bassels shines and establishes herself as one of the most intriguing jazz/pop singer/songwriters on the current scene. Harking to the swing era, and yet firmly contemporary, Bassels is joined here by talented musicians throughout, including her core band, bassist Russ Boswell, violin/viola player Drew Jurecka, vibraphonist/guitarist Thom McKay (who, along with Bassels, serves as co-producer here) and noted percussionist Chendy Leon, as well as guests.

The majority of tunes here were both composed and arranged by Bassels, and the uplifting opener (and title track) incorporates irresistible swing motifs with Bassels’ smoky, sultry, sonorous voice, accented by sweet background vocals. Another treat is Tangled Thread, the complex rhythmic and melodic vocal line reminiscent of the sassy Boswell sisters, replete with a fine acoustic guitar solo from Tak Arikushi. Another stunner is Lazy Gazing – a perfect marriage of melody, lyrics and arrangement. The bluesy Gone is a heart-rending and soulful romantic idyll rendered with intensity and heart, and the inclusion of McKay’s vibes on the Cinema Noir-ish Big Bad Wolf is genius.

The closer, I Wanna Be Like You, is consummately performed by Bassels, and with the clever addition of Jacob Gorzhaltian’s stirring clarinet work, the listener is magically transported to a lower east-side speak easy where they are regaled by a talented, luminous chanteuse!

**Lesley Mitchell-Clarke**

Weyn Allah

Al Qahwa

Independent (alqahwa.bandcamp.com/album/weyn-allah)

> Depending on who you talk to, the word multiculturalism is either meaningless, or a politically correct supercharged word, especially in a post-pandemic world where everyone becomes easily overheated about everything. If the media is to be believed even Canada has not been spared the blushes of intolerance, and there seems no reason to doubt this.

However, Canadian artists like the one-world-one-voiced Al Qahwa have always fought back against any form of divisiveness in the exquisite poetry of their music, sometimes with subtly crafted lyrics and at other times with more overt sounding words. The album Weyn Allah feels slightly different, not only because the title asks (and translates to) Where is God? But more than that there appears to be a more elemental, haunting cry that emanates from this music. The song of the same name hits the proverbial right spot in every way: poignant lyrics, elegant music and perfect execution.

Elsewhere, on Dunya Farewell chromatic notes sigh, but the harmonic cushioning rarely falls where you anticipate. Vocalist Maryam Tollar embodies this elegance in the plaintive evocations of her vocals sung with Jono Grant’s excellent performance on nylon-string guitar.

The lonesome wail of Ernie Tollar’s reeds and winds is breathtaking. Meanwhile, the delicately knitted single notes from Demetri Petsalakis’ oud, framed with the deep rumble of Waleed Abdulhamid’s bass and the resonant thunder of Naghmeh Faramand’s daff all make for a truly affecting experience.

**Raul da Gama**

Your Requests

Laila Biali

Imago EMG607 (lailabiali.com)

> Gifted pianist and vocalist Laila Biali has just released an all-star recording with an interesting twist; in addition to welcoming vocal luminaries Kurt Elling, Emilie-Claire Barlow and Caity Gyorgy, the repertoire is based on requests that she has received from audience members during her performances.

There are ten exquisite tracks here. Biali’s instrumental collaborators include clarinetist Anat Cohen, Grégoire Maret on harmonica, Michael Davidson on vibes, Kelly Jefferson on tenor/soprano sax, George Koller on bass, Ben Wittman (who also shares arranging and production credits with Biali) and Larnell Lewis on drums and Maninho Costa on percussion.

First up is the classic standard, Bye Bye Blackbird, arranged with a contemporary and rhythmic sensibility, replete with a dynamic sax solo from Jefferson. Directly following is a diaphanous take on Oscar Levant’s Blame it on My Youth. Biali’s voice is sultry and emotive here, perfectly interpreting the story of the poetic lyric. Also of note is Rogers and Hart’s immortal ballad My Funny Valentine, rendered here (with palpable musical chemistry) as a lovely duet between Biali and the inimitable Elling.

A true highlight is an inspired duet with Barlow on Rogers and Hammerstein’s My Favourite Things. Barlow and Biali harmonize effortlessly and easily manifest a joyous track. Additionally, Biali shines on both piano and voice on a sumptuous take on Autumn Leaves. Her interpretation of Johnny Mercer’s renowned lyric is perfection itself, enhanced by another dynamic soprano sax solo from Jefferson and sensitive and creative bass work from Koller.

**Lesley Mitchell-Clarke**

Nowhere Girl

Nicky Schrire

Anzic Records (nickyshrire.bandcamp.com/album/nowhere-girl)

> This is singer-songwriter Nicky Schrire’s first release in ten years and she’s come a long way since then, both geographically and musically.

Born in London, England, raised in South Africa and educated in New York, Schrire has made her home in Toronto for the last few years. Her previous jazz recordings had a healthy dose of covers from the Great American Songbook, with a smattering of originals, but Nowhere Girl’s 11 tracks are all (but one) written by Schrire.

Whether this is a jazz album is debatable, if you care about such things, but what’s not in doubt is the high quality of the songwriting, singing and playing. Supported by the Canadian jazz trio, Myriad (Ernesto Cervini, drums, Dan Fortin, bass and Chris Donnelly, piano) and local luminary saxophonist Tara Davidson, there’s plenty to satisfy jazz fans. Starting with the driving title track and finishing in a similar high energy style with My Love featuring Mozambican Julio Sigauque’s guitar work. In between is a collection of lifting, poetic songs delivered with Schrire’s pretty, unaffected voice that lends a somewhat Celtic feel to many of the tracks. Her travels inform a lot of this new album both literally, with songs like In Paris and This Train (about New York City), and also musically, as styles from various cultures subtly leave their marks.

**Cathy Riches**
Something in the Air

The Struggle for Democracy in Portugal and the Growth of Innovative Music

KEN WAXMAN

For Portugal, a country that was still struggling to solidify its democracy in the 1980s following nearly 50 years of outright dictatorship, one unexpected byproduct of that struggle has been a burgeoning free music scene. Resourceful, the scene nurtured by the struggle for the country’s expanding freedoms now includes internationally known veterans like violinist Carlos Zingaro, younger local experimenters and has started to attract improvisers from elsewhere.

One experienced player is Paris-born pocket trumpeter Sei Miguel, who has lived in Portugal since 1986 and has propagated local free music since then. Road Music (Clean Feed CF 621 CD cleanfeedrecords.com/album/road-music) features ten tracks by his Unit Core recorded between 2016 and 2021. Most position Miguel’s smeared brass timbres in microtonal cohabitation with plunger tones from Fala Mariam’s alto trombone and Bruno Silva’s guitar clips and twangs with Pedro Castello Lopes adding rhythms from percussion instruments. These understated pulses are particularly effective on Sentinela and Canção, with triangle clinks decorating broken octave and unison short brass bites. Not only do the woody clave smacks provide a distinctive backing when joined with guitar strums on unison short brass bites, trumpet squeaks and guitar twangs to feature lines and half-valve expressions. Still there are enough pivots throughout near stasis as dramatic bent notes and grit are favored over unbroken.

Otherwise, expositions are usually slow-moving and often descend into breathy sighs to a sequence of bugling triplets that torque the tune’s

#2 which provides a rare instance of the trumpet moving past his usual breathy sighs to a sequence of bugling triplets that torque the tune’s

songline to single guitar licks cushioned by voltage pulsations.

Although violinist Ernesto Rodrigues and guitarist Flak from Lopes’ tentet are also part of the Suspensão octet on Impromptu (Creative Sources CS 773 CD creativesourcesrec.com/ernesto_material/discocograhy/disc_773.html) the music is as hushed as Echosis is boisterous. A single, almost 35-minute improvisation, whose 15-word title is nearly longer than the music itself, confirms Portuguese improvisers’ versatility. With frequent silent intervals, the evolving track alternately connects and separates timbres that suddenly arise and

brutalovechamp
Brandon Seabrook
Pyroclastic Records PR27 (store.pyroclasticrecords.com)

Brandon Seabrook is known to be a composer who eschews both sonic norms and overheated emotion. But on brutalovechamp he seems to tear up that musical playbook, to turn his own insides out and even bare his soul. These are works, seemingly like musical shards of raw emotion. You don’t really need to unscramble the three-word mash-up of the title or reach the end of the booklet to discover that Seabrook was gutted by the loss of man’s best friend, his dog Champ.

Seabrook creates dizzying layering-on of tonal cadences, mixing guitar, mandolin and banjo, into the low instrumentation of bass recorder, alto, B-flat and contrabass clarinets and two contrabasses. Into this he has a cellist pour liquid notes, while the ensemble glimmers, redolent of a myriad of percussion instruments. This unusual collision of timbre creates a musical feast for the senses.

If Seabrook means for you to feel the evocations of his pain at losing his beloved dog, then this you certainly do up close and personal on brutalovechamp. This is all inward-looking music, raw in a Jean-Paul Sartre-esque, existential sort of way. And although Seabrook may be averse to labels, some works cannot escape sonic allusions to the symbolists like Arthur Rimbaud, in for instance, Gutbucket Asylum. But make no mistake, every piece of music on this recording bears the authentic imprint of Seabrook’s feral sound palette. Raul da Gama
What hasn’t stopped is the number of Portuguese players experimenting with musical forms and collaborating with international players. **MUEJL**’s *By Breakfast* (4Da Record CD 006 4darecord.bandcamp.com) for instance, while recorded in Lisbon, features local bassist João Madeira, also on *Impromptu*, Brazilian clarinetist Luiz Rocha, French tenor saxophonist Michel Stawicki, Turkish cellist Uygur Vural and Italian vocalist Elisabetta Lanfredini. With the nine tracks as consolidated as the band name made up of the members’ initials, the program displays the tension generated from string/reed equilibrium, while Lanfredini stretches her tessitura to approximate timbres from lyric soprano nonsense mumbles, alpine yodels and wispy basso breaths. Contrapuntal results are expressed at greatest lengths on Kia’s Vocal Calls as the singer’s melismatic switch from bel canto to basement mumbles stretches still further the exposition defined by heavily vibrated bass thumps and warm clarinet lines. With Lanfredini moving to replications of davening at one point and Aboriginal chants at another, integration is invoked when vibrated drones from voice and reed become indistinguishable. Overall the five constantly move from lightness to darkness as chalumeau register clarinet and timed sul tasto string strokes can vanish in a maze of verbal nonsense syllables or, despite cross talk, bel canto vocalizing can smack up against reed tongue slaps and a mournful cello line. Furthermore, as demonstrated on Ohai Forest Suite, vocal mewling doesn’t detract from reed multiphonics, but climaxes in harmonized breathy tones.

As Portuguese democracy continues to solidify, the hope – and expectation – is that creative music will evolve with it.

The same could be said for **The Wind Wends its way Round** (atrito-afeto 012 atrito-afeto.com) by Montreal pianist Karoline LeBlanc seconded on three of the six tracks by Portuguese drummer Paulo J Ferreira Lopes. A frequent musical visitor to Portugal, the pianist’s playing completely negates the Canadian cliché of deference and politeness. Pouring intensity into her improvisations, all tracks are taken at presto or prestissimo tempos and emphasis is almost always on the ringing bottom notes. Sympathetically adding press rolls and rolling patterns, Lopes mostlystands aside from the boiling cauldron of emphasized notes. Perfectly capable of slowing the tempo, as she does on *Porter ses pas*, and able to leapfrog into treble clef tinkles from darker interludes at will, LeBlanc takes these quick changes in almost literal stride. Tinkling tonal interludes usually occur at the same time as her other hand is crunching and clattering basement notes that resonate through the soundboard and piano’s wood. Always in control, her pumped-note profusion may resemble those of a player piano, but there’s cerebral planning attached. Splayed and sputtering piles of notes may issue from the piano on the title tune and concluding Round Talk yet these hard returns and dips into darker timbres are heard in symmetry with unexpected glissandi detours or slapping rebounds. When it appears, as on The Wind Wends its way Round, that this pressurized playing will never lose its ferocity, LeBlanc surprises by rebounding to a measured pace and sudden stops.

**Frédéric Lambert & Ali Kian Yazdanfar**

The works for viola and double bass in *Iridescence* let us see and hear from a different vantage point: two string instruments, often found in the shadows and yet filled with prismatic possibility and potential.
Old Wine, New Bottles
Fine Old Recordings Re-Released

BRUCE SURTEES

Born on August 28, 1894 in Graz, Austria Karl Böhm was one of the most outstanding conductors of the last century. He made his first foray into conducting in 1917 in his hometown before migrating to Munich in 1921 at the behest of Bruno Walter. In 1933 Böhm debuted at the Vienna State Opera and in the same year was appointed GM of the Dresden State Opera. Upon his death in 1981 he left many recordings with different orchestras in a wide repertoire and is best known for his Beethoven, Brahms, R. Strauss, Wagner and of course Mozart. Some Torontonians may remember him guest conducting here in the 1960s. I attended a very memorable rehearsal and concert at Massey Hall. He was a strict disciplinarian with a very fine ear.

SWR Classic has issued a six-disc CD set of live recordings from concerts with the Radio Symphony Orchestra Stuttgart. This orchestra, as many believe, is a superior ensemble and better than many European philharmonics. The first disc contains two works from a live concert on September 18, 1974, Mozart’s Symphony No.40 K550 followed by the Beethoven Piano Concerto No.4 with pianist Branka Musulin. This is the first performance and recording from the set and I found it movingly fresh and satisfying. It certainly gave me great expectations that were completely realized by the repertoire, performances and recordings that followed.

The set continues with Symphonies Nos.2 and 7 by Beethoven, recorded in concert in Stuttgart on February 14, 1979. Disc Three contains Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony recorded live in Stuttgart on November 12, 1959 with soloists of Ruth-Margent Pütz, Sibylla Plate, Walter Geisler and Karl-Christian Kohn, with the Sudfunkschor and Philharmonischer Chor Stuttgart. As I expected this is a dramatic and intense performance with no holding back in the many explosive tuttis that characterize this work. The choir and soloists complete a flawless cast.

Johannes Brahms waited many years to write his first symphony. People were waiting for him to write a “Beethoven Tenth Symphony” as he was thought to be the logical successor to Beethoven and able to compose a work of this calibre no matter what he would call it. Of course, he had no intention to put himself in that position. He started his first symphony at the age of 22 but didn’t finish it until 1876 at the age of 43. If you don’t know the work, just know it is pure Brahms.

Böhm understood that perfectly and his affectionate performance recorded in the studio reflects his deep admiration and understanding of the composer. Also on this disc is the well-known Schumann Piano Concerto Op.54, again with Musulin.

Disc Five opens with the beautiful Dvořák Symphony No.9 “From the New World.” A very animated approach to this popular work brings a more inspired performance than we are used to hearing. It is wonderful to hear the wind instruments in such balance with the orchestra. One can only imagine that this is what Dvořák intended. On the same disc is a vital performance of the Paul Hindemith Symphonic Metamorphosis of Themes by Carl Maria von Weber. This performance is unusually translucent. Disc Six contains one work, the Seventh Symphony by Anton Bruckner recorded live on September 18, 1974 in Stuttgart. Böhm certainly knew his way around Bruckner as this live performance confirms.

Karl Böhm The SWR Recordings
SWR 19123CD (naxos.com/CatalogueDetail/?id=SWR19123CD)

From Rhine Classics we have an impeccable transfer of the Jascha Heifetz legendary New York concert of 1947 on two CDs. The Korngold Violin Concerto in D Major Op.35 broadcast performance is presented with the radio announcer’s introduction. He gives a brief history of Heifetz’ connection to the work as well as letting us know that Korngold himself is in the audience.

After a little bit of tuning, we hear Heifetz and the New York Philharmonic conducted by Ephrem Kurtz. The recording is immaculate with neither click nor distortion belying its age. Clearly Heifetz is in position close to the microphone, as was his preference and the performance sounds authoritative. Also from the same March 1947 concert, we have the Mozart Violin Concerto No.5 in A Major K219, the “Turkish.”

On the second disc we hear the Beethoven Violin Concerto with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra under Paul Paray, this one from the United Nations General Assembly Hall in New York City on December 9, 1959. After the brilliant Carnegie Hall acoustics this performance sounds rather dry but all together certainly worth another hearing. The Brahms Double Concerto with Heifetz and Gregor Piatigorsky with an unnamed orchestra from December 15, 1966 is clearly an amateur recording from the stalls. This recording was made by one of the audience and wisely released for its historic value as this was the last time Piatigorsky and Heifetz were to play together. Finally, the Jules Conus Violin Concerto edited by Leopold Auer from Carnegie Hall with unnamed orchestra and anonymous conductor. All in all, a must-have disc for Heifetz fans, including me.

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English Decca has issued another collection from their vaults of unreleased masters of unique performances in their famous beautiful sound, the excellence of which may be well remembered from when they introduced Full Frequency Range Recordings. They were exceptional for their day and some of them are prized by collectors. One of these invaluable unreleased recordings is the three-CD set of the late soprano Jessye Norman. I’ve been looking forward to this since it was announced, and I’ve not been disappointed. Norman was well known in some circles as a “dramatic soprano” a title she resented as her range was far beyond that described in such a way. On the first disc we have excerpts from Tristan and Isolde recorded in Leipzig with the Gewandhausorchester conducted by Kurt Masur during March and April in 1948. In the cast are Norman and Thomas Moser, Hannah Schwartz (Brangäne) and Ian Bostridge (Seemann). There arearias and duets from each of the four acts. The performances are excellent as is the conducting under the sensitive direction of Masur. The Liebestod is heartbreaking.

In the second disc there is outstanding singing in both the Four Last Songs of Richard Strauss and Wagner’s Wesendoncklied. Performances are meaningful with sensitive support by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Eiji Oue. The sound is marvelous, as is the singing. The final disc contains two excerpts from the Mahler Eighth Symphony, again the sound is wonderful. From Rhine Classics we have an impeccable transfer of the Jascha Heifetz legendary New York concert of 1947 on two CDs. The Korngold Violin Concerto in D Major Op.35 broadcast performance is presented with the radio announcer’s introduction. He gives a brief history of Heifetz’ connection to the work as well as letting us know that Korngold himself is in the audience.

Philharmonic under James Levine.

The third disc brings us arias from the Joseph Haydn Scena di Berenice and arias from Berlioz’s Cléopâtre followed by Benjamin Britten’s Phaedra. Haydn’s Beatrice and Benedict is very attractive as conducted by Seiji Ozawa with the Boston Symphony.

This is a wonderful set that has given me great pleasure hour after hour. I must admit then that the Four Last Songs has regularly found its way to my player, although perhaps not quite as often as the third disc. But who’s checking?

Jessye Norman – The Unreleased Masters
Decca 4852984 (store.deccaclassics.com/*/CD/The-Unreleased-Masters/7MRD1YD8000).

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

Jessye Norman – The Unreleased Masters
Decca 4852984 (store.deccaclassics.com/*/CD/The-Unreleased-Masters/7MRD1YD8000).

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