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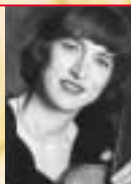
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Editorial

With this issue, *The Music Scene* begins its 3rd year dedicated to promoting the classical music and jazz communities as a non-profit charitable magazine and Web site. Our sister publication, *La Scena Musicale* is now in its 9th full year. The guiding philosophy behind these publications is our mission to ask and answer intriguing questions about classical music that resonate with our varied readership, from novice to expert, and musicians of all kinds. Our team of dedicated volunteers and staff is once again inspired to share with you, our readers, music's wonders.

In this issue, we answer questions about music education and what to look out for in the upcoming fall season. The problem of how to motivate music students is dealt with in two articles. An important aspect of this type of motivation is attendance of concerts at the professional level. Visit canada.scena.org for the Canadian Classical Music Calendar, the most comprehensive listing of music events in Canada.

Funding for *The Music Scene* and *La Scena Musicale* is derived predominantly through advertising sales revenues; our advertisers' ongoing support should be applauded. In addition, we are launching a subscription drive and our third annual fundraising campaign.

Have a joyful musical year!

Wah Keung Chan
Co-founding publisher/editor

Movers and Shakers

Tugan Sokhiev, appointed in 2001 as music director of the **Welsh National Opera (WNO)**, has terminated his contract. Carlo Rizzi, the WNO's former music director (1992-2001), returns to the post.

As part of its astonishing recent rejuvenation, the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra** has recently announced that 32 year-old French conductor Stéphane Denève will be its new principal conductor starting with the 2005-06 season. Denève will succeed Alexander Lazarev, making him one of the youngest directors in the orchestra's 113 year history.

In mid-August, conductor Nicholas McGegan announced that he will step down as music director of the Limerick-based **Irish Chamber Orchestra** following the 2004-05 season. The decision was the result of his increasing demand as an international guest conductor, which includes: New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, and St Paul Chamber Orchestra. McGegan is considered to be one of the world's leading authorities on baroque and classical music.

Angel Romero, brother of virtuoso Pepe Romero, has successfully made the leap from concert guitarist to music director and principal conductor of Tijuana's tumultuous **Baja California Orchestra**. Romero intends to increase the ensemble's size along with its budget, ultimately transforming it into a world-class

organization. He is already in the process of planning concerts for the chamber ensemble, which will make its New York debut in March at Manhattan's Lincoln Center.

After 20 seasons with the **Cleveland Orchestra**, Blossom festival director Jahja Ling will call it quits after the 2005 festival season. Ling has led the event through more than 400 concerts and says he will miss the listeners and people in the Blossom community dearly. Ling quoted a Chinese saying to reflect upon his decision to leave the festival: "There is no party without an end." The Cleveland Orchestra has decided it will not renew the position of Blossom festival director after Ling steps down.

In early August the **London Symphony Orchestra** announced the loss of its most forward-thinking leader. Clive Gillinson will be leaving his long-held position as managing director of the LSO to begin a tenure running New York's famed **Carnegie Hall**.

In July, **Vancouver Symphony Orchestra** music director Bramwell Tovey announced Newfoundland's Mark Fewer, one of Canada's most promising violinists, to be the new concertmaster and to act as Tovey's right-hand man effective September 2004. **MV**



Photo: Donald Lee

Jupiter String Quartet wins Banff International Competition

The Jupiter String Quartet (Nelson Lee and Meg Freivogel, violins, Liz Freivogel, viola and Dan McDonough, cello) of Boston, Mass. took first prize at the September 6 final.

St Lawrence String Quartet finds new cellist

Two years ago, Canada's foremost chamber ensemble was given the heartbreaking news that its long time cellist Marina Hoover was to leave the ensemble to live with her husband and son in Chicago. The task of finding a new cellist proved to be difficult for the quartet. They carefully selected 15 cellists to informally jam with them, thereby exploring the collective's interactive chemistry. One cellist immediately captured the imagination of the group, but although Italian cellist Alberto Parrini proved himself to be a fine performer, it soon became clear that the arrangement was not going to work out in the long term. The search continued until they found American cellist Chris Costanza, who, unlike Parrini, was a quartet veteran as well as a member of the Chicago String Quartet. Violinists Geoff Nuttall and Barry Schiffman, and violist Lesley Robertson, agreed that Chris was the most impressive cellist they

had ever played with. The quartet acknowledged. After a spectacular recent morning concert at the Spoleto Festival in South Carolina, quartet acknowledged that Costanza will be joining the St Lawrence Quartet as its new principal cellist. **MV**

CPO Posts Best Operating Surplus in over 10 years

After going into bankruptcy protection two years ago, the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra (CPO) has recently reported a positive operating surplus of \$135,000, putting both orchestra organizers and Calgarians at ease. The orchestra had to suspend operations in October 2002 for 45 days following its filing for court protection from its creditors before starting an aggressive \$1.5m fundraising campaign to help it stay afloat. Over the 2003-04 season, the orchestra managed a reasonable \$6.7m in expenses with a total revenue of \$6.8m, leaving room for the modest surplus. CPO president Mike Bregazzi credits the surplus to the implementation of a streamlined business model that focused on restructuring operations, hiring new management, cutting musicians' pay by 20 per cent, lucrative sponsoring contracts, and support from Calgarians via donations and ticket sales. Larry Fichtner, Chairman of the Calgary Philharmonic Society Board of Directors, was thrilled with the results and expressed a genuine optimism for the future of the city's only symphony orchestra. The 2004-05 season offers an exciting and unique program of music that will hopefully help put an end to the CPO's financial difficulties. Lori Crawford, Director of Marketing and Sales, assures sales will remain brisk and expects sold-out concerts for the season ahead. **MV**

Possible fraud prompts NJS to conduct internal review

The New Jersey Symphony is fearing the worst after having purchased a number of rare instruments from the notorious American Monmouth County philanthropist Herbert Axelrod in February of 2003. According to a published report, orchestra officials have officially launched an internal review of the \$17m deal with Axelrod, who has since been indicted on two counts of tax fraud and arrested in Germany after first fleeing to Cuba and then Switzerland. Several experts have determined that four violins and a cello were almost certainly not made by the craftsmen originally believed to have made them. The experts also assert that the prices of three violins by Antonio Stradivari were inflated by as much as half their actual value, and that a \$3.3m violin reputedly made by Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù was probably the work of his father and was worth less than \$1m. A US federal grand jury investigation is looking into this and another transaction in which Axelrod allegedly donated four instruments valued at \$50m to the Smithsonian Institute in 1997. The probe will focus on whether Axelrod inflated the instruments' value in both deals to pad his tax deductions. It is not known if Axelrod will return to New Jersey voluntarily to face the tax charges. **MV**

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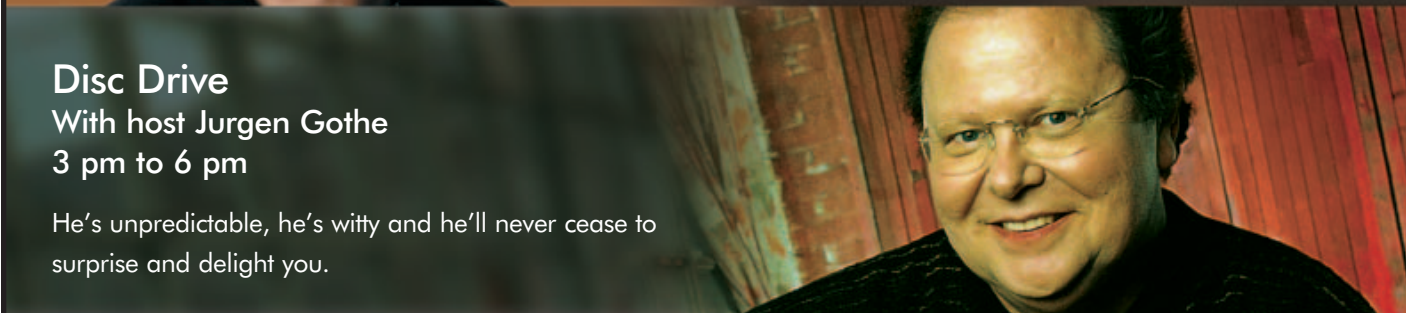


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Shopping for an Instrument

JEAN-SÉBASTIEN GASCON

FOR BEGINNING MUSIC STUDENTS, A GOOD WORKING INSTRUMENT IS IMPORTANT IN DEVELOPING THEIR LOVE OF MUSIC. The easier it is to play, the sooner the student's skills improve. The ideal study instrument must fulfill several tasks: it must suit the student's tastes, be easy to play, be in tune, and require minimal maintenance. Sometimes choosing the right instrument can be discouraging, and finding the right relationship with a music store can be crucial to the decision process.

The Ideal Vendor

A good music store must offer a wide selection of quality instruments as well as good advice and service before, during, and after the sale. Starting with recommendations from teachers, other students, and experienced professionals is a good plan.

Service

When shopping for an instrument, price is only one factor. A good shop will try to match students' levels and budgets with the right instrument and the appropriate purchase options (such as renting, rent-to-buy, and loans).

"My daughter's violin doesn't stay in tune and so part of the lesson is spent tuning the instrument. According to her teacher, it is difficult to play," complains Suzanne, mother of 10 year old violin beginner Valérie. According to violin expert Lili Saint-Michel, temperature changes can affect the tuning peg of a violin. "The store that sold the violin needs to just adjust the pegs so that they keep the tension well."

The above example illustrates the importance of having good post-purchase service. Stores that specialize in only one type of instrument (for example, only strings or brass) usually have a good repair department. Larger stores usually affiliate themselves with repair services that prepare, maintain, and repair their instruments.

As most instruments are made in Europe, Asia, and the USA, the process of transport may affect instruments. Most good shops have the instruments individually tested and adjusted before putting them on sale. Ask about how the instrument has been serviced before purchasing it.

Renting

For beginners with limited budgets, instrument rental is the ideal option to evaluate whether a particular instrument is suitable. Many stores offer the option of renting, renting to buy, or trading in to upgrade to a better model.

Resale / Upgrading

Ask each store about their policy of repurchase or upgrading. A good instrument that has been well maintained generally retains its original value. The store might offer you 50–100 per cent credit towards the purchase of another instrument.

Trial Period

Many retailers offer a seven-day trial period to assure customer satisfaction.

Financing

Some banks offer loans to finance instrument purchases, while certain stores offer in-store deferred payments.

Used

New instruments are usually covered by a one-year guarantee, but buying used instruments is another good option. However, even the best Stradivarius needs regular maintenance. Some stores offer reconditioned, used instruments with a guarantee. Buying a used instrument in a private sale may require some additional work. A good technician should be consulted to evaluate and recondition the instrument. For instance, repadding a saxophone could be pricy. ■

[Translated by Wah Keung Chan]

"Made in China" Instruments

FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS, AN INFLUX OF INSTRUMENTS MADE IN CHINA, PRICED AT ALMOST ONE THIRD THE COST OF OTHER INSTRUMENTS, HAS BEEN FLOODING THE MARKET TARGETING BEGINNERS AND FIRST-TIME BUYERS. Although these instruments are generally considered to be of inferior quality, some retailers have begun to endorse and sell them.

The music instrument market is now subject to the forces of globalization. As with most manufacturing, lower labour costs in China and Asia (sometimes 75 per cent less than in the West) are the main contributing factor for the difference in price. The USA has accused China of dumping, saying it exports more instruments there than the total number sold in America by all manufacturers. Evidently, this new economic reality has given consumers more product choices and more competitive pricing.

Constructing instruments, however, is not the same as manufacturing toys. The craft requires decades if not centuries to develop the necessary expertise. The usual Asian approach has been to study and copy the best instruments and to hire the best makers as consultants for the missing expertise. After initial failures, the results today are more convincing, although due to the high volume of production there are still variations from one copy to another.

This competition has forced the main instrument manufacturers (i.e., Yamaha, Steinway, etc.) to adapt and invest in Asia to develop their own "Chinese" line of instruments. To protect their reputation, they control the quality strictly.

"Our goal to make violins accessible has prompted us to develop a line of student models with a Taiwanese manufacturer who knows the violin," says Montreal violin maker Jules Saint-Michel. "Several years of cooperation was needed to develop good products that include a Brazilian bow and a good carrying case."

At wind instrument retailer Pascal Véraquin's, this is the first year Asian-made models are being sold. "Before, I would never sell these instruments, as the quality was not sufficient for my clientele," says Véraquin. "This year, I saw superb quality at NAMM, the Taiwan instrument maker show. We will however make sure that each model is adjusted and tested in our workshop before we put it on sale." ■

[Translated by Wah Keung Chan]



Jules Saint-Michel
Photo: Jean-Sébastien Gascon



Pascal Véraquin
Photo: Jean-Sébastien Gascon

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How Teachers Motivate

ERIC GINESTIER

RECENTLY, *TMS* INTERVIEWED SEVERAL RESPECTED MUSIC TEACHERS TO FIND OUT HOW THEY DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF MOTIVATING THEIR STUDENTS.

Gordon Clements, a classical and jazz clarinetist, saxophonist, and flutist, has been teaching music for the last 25 years in the Victoria area. He currently works for Brentwood College School as well as the Victoria Conservatory of Music.

Judy Loman, renowned harpist, teaches at the Royal Conservatory, University of Toronto, and Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. Her recent CD on Marquis Classics is called *Illuminations*.

Bella Pugachevsky, a Russian-trained classical pianist, has been teaching for 37 years. Her students mostly range from five years of age to the pre-university level. Ms Pugachevsky has been with the McGill Conservatory since 1983.

Renowned violinist Mayumi Seiler is founder of Via Salzburg chamber music series in Toronto. In addition to teaching at both the Royal Conservatory of Music and University of Toronto, she has two young children currently studying music themselves.

Frances Unsworth has been with the McGill Conservatory since 1986. She is now the string coordinator there. Originally, she learned the violin in Manchester, UK, later earning two degrees from McGill University.

TMS: How common is it for you to see a lack of motivation among your students?

BP: Any child willing to learn an instrument – any child – will get lazy at a certain point. It's against a child's nature to sit at a piano and practice.

TMS: What lies at the root of this problem?

MS: There is generally not enough focus in music education in elementary and high schools. Not enough good musicians come in and teach workshops, perform for schools. I believe that it is crucial for society now to focus more on music in education, where the seed can be nurtured once it has been introduced.

FU: The majority of kids love coming to their lessons, but they can't stand having to practice; it's like homework. For the younger children, it's a question of just being able to stand still and actually do something concentrated for 45 minutes, and with the older children, it's just one more thing in the list of commitments.

TMS: What sorts of techniques do you use to motivate students?

GC: Providing positive, immediate feedback on students' basic, musical skills is important; and also, finding exercises which provide the biggest bang for the buck. In my own playing, I discovered

that a lot of the traditional exercises I'd been given over the years didn't really accomplish as much as I needed them to accomplish. So I've looked over the years for exercises that would help students achieve a great deal in a short period of time.

BP: First of all, there must be a personal contact. You have to take time to talk to a student, to make him understand that he is special, and to make him comfortable, both mentally and physically.

If they are old enough – say nine or ten years old – I make it clear to them that music is a big commitment. Then a teacher has to be careful not to overload the student with work, to teach at the pace the student is comfortable with.

Also, one has to remember to keep things interesting. This means that I try to have a lot of variety in lessons, especially with younger students: five minutes of movement, five minutes of listening, five minutes of musical games.

FU: The approach is much harder with teenagers because they have a lot of changes in their academic life, and very often the music suffers. At that point you're either motivating with exams, or festivals, or concerts; you're also setting personal goals. Very often they'll want to play some popular music, and so then it becomes – I don't like to use the word – a sort of bargaining: we'll do some of your stuff, then we'll do some of my stuff. Also, what becomes very important especially as they get older is to ensure there is some sort of social aspect to their playing. When they begin playing with other children, they start to motivate one another.

MS: Let them go to live performances, let them hear good music, let them play with other musicians, preferably at a higher level. I try and convey the energy it gives me, the fulfillment they could get out of it if they were to devote themselves more.

JL: I encourage my students to listen to as many great performers of all instruments as they have the time for, not particularly for motivation but to develop musicianship.

TMS: What kind of role should parents play in the whole process?

FU: With the younger children you have to explore the same sort of things that you require in order for them to do homework or the dishes, whether it's stickers on the fridge or some kind of calendar system, a reward for a week or a month that has been completed properly.

As for the older children, I suppose my biggest advice would be for parents to know just how difficult it can be. It's as big as homework, and it becomes a family commitment, because it's one more thing for mom or dad to bug them about – and you will have to bug them, even with the most

motivated child.

BP: I'll tell you about my mother. She never played an instrument, but when I started I was about six and a half, and my mom was following the lessons with me for about the first two years. After that, she could not really follow any more, but she was present; she would practice with me.

JL: Parents should take part in the practice sessions each day while the students are young, (this means coming to lessons and making an effort to understand what the teacher wants,) and try to impress on the student the rewards of doing something to the very best of their ability.

TMS: What kind of role should the child play in his/her motivation?

GC: In any community, you'll find whole groups of music teachers who have different approaches, different personalities, different attitudes, and I think it's important that the student find the right one. If at some point you feel that he isn't pointing you in the right direction, you should either ask him for different advice or look for another teacher.

FU: For the elementary school level, I don't think they should have very much responsibility; I think it lies on the teacher and it lies on the parent. As they become teenagers, more of the responsibility should belong to the students. They should be wanting to come to the lesson and do their best, and if they can't, they should be embarrassed about it. That in itself, at that age, can become enough of a motivator.

TMS: How much of a factor was a lack of motivation in your own experience of learning to play an instrument, and what helped you stay interested?

GC: When I got to high school, I had been playing for a while, and a friend of mine also had been playing for a while on clarinet. I wanted to get as good as he was, and he wanted to make sure he stayed better than me, so we played off of each other through high school, the best of friends. With me it was a little weird in that I didn't get private lessons regularly until after I finished high school, but I played in a lot of groups. So obviously for me, as a youngster, that group experience was a big deal. That's where most, if not all of my gratification came from; that, and the progress I made on the instrument.

FU: I used to find any way possible not to practice, right down to things like tape-recording myself playing and playing it back later so that my parents would think I was doing it. What worked for me to keep me interested, though, was that as

continued next page→

Keeping the Music Student Motivated

NOÉMIE L. ROBIDAS

Education

Musician's Corner

ACCORDING TO A STUDY DONE IN FRANCE IN 1995, ONLY ONE PER CENT OF VIOLINISTS WITH APPROXIMATELY 10 YEARS OF TRAINING WILL EVENTUALLY MAKE A CAREER OF IT. Perhaps this statistic is not all that surprising, considering the relatively few opportunities available in the professional sphere. But what is more worrisome is that less than four per cent of this group will play the violin as amateurs, while 95 per cent will never pick up the instrument again. Other studies suggest that a small proportion of children who take up the violin endure more than three or four years of lessons.

Studies done in Great Britain show that a substantial number of young music students quit within the first 18 months, and 40 per cent of those who do continue abandon the endeavour at age 11 or 12 – the transitional age where children move from elementary to secondary school. Among certain US schools with state-run music programs, statistics, though a few years older, reveal even worse trends: 70 per cent of stringed-instrument students quit playing, with the violin taking the prize as least popular instrument as 75 per cent of its adherents give it up.

In Canada, the problem is harder to grasp because there are fewer subsidized music education programs in public schools. Most musical instruction occurs in private schools, which receive no subsidies from government sources, and from which it is difficult to amass statistical information of this kind. However, despite the absence of hard numbers in this country, the testimony of many of its experienced music educators suggests that the data from the aforementioned studies could well apply here, too.

Training to be a musician can be considered a costly, time-consuming, and rigorous activity. For example, some of the best violinists will have accumulated more than 10,000 hours of personal practice time before reaching the age of 21, and it usually takes more than 10 years of practice and preparation to be able to perform at an international level. Faced with such high numbers of drop-outs among music students, then, such an investment may seem to some hard to justify. For this reason, it is important for teachers, parents, and pupils to understand what factors influence whether or not a student continues to play an instrument.

What conditions might lead students to remain interested in music? First and foremost, a desire to play an instrument is a must, along with a positive attitude to the repertoire, instructor, concert performance, and independent practice. Students must equally have a positive image of their classmates as well as the ability to assess the rate of

their own progress. Along the way, aspirants will have to develop an intrinsic sense of motivation in order to persist. The key to this is setting short-, mid-, and long-term goals.

Meanwhile, instructors must adapt to the varying ages and levels of their students. Younger beginners will work better with teachers who are warm and affable, while adolescents will be inspired by skill and experience. In both cases, instructors must be, of course, competent, and should take great interest in the pupil's progress throughout their relationship. The goal is to enable the child to improve and become more autonomous. Ideally, lessons should be one-on-one, complemented by courses given in groups. Teachers must frequently organize concerts and diverse activities whose purpose is to solidify, apply, and improve on what the student has learned. Students should be encouraged to enter competitions and master classes, according to their level and personality. Finally, teachers must actively participate in the grand enterprise of the "musical enculturation" of the student by revealing and exalting the various elements of the musical universe and the instrument in question (i.e., repertoire, interpretation, music history, etc.).

Music must be a positive and present element in the child's life (music at home, family concerts, attending professional concerts, etc.). Having opportunity to experience intensely positive emotional reactions to music from an early age is important. Strong parental support will foster a child's tendency to persist in music, while the absence of parents' constructive participation in the process will prevent the student from attaining higher levels. Such participation will evidently depend on factors such as the age and personality of the child, the requirements of the instructor, and the amount of available time one has. The role of the parent is to supply the necessary elements for practice (instrument, scores, music stand, etc.), encourage the child to practice, take notes during lessons, and supervise practice.

Practice should be done regularly and efficiently, paying special attention to structure and conscious repetition, and should take place in a positive and comfortable setting. As the child's age and level increases, practice should increase in difficulty and intensity so as to remain challenging. A higher level cannot be reached without spending thousands of assiduous hours practicing over the course of several years. ■

[Translated by Eric Ginestier]



Piano Suzuki:
Eugenia Kirjner and Kaelan Felcarek-Hope,
of the McGill Conservatory of Music
Photo: mPaeum inc.



Flûtes Suzuki: McGill Conservatory students and
Claire Marchand
Photo: mPaeum inc.

→continued from previous page

I got older, I would hear of an orchestra going on tour. I remember the first time, I was about 11, and I was told that the senior orchestra was going on tour all through the south of France – well, there was no way I was not going to do that.

BP: In the beginning, I was very unhappy. But when I entered high school, I was very lucky to have a won-

derful teacher. She was young, maybe 24, in the last year at the conservatory. She was a good pianist, bright, young, and full of life. And all of a sudden, I just woke up. I made huge progress in my playing because I was so motivated by her example, and because we had so much fun. It was because of her that I decided to become a musician. ■

McGill University Celebrates 100 Years of Music

MARIELLE LEROUX

CONSIDERED ONE OF CANADA'S FINEST UNIVERSITIES, MCGILL ENJOYS A DISTINGUISHED INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION. A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE FAME OF THIS GREAT INSTITUTION IS ITS MUSIC FACULTY, KNOWN FOR THE EXCELLENCE OF ITS TEACHING AND RESEARCH PROGRAMS AS WELL AS ITS CONCERTS AND VARIOUS MUSICAL ENSEMBLES.

McGill's origins date back to 1813, when the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning received a legacy from fur trader and philanthropist James McGill. This consisted of £10,000 and about 46 acres of land. In 1821 King George IV signed the royal charter creating the University of McGill College, which in 1885 became McGill University. In 1829 the Faculty of Medicine began giving courses, followed by the Faculty of Arts, which opened in 1843.

Music made its appearance at McGill with courses offered for young ladies only, beginning in 1884. In 1896 the university's chancellor, Lord Strathcona (the Canadian railway baron Donald A Smith) founded Royal Victoria College for young ladies and invited pianist Clara Lichtenstein to come from Europe and take charge of musical education.

In 1904 the McGill Conservatorium of Music was established, thanks to the efforts of Clara Lichtenstein, Lord Strathcona, and Principal William Peterson (this body would give birth to the Faculty of Music in 1920). Courses at the conservatory began on September 21 with a student body of 426 and a teaching staff of 23. Pianist Ellen Ballon and violonist Albert Chamberland gave a recital for the official inauguration on October 14, attended by Canada's governor general, Lord Minto. Charles Albert Edwin Harriss became the conservatory's first director, with Clara Lichtenstein as associate director, a position she held until 1929.

In 1908 the university's board of governors created a chair of music on Harriss's recommendation. Its occupant would be given professorial status. This led to the hiring of Harry Crane Perrin, organist of Britain's Canterbury Cathedral, first as professor of music and later as Harriss's successor. The creation of the music faculty was made possible in 1920 thanks to a generous gift by tobacco millionaire Sir William MacDonald. Perrin became the faculty's first dean. His achievements over his 21-year career at McGill included the formation of the first university symphony orchestra.

Perrin was succeeded as dean by Douglas Clarke, who remained in office from 1930 to 1955. During his time gifts from the public increased significantly. A series of concerts welcomed such internationally acclaimed musicians as Gustav Holst, Georges Enesco, Sergei Prokofiev, Jan Paderewski, and

Leopold Stokowski. Clarke also made his mark on Canadian music history as one of the founders of the Montreal Orchestra, which he conducted without pay for 11 years.

Notable personalities followed Clarke as dean: Marvin Duchow, for whom the present music library is named, occupied the post from 1955-1957 (as interim dean) and from 1957-1963, followed by Helmut Blume (1963-1976), Paul Pedersen (1976-1980), John Rea (1986-1991), John Grew (1991-1999), Richard Lawton (1996-2001), and Don McLellan (2001-).

In 1966, the McGill Conservatorium of Music became the McGill Preparatory School of Music, and in 1971 both it and the music faculty took over a wing of Royal Victoria College, which was renamed the Strathcona Music Building. Both institutions remained under the direction of the dean until 1977 when the school became the McGill Conservatory of Music with Oleg Telizyn (1978-1980) as first director. Telizyn was followed by Kenneth Woodman (1980-1987), Peter Freeman (1987-1991), Michael Isard (1991-1994), Carl Urquhart (1994-2001), Peter Freeman (2001-2002), and Dean Jobin-Bevan (2002-).

Both the conservatory and the Faculty of Music have been at the forefront of musical development in Canada since their inception, thanks to dynamic leadership, talented teachers, enthusiastic students, and sound teaching programs. Today's Faculty of Music numbers 55 full-time professors and 90 part-time teachers, with an annual student body of 700 from all parts of the world. Teachers and students present nearly 450 concerts and musical events each year, mainly in Pollack Hall, Redpath Hall, or the Clara Lichtenstein recital room in the Strathcona Building. The faculty is also a first-rate research centre for musical technology, composition theory, musicology, and musical education, in addition to being active in both the Montreal and international music scenes.

In order to stay at the forefront, McGill's music faculty is currently building a new wing that will include a recital hall, new rehearsal rooms, plus a world-class facility for research and production in connection with its interdisciplinary research centre for music, media, and technology. The Marvin Duchow music library will also be rehoused in the new wing. Progress on the new facility can be followed on the Web at www.mcgill.ca/music, where information on programs, admission, and the many events that will be celebrating 100 years of music at McGill are listed.

[Translated by Jane Brierley]



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A full-page photograph of Deborah Voigt, a woman with blonde hair, smiling and gesturing with her hands. She is wearing a bright orange, high-collared jacket. The background is dark. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

Deborah Voigt

Makes Vancouver Opera Debut

WAH KEUNG CHAN



WHEN VANCOUVER OPERA OPENS ITS 2004-05 SEASON THIS OCTOBER WITH RICHARD STRAUSS'S *DER ROSENKAVALIER*, IT REPRESENTS THE CULMINATION OF A COUP FOR THE CANADIAN COMPANY. DEBORAH VOIGT, ONE OF THE WORLD'S LEADING DRAMATIC SOPRANOS, WILL BE SINGING THE ROLE OF THE MARSCALLIN, ONE OF THE MOST COVETED AND DEMANDING ROLES IN OPERA. JAMES W. WRIGHT, VANCOUVER OPERA'S GENERAL DIRECTOR, REMARKED, "DEBORAH VOIGT IS, QUITE SIMPLY, A SUPERB SINGER AND A GREAT ARTIST, AND WE ARE GRATIFIED THAT SHE CHOSE TO MAKE HER DÉBUT IN THIS ROLE HERE."

The up coming October performances represent a first run for Voigt who will face the world press when she sings the role in Vienna next May. "When Vienna Opera offered me the role, I didn't want to sing it there for the first time, and so we approached several opera companies," explains Voigt. "Vancouver Opera was willing to do this for me, and the timing was perfect for both of us."

"I find the Marschallin interesting and flirtatious," Voigt told TMS in September as she was about to finish memorizing the part. "The challenge is not to play her too heavy. While she has feelings for this young man, she knows he is not the last young man to come through her life, and it is important to keep that perspective. Vocally, there is a lot of quick text, but having got through Isolde, I think she'll be just fine."

The role of Isolde in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* is considered the pinnacle for a dramatic soprano, and there is only a handful of singers at any one time who can do it jus-

tice. When Voigt added the demanding role of Isolde to her repertoire in 2003 at Vienna Opera, she confirmed her status as one of today's top German singers. Her repertoire, however, goes beyond the Wagnerian (Senta, Elsa, Sieglinde, Elisabeth) and Straussian roles (Chrsythemis in *Elektra*, Ariadne, Empress in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*), and includes healthy doses of Verdi (Lady Macbeth, Amelia, Aida, Leonora in *La Forza del destino*). Furthermore, Voigt is one of the few classical musicians having a recording contract; her latest album on EMI, *Obsessions*, of Wagnerian and Straussian arias was released last April. Given her chosen career and rising success, it is ironic that Voigt didn't see an opera until she was in college.

"My mother sang and encouraged that in me. I was interested in theatre at a young age and I took part in a lot of musicals and plays in schools. My most famous role would have been Agnes Gooch in *Mame*. As a very young person, I recognized that I could communicate with an audience. It happened to be in gospel music as I was active in a church. Many American singers have a church background and come from the Midwest of the United States. It was our first exposure to music," relates Voigt.

Studying piano was important in Voigt's early music training. Although she is quite modest about her piano skills ("I'm no Lang Lang"), New York critics were amazed last year when Voigt accompanied herself for an encore. "I started playing piano at seven or eight and continued for five years. I just began to sing a lot and play the piano for the

school choir and my interest shifted. I was in the middle of memorizing the Beethoven Sonata for a competition and I just could not get it memorized. That was the sign to move on and focus on voice."

"I stayed involved in choral music, and when I reached high school, I decided I should take voice lessons. Jane Paul, the wife of my choral conductor was an opera singer and I started taking lessons with her. This was in Southern California so I could easily have taken lessons from a pop singer. She started me on a classical vocal format of singing. My first aria was Cherrobino's aria from *Figaro*. I always had good high notes, I was lucky to have that upper extension on my voice," she recounts.

Voigt attended the University of California, Fullerton. Upon graduation, she was accepted into the San Francisco Opera's Merola Program for young singers where she appeared in small supporting roles. Victories at the Luciano Pavarotti Voice Competition, the Gold Medal in the 1990 Tchaikovsky International Competition and the 1992 Richard Tucker Award helped pave the way to her current star status.

Initially, Voigt studied with Paul for 15 years and for the last 18 years with Ruth Falcon. When Voigt arrived in Montreal in 1993 for Montreal Symphony Orchestra maestro Charles Dutoit's performances and Grammy Award-recording of Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, she already showed off a sumptuous soprano with floaty high notes. Since then, her recordings demonstrate more strength and vibrancy. How has her voice developed over the years? "It has grown and matured, a

L'affair Voigt

WITH THE RELEASE OF A NEW WIDELY ACCLAIMED CD ON EMI, *OBSESSIONS*, A CARNEGIE HALL RECITAL DEBUT ON APRIL 7TH AND A WORLD PREMIERE OF A WORK COMMISSIONED FOR HER, 2004 WOULD BE CONSIDERED MEMORABLE FOR ANY SINGER. In March, however, Voigt's name jumped from the arts pages to the six o'clock news when *The Daily Telegraph* ran the headline "Royal Opera sacks diva who was 'too fat for dress'." The interview mentioned that Voigt had been fired from a summer 2004 production of *Ariadne auf Naxos* because the administration felt that she wouldn't fit into the staging and design concept wearing a black evening gown. Actually, Voigt had spoken out about the situation the year before in a web interview published on Andante.com. As she said on NPR last April, "I was in London for a concert and was asked why I wasn't singing there this summer. I had only thirty seconds to decide whether or not to tell the truth. What was most upsetting was that they chose not to engage me for something else."

The world press, especially headline editors, had a field day over Voigt's story. "It's not over till the skinny lady sings," "Opera downsizes a diva," "It's over before 'fat' lady sings," The entire controversy re-ignited the classic opera debate — voice versus looks. Over the course of the Twentieth Century, the pendulum of power in opera swung from singers like Caruso to conductors like Karajan, and in the last thirty years, to stage directors. The issue of casting based on looks and image seems to be more common in regional houses seeking to attract newer audiences. "If we are going to serve opera and be true to the form then we should make voice the priority," said Voigt. "Where do you draw the line? If you say she is too big, then is the next one going to be too short or eyes not the right colour? Every opera house is entitled to make the decisions they make. That's the world we live in."

Fans were outraged and shocked by the Royal Opera's decision about Voigt who is one of the top-3 sopranos of her genre in the

world, particularly since Ariadne has been Voigt's signature role since her debut as Ariadne in 1991 at Boston Opera. The role was instrumental in launching her career. At the height of the controversy, Royal Opera made lame excuses before trying to silence critics by offering to hire Voigt for a future engagement. The actual production played to lukewarm reviews for the vocal performance of the slimmer replacement soprano. Some questioned why the black dress could not have been re-fitted for Voigt.

The issue of weight has haunted Voigt ever since the late maestro George Solti put his hand on her shoulder during an audition to indelicately ask, "Why are you so fat?" Voigt notes that she has considered everything possible to lose weight, including therapy.

Over the last few years, Voigt's weight has fluctuated and according to some, this has affected her voice. Reviews of Voigt's performances as a more svelte diva received mixed reviews. "Every one feels peer pressure to look more aesthetically pleasing by whatever today's standards might be. When I've managed to drop weight in my life, it's just because I've wanted to feel better. It was at a time when I could do it. The lifestyle of an opera singer doesn't make life easier. I spend 10 months of the year on the road. It's trying to set up a normal schedule where one is in familiar surroundings, and can rely on getting same foodstuffs, and can go to the same gym, getting the same trainer and getting into a routine. I find that is the hardest thing for me. You change locales every week, every six weeks, you feel like you have to start all over again. So it's hard to get into a pattern that always works.

"Eating disorders are addictions like alcoholism. Sometimes we have better control over them. The difference between a food addict and an alcoholic is that you have to eat to live. It's very difficult to live within certain boundaries when this is an area that is a problem."

- Wah Keung Chan

bit darker, the timbre is the same. There was a time when my middle and low voice was not developing as quickly or as fully. At that time I started studying with a baritone and we mixed head and chest voice so that it would not feel so precarious for me. It really helped get through that time."

Recently, Voigt started begun teaching, giving a masterclass through the Marilyn



Horne Foundation. Her advice for young singers is: "Be as prepared as possible. Having a career is luck that you cannot predict. If it should happen to fall on your lap, you better have the tools to grab it. There is a quality in certain entertainers that is innate or God-given that cannot be taught, whether it is charisma. I had that ability to communicate with people — that I was fortunate to be born with. It's hard to identify in oneself."

A naturally warm and vivacious person during interviews, Voigt is not immune to nerves. "Sure I have stage fright, but it's not incapacitating. Nerves are a natural byproduct, and I'm pretty nervous before every performance. The only way to get around it is to know what I'm doing and what to expect," she admits.

On the personal side, Voigt recently divorced and continues to be based in Jupiter, Florida. She lives in a house facing the Atlantic Ocean. "Given the amount of time I'm away, when I'm home, I consider myself on vacation," she says. "I'm a water freak. I love to be near water. I fell in love with the Vancouver area during my 24-hour visit there. I'm looking forward to discovering the area along with the new part I'm singing."

Vancouver Opera's first-ever production of *Der Rosenkavalier* (October 16, 19, 21, 23) features Deborah Voigt, Beth Clayton, Tracy Dahl, John Cheek and John Fanning, with staging by David Gately. Tel: 604-280-3311 www.vancouveropera.ca

EVERGREEN FOU T'SONG MAKING SWEET MUSIC AT SEVENTY

JOSEPH SO


In a world full of musical meteors that shine brightly and then just as quickly vanish without a trace, the career of Chinese pianist **Fou T'song** is remarkable for its longevity. Widely recognized as the first Chinese musician to have established an international career, Fou predates the current crop of *wunderkinder* like Lang Lang and Yundi Li by nearly half a century. Since his professional debut in 1951 in Shanghai playing Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto*, Fou has established himself as a distinguished interpreter of the great masters, playing to critical acclaim in all the major venues. Called the greatest Chinese musician alive by Time magazine and hailed by German literary giant Hermann Hesse as the only true performer of Chopin, Fou T'song is now in his fifty-third season in front of the public. This year also marks his seventieth birthday – a momentous occasion in Chinese culture. Toronto music lovers will have the good fortune of hearing Fou on October 15th, in a recital sponsored by the Lunar Festivals of the Arts in association with CICS, organizations well known in the local Chinese community.




Born in pre-WWII Shanghai to a family of intellectuals, Fou T'song's father Fou Lei was a respected scholar and philosopher who translated the great French classics to Chinese (a collection of letters from father to son, published in the 70's, gives the reader valuable insight into the worldview of the elder Fou and his relationship with his pianist son). A student of Italian pianist Mario Paci, success came early to the youngster when at the age of 19 he won Third Prize at the Bucharest Piano Competition. Another Third Prize and a special Mazurka Prize followed in the 1955 international Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw, which put him on the pianistic map. He continued his study with Zibgniew Drzewiecki at the Warsaw Conservatory and performed widely, playing more than 200 concerts throughout the former Soviet East Bloc countries. His 1957 defection, while on tour in London, made international headlines. Given the political climate in Maoist China at the time, Fou was declared a non-person and his parents branded bourgeois capitalists; repeated torments by the Red Guards led to their eventual double-suicide at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. It was only in 1979 that Fou T'song set foot in China again, to attend a memorial service for his father. The following year he realized his dream of performing in China, and has since been invited back on many occasions to play, lecture, and give masterclasses.


This writer recalls the first recital appearance by Fou T'song after his defection, in the 1964-65 season in the then-British colony of Hong Kong, under the tightest possible security. The excitement generated both onstage and off remains one of the most memorable events in forty years of concert-going. As luck would have it, a few months later I encountered Fou T'song again, this time in a recital at an out-of-the-way venue, in a college campus in Oregon where I was studying at the time. So I can honestly say he had a great influence on my musical development. It is remarkable that Fou T'song's career was built without the backing of a large record label or publicity machine, at a time when non-whites on the concert stage in the West were considered a curiosity.

For his Toronto concert, Fou T'song has chosen a program of Haydn *Sonatas in G Major* and *F Major*, Schubert's *Sonata in C Major D840*, Chopin's *Three Mazurkas Op. 50* and *Sonata in B flat minor*, and *Four Poems* by Chinese composer Soong Fu Yuan. The concert takes place at the Toronto Centre for the Arts on October 15 at 8:00 pm. Tickets are available at the box office at 5040 Yonge Street, North York, or by Ticketmaster (416-870-8000).

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STEVEN ISSERLIS, cello
STEPHEN HOUGH, piano

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Reviews

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★★★★★ a must!
 ★★★★★ excellent
 ★★★★☆ very good
 ★★★☆☆ good
 ★★☆☆☆ so-so
 ★☆☆☆☆ mediocre

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Reviewers

JKS Joseph K. So
 WSH W.S. Habington

VOCAL

Mozart: *Le Nozze di Figaro*

Véronique Gens, Patrizia Ciofi, Angelika Kirchschlager, Lorenzo Regazzo, Simon Keenlyside
 Concerto Köln, René Jacobs, conductor
 Harmonia Mundi HMC 801818.20 (3 SACDs; 2 hr 52 m)
 ★★★★★

In the crowded field of *Nozze* recordings, this is one of the most intriguing and arguably one of the best. Under the baton of early music specialist René Jacobs, this *Nozze* is fresh, vibrant, and very much alive. The period instruments, emphasizing the woodwinds, give it a different sound. The tempo is fast, with a breakneck Susanna-Cherubino *duettino*, and the ensemble work is wonderfully detailed and absolutely first rate. There are plenty of additional ornamentations in the arias, which may not be to everyone's taste. The same can be said for the idiosyncratic *continuo* playing. The cast excels not so much as individuals but as an ensemble, down to the smallest role. Patrizia Ciofi is a bewitching Susanna, though sometimes her soprano sounds veiled. Angelika Kirchschlager's high mezzo is ideal as Cherubino. The silvery voiced Veronique Gens (Contessa) sings with lovely legato, though lacking a high pianissimo, and flat in the high A in "Dove sono." All the traditional cuts are restored; Marie McLaughlin's "Il capro e la capretta" turns the *comprimaria* Marcellina into a starring role. The full-



voiced Barbarina of Nuria Rial has the makings of a future Susanna. Of the men, Lorenzo Ragazzo is a dramatically vivid Figaro. Simon Keenlyside (Conte) sings with gorgeous tone and is full of macho swagger. The smaller male roles are double-cast, with Kobie van Rensburg as an amusing Don Curzio complete with stammer. The recorded sound in SACD is fabulous, even in regular stereo. The beautiful packaging has a 300-page booklet with substantial essays and full-colour photos from the recording sessions. **JKS**

Johann Sebastian Bach: *St. Matthew Passion*

Irmgard Seefried, Anny Felbermayer, Gisela Rathauscher, Rosl Sterba, sopranos, Kathleen Ferrier, Magdalena Stowasser, contraltos, Walter Ludwig, Fritz Uhl, tenors, Otto Edelmann, Paul Schöffler, Walter Berry, bass-baritones, Erich Kaufmann, bass, Harald Pröglhöf, Otto Wiener, baritones, Anton Heiller, positive organ, Alois Forrer, organ, Wiener Symphoniker, Singverein der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Wiener Sängerknaben, Herbert von Karajan, conductor

Andante BK-A-1170 (210 min 04 s, 3 CDs)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

Ask any period instrument enthusiast about Herbert von Karajan's Baroque indulgences and they will probably assure you that he served up the music with a thick coating of Romantic lard. This set, recorded at the 1950 Vienna Bachfest, absolutely contradicts that viewpoint. In fact, Karajan beat the historically-informed crowd at their own game, and this was two decades before the period instrument brigade effectively took the field. He insisted on presenting the Great Passion uncut with austere orchestral forces. The figure of 60 choir rehearsals has been mentioned in connection with this performance. The result is a valid account of a great work and a profoundly moving listening experience. The performance was extracted from a duplicate broadcast tape and the remastering is nothing short of miraculous.

"All these Viennese singers work themselves to a standstill," Kathleen Ferrier wrote to a friend during the rehearsals. "I just dawdle by comparison." Some dawdle; from her first aria, "*Buß und Reu*" (guilt and grief), Ferrier is at her ethereal best. The recitative technique of Walter Ludwig (Evangelist) and Paul Schöffler (Jesus) is superbly forthright and musical. Even the minor parts in this performance are taken by singers of standing in the opera house. But perhaps the real secret of Karajan's success is that he conducts the *St. Matthew Passion* as a work of music drama. The booklet format and notes are up to Andante's customary exquisite standard except that Picander's libretto is only translated into English. **WSH**



Grieg and Sibelius Songs

Karita Mattila, soprano
 City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Sakari

Oramo, conductor

Warner Classics 8573 80243-2 (58 m 22 s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

Considered one of a handful of top sopranos today, Karita Mattila is a combination of luminous vocalism, strong musicianship and alluring stage presence. She excels in Wagner and Strauss; her *Salome* at the Met last spring was arguably the hottest ticket in town. Mattila has also made a specialty of interpreting songs by Scandinavian composers. Her coolly shimmering timbre—pure, ethereal, and tinged with a touch of melancholy—is made to sing this repertoire. However lovely the Sibelius songs are on this CD (her version of *Luonnotar* is now the definitive one and *Sancta Maria* is wonderfully dramatic), I find myself turning to the Grieg pieces again and again. This composer's way with harmony and melody is pure magic. Outstanding are the two Solveig songs and *Varen*; one dares say Grieg captures the soul of Scandinavia. The soprano is given marvelous support by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Sakari Oramo. If one were to quibble, there is perhaps a lack of variety in the selections with little change in mood. But this is more a comment on the limitations of the stylistic palette than on any deficiencies of the soprano. Highly recommended. **JKS**

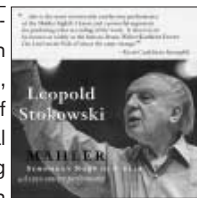


Gustav Mahler: *Symphony No 8*

Frances Yeend, Camilla Williams, Uta Graf, sopranos, Martha Lipton, Louise Bernhardt, contraltos, Eugene Conley, tenor, George London, bass, Carlos Alexander, baritone, the Westminster Choir, Schola Cantorum, Boys' Choir of PS 12, Leopold Stokowski, conductor
 Music & Arts Mono CD-1130 (77 min 54 s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

Mahler's colossal 8th symphony was first performed in Munich on September 12, 1910. The audience of 3,000 included the musical elite of Europe and the young Leopold Stokowski. When he conducted the North American premiere of the work in 1916, Stokowski assembled 1,068 musicians and singers on a specially constructed stage in the Philadelphia concert hall. It is his direct association with the music's origins that will make this disc irresistible to Mahlerians. It was originally issued by Music and Arts as part of a boxed set in 1988. The same astonishing 1950 live performance was selected by the NYPO for their *Mahler Broadcasts* CD collection and it has more recently been issued by the German label Archipel. The Music and Arts version is preferable for its warmer sound quality that especially favours the solo voices. The only serious disadvantage is that M&A provides only two cue points on the disc (Archipel offers 15). Recommended, regardless. **WSH**



Orchestral

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Dances and Marches

Ballet Music Les Petits Riens K.299b, Three German Dances K.605, Five Contredanses K.609, Das Donnerwetter K.534, Three Marches K.408, Four Minuets K.601, Five Dances (selected by Cyril Rootham) Symphony Nova Scotia, Georg Tintner, conductor
Naxos Tintner Memorial Edition Volume 11
8557243 (74 min 14 s)

★★★★★☆☆

"Les Petits Riens," according to Maestro Tintner, "consisted not only of pieces by Mozart, but by other people as well. We do all the doubtful pieces and all his, but not a single piece that we know he didn't write." The ballet was composed during Mozart's speculative expedition to Paris in 1778, and it was performed but he was never paid. This reissue of a CBC commercial studio recording presents a rare opportunity to hear the delightful score rendered to perfection by the Nova Scotians. The remainder of the program consists of late works from Mozart's brief tenure as a court composer responsible for producing dance music for palace balls. These concise pieces could invite flash-in-the-pan execution but Georg Tintner invests them with well-judged splendour. There is an element of pomp that is entirely appropriate to the quality of the music and its purpose. Each tiny masterpiece gets its full due. These are performances that Karl Böhm and Günter Wand would have approved of, and the orchestra really seems to be enjoying itself. **WSH**



Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphonies

Symphonies Nos 1-9: Irma Gonzalez, soprano, Elena Nikolaidi, contralto, Raoul Jobin, tenor, Mack Harrell, baritone, Westminster Choir (John Findley Williams, director) New York Philharmonic Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra (in No 6), Bruno Walter, conductor

Music & Arts Mono CD-1137 (410 min 06 s, 6 CDs)

★★★★★☆☆

Symphonies Nos 1 and 2, Mozart: Three German Dances K.605, Haydn: Symphony No 88, Finale, Columbia Symphony Orchestra, Bruno Walter, conductor
Sony Masterworks Expanded Edition SK93087 (76 min 33 s)

★★★★★☆☆

Symphony No 3, Overtures: Leonore III, Coriolan, NBC Symphony Orchestra, Arturo Toscanini, conductor
Music & Arts Mono CD-1134 (66 min 53 s)

★★★★★☆☆

"When Bruno Walter died, I put up my fees," replied Otto Klemperer to an interviewer's question during the 1960s. An irreverent response, perhaps, but it speaks volumes. Walter and Klemperer shared a musical mentor in Gustav Mahler and both brought the experience of a



unique concert era into 20th century recording studios. By reputation, Walter's Beethoven has tended to fall between the stools of the monumental grandeur of Klemperer and the fiery athleticism of Toscanini. This timely set from Music and Arts allows us to reassess conventional wisdom about where Walter stood with the Nine at mid-century. After repeated hearings, it can be confidently asserted that the cycle is superbly performed and in far better sound than we have any right to expect. Mahler emphasized Wagner's dictum that "The essential thing in music is clarity," and based on the evidence here, Walter heeded the lesson. He knew the music and he knew how to inspire outstanding performances from the orchestras at his command. It would be fair to say that he was a more rounded and genial classicist than either Klemperer or Toscanini. The symphonies are beautifully shaped and accented, though there is no lack of vigour, especially in Nos 2, 5 and 7.

The Walter set includes an extra disc with New York accounts of Nos 3 and 5 recorded in 1941 that provide fascinating comparisons with his postwar (1946-53) manner. The earlier versions have an extra element of bracing tension. The Sony disc with the Columbia Symphony Orchestra was recorded in 1958-59 and, fine as the performances of Nos 1 and 2 are, it strongly implies that Walter continued to mellow with age. Direct Stream Digital technology has been employed to enhance the excellent stereo masters. The disc could serve as token representation of Walter in a general collection but it is not to be preferred to the quality of the Beethoven offered by the Music and Arts set.

Music and Arts carries a wealth of Toscanini recordings in its rapidly expanding catalogue. The issue at hand consists of concert performances of the *Erioca* (1938), *Leonore III* (1948) and *Coriolan* (1953). Symphony No 3 was a specialty of the conductor who admonished the BBC Symphony in 1937 for the opening movement, saying, "No! No! Is-a not Napoleon! Is-a not 'Itler! Is-a not Musolini! Is-a *Allegro con brio!*" In spite of rather congested sound, this account of the symphony is the sort of performance that grabs you by the collar and holds its grip. There is no indecent haste, with the slow movement exceeding 16 minutes (close to Walter's timings in both accounts cited above). A worthwhile addition to the shelves of any dedicated Beethoven disciple. **WSH**

David Diamond: Orchestral Works

Symphonies Nos 2 and 4: Seattle Symphony, Gerard Schwarz, conductor

Naxos American Classics 8559154 (59 min 19 s)

★★★★★☆☆

Symphony No 8, Ballet Suite TOM, This Sacred Ground, Erich Parce, baritone, Seattle Symphony Chorale, Seattle Girls' Choir, Northwest Boychoir, Seattle Symphony, Gerard Schwarz, conductor

Naxos American Classics 8559156 (68 min 54 s)

★★★★★☆☆

The partnership of Naxos and the Seattle

Symphony has generated renewed and timely interest in the music of the orchestra's honorary composer-in-residence, David Diamond. These re-issues, licenced from the Delos label, have become mainstays of the Naxos American Classics collection. Diamond was born in 1915 and he belongs to the generation of composers who brought American music to its full maturity. If he had written nothing but the first movement (*Adagio funèbre*) of his 2nd symphony Diamond would deserve to be remembered with admiration. It was composed in 1942-43 and it is a wartime work to place beside the 5th of Vaughan Williams, Honegger's *Liturgique*, or Shostakovich's No 8. The 14 minute *Adagio* is followed by a brief but menacing quick movement and an *Andante* of another 14 minutes. The *finale* conveys optimism but there is no doubt that it's going to be a long war. *Symphony No 4* is a concise three-movement composition of comparable quality dating from 1945. Diamond has maintained his allegiance to tonality but his *Symphony No 8* (1961) incorporates highly chromatic elements and even a 12 note tone row. In two movements and lasting just over half an hour, the symphony represents something of a (very successful) diversion in the composer's output. It is worth the modest cost of the disc by itself, which is just as well because the ballet suite and choral setting of Lincoln's Gettysburg address (*This Sacred Ground*) are less successful diversions. **WSH**



Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky: Orchestral Works

Romeo and Juliet, Francesca da Rimini, Voydewoda, The Tempest, Marche slave, Festival Overture on the Danish National Anthem, Fate, Hamlet, Capriccio italien, Overture in F major, Manfred, Overture solennelle 1812, Russian National Orchestra, Mikhail Pletnev, conductor

DG Trio 477 053-2 (237 min, 3 CDs)

★★★★★☆☆

This album is due for release on September 12 and is especially welcome because, with the exception of *Manfred* and *The Tempest*, none of the selections have previously been available in Canada.



These were recorded as couplings to the single disc versions of Pletnev's 1997 Tchaikovsky symphony cycle, which never appeared in this market (we got the five-disc box with only the symphonies). For those who know and admire Pletnev's refined approach to the composer, any further recommendation would be superfluous. The performances and sound quality are outstanding and, at bargain price, represent a very low-risk investment. The playing of the Russian National Orchestra is a marvel to hear. The conductor's readings exaggerate nothing but there is

no lack of aural fireworks. Even the lesser known pieces are accorded complete respect. **WSH**

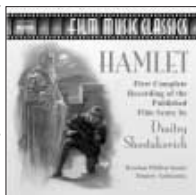
Dmitry Shostakovich: Hamlet (Complete Film Score)

Russian Philharmonic Orchestra, Dmitry Yablonsky, conductor

Naxos Hybrid SACD 6110062 (62 min 28 s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$

This just might be Shostakovich's most subversive composition. The possibility may have escaped Solomon Volkov and other dissident conspiracy theorists because there has never previously been a complete recording of the published film score. With his nationally distinctive music, Shostakovich takes Shakespeare's universal tragedy as presented in Grigori Kozintsev's 1964 film and plants it firmly in Russian soil. He musically underlines regicide, treachery, folly, madness and vengeance and then says, "This is the Soviet Union." His military music and fanfares blare out absurdity while the scenes involving the ghost, the poisoning, Ophelia's death and the cataclysmic conclusion are the epitome of terror. In the opinion of some, film music was never top-drawer Shostakovich. But *Hamlet* was a composition that rubbed shoulders with *Symphony No 13*, and the film score is of similar quality. The Russian Philharmonic play with rare distinction. The state-of-the-art Hybrid SACD (including 5.1 surround sound) even allows you to enjoy the performance with a proper cinema ambience. **WSH**



Robert Kurka: Orchestral Works

Symphony No 2, Julius Caesar: Symphonic Epilogue after Shakespeare, Music for Orchestra, Serenade for Small Orchestra, Grant Park Orchestra, Carlos Kalmar, conductor

Cedille 90000 077 (64 min)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

Had he not died in 1957 at the age of 35, Robert Kurka might have been able to mount a serious challenge to the advance of serialism in American art music. The Grant Park Orchestra, a community-based ensemble in Chicago, under Carlos Kalmar provide ample justification for the notion in this splendid sampling of Kurka's orchestral works. They demonstrate that Kurka could indeed have been the man to revitalize the neoclassical heritage that had been created by Harris, Copland, Piston, Schuman, and others. The pieces recorded here reveal a prodigious imagination coupled with relentless energy. The *Symphony No 2* is probably the best example; it is an original, invigorating 21-minute escalade through mid-1950s American consciousness. The symphony has previously been given an excellent recording by David Alan Miller and the



Albany Symphony Orchestra (Troy 591), but Kalmar's reading is even fresher. *Julius Caesar* provides a highly dramatic nine minutes while the *Serenade for Small Orchestra* contains no small ideas. *The Music for Orchestra* of 1949 provides proof that Kurka, like Gustav Mahler, was able to incorporate the popular idiom into formal but accommodating designs. **WSH**

Wilhelm Furtwängler: Collections

Bach: Suite No 3; Beethoven: Overtures: Egmont, Lenore II, Symphony No 8, Grosse Fugue; Brahms: Symphonies Nos 1 and 3; Bruckner: Symphony No 9; Gluck Overture to Alceste; Mozart: Symphony No 39; Schubert: Overture to Rosamunde, Schumann: Symphony No 1; Strauss: Metamorphosen; Wiener Philharmoniker (Schumann), Berliner Philharmoniker, Wilhelm Furtwängler, conductor

DG Original Masters 477006-2 (346 min 52 s, 5 + 1 CDs)

★★★★☆ \$

Beethoven: Symphonies Nos 3, 5 and 9, Erna Berger, soprano, Gertrude Pitzinger, contralto, Walter Ludwig, tenor, Rudolf Watzke, bass, Wiener Philharmoniker (No 3), Berliner Philharmoniker, Wilhelm Furtwängler, conductor

EMI Great Conductors 5628752 (158 min 18 s, 2 CDs)

★★★★☆ \$

The DG set is the second to be devoted to Furtwängler in the Original Master series and the fourth such multi-disc compilation to be issued by the label. This collection commemorates the 50th anniversary of the conductor's death and it features another excellent cross-section of his core repertoire. The Mozart and Bruckner are taken from wartime broadcast tapes and the latter is especially valuable because Furtwängler apparently never conducted *Symphony No 9*. Other essential works are Beethoven (*Leonore II*, *Symphony No 8*, and the *Grosse Fugue*) and *Metamorphosen* by Richard Strauss. The sixth disc in the set provides 44 minutes of Furtwängler being interviewed in German.



The EMI Great Conductors series has become an invaluable resource. The set devoted to Furtwängler is the 40th and concluding volume. A fledgling collector wondering about the fuss over Furtwängler would find the recording of Beethoven's *Symphony No 3* to be very informative. The live recording with the VPO dates from 1953 and is an example of instinctive conducting at the exalted level of genius. The BPO accounts of Nos 5 (Berlin 1944) and 9 (London 1937) are also revelatory and add weight to the argument that Furtwängler was at his best in the concert hall. Note that two repeats in the second movement of No 9 were deleted to permit the accommodation of the three works on two discs. **WSH**

DVD

Grace Bumbry: Voices of Our Time

A Homage to Lotte Lehmann

Grace Bumbry, mezzo-soprano; Helmut Deutsch, piano

Live performance (Théâtre Musical de Paris -

Châtelet, 5th May 2001)

TDK (91 m)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

Grace Bumbry, one of the last great mezzos, had fame enough at the height of her career to rival that of Marilyn Horne and Cecilia Bartoli. The Bumbry voice in its prime had an exceptional richness and ring, and her extravagant persona was the stuff of legend. In the 1970s and early 1980s, Bumbry tried her hand as a soprano – not always successfully – assaying such roles as Salome, Norma, and Jenufa, before settling back down to mezzo range and making her farewell in 1997 as Klytemnestra. Today Bumbry teaches and still sings the occasional concert. This recital features songs by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Liszt, Berlioz, and Strauss, in homage to her teacher, the great Lotte Lehmann. It would be unrealistic to expect a vocally impeccable performance after a 40 year career. The once great mezzo now sounds shallow and sometimes tremulous, her pitch occasionally wayward and her breath support effortful. Some of the songs sit uncomfortably at her register break, which she struggles to disguise. Still there is much on this recital that shows flashes of her former glory. Overall, her sound remains vital, complete with the ability to sing a high *mezza voce*, a skill she developed relatively late in her career. She is given sympathetic support by the excellent Helmut Deutsch at the piano. Highly recommended for fans of Bumbry and for those curious about her artistry. **JKS**



Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

Le Coq d'Or

Albert Schagidullin (King Dodon), Ilya Levinsky (Prince Guidon), Andrei Breus (Prince Afron), Ilya Bannik (General Polkan), Elena Manistina (Amelfa), Barry Banks (Astrologer), Olga Trifonova (Queen of Shemakha), Yuri Maria Saenz (The Golden Cockerel), Chorus of the Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg, Orchestre de Paris, Kent Nagano, conductor

Stage Director: Isao Takashima

Video Director: Thomas Grimm

TDK DVUS-OPCO (108 min) Sound: 2.0 & 5.1

★★★★★ \$\$\$\$

The prospect of a blend of Russian opera and Edo-period Kabuki from Japan was anticipated with some dread, but concern about clashing cultures was unjustified because the DVD represents the best new opera production encountered this year. It is a rare gem.

In a way, the opera completed in 1907 was just waiting for Isao Takashima and his gifted collabo-

rators to happen. Rimsky and his librettist, Vladimir Bel'sky, adapted Pushkin's fairy tale poem, *The House of the Weathercock*, as a piece of robust political satire. The composer was enraged at the defeat of Imperial Russia by Japan in 1906. His last opera (forbidden by the censors from performance in his lifetime) is a sophisticated attack on Tsarist arrogance and indolence and the cost of military incompetence. It is hilarious, violent, on-target satire with an accurate premonition in the work's epilogue: the bad will be succeeded by worse. The setting is in the mysterious East and Takashima brings it to life in convincing fashion. Profound and amusing effects are achieved with exquisite economy of gesture. This production of *Le Coq d'Or* is an example of how musical inspiration can be enhanced by costumes and make-up and relatively austere sets. Unlike other concept interpretations in modern (often punk) dress, this staging fits hand-in-glove with the score. Rimsky deployed musical leitmotifs in vivid, descriptive recurrent patterns that rendered an elaborate fresco of sound when treated to various metamorphoses. Kent Nagano directs the music with distinction.

The vocal score is also compelling with the bad guys (Astrologer and Red Queen) getting all of the good songs. Much of the Tsarist buffoonery is conveyed in Mussorgsky-style declamation. It was well worth the effort to bring in the Mariinsky Chorus for the large ensembles.

The performance was recorded at the Théâtre Musical de Paris-Châtelet in December 2002. It was a revival of a 1984 co-production with the San Francisco Opera. Excellent imagery and sound; adventurous collectors should not hesitate. **WSH**

Georges Bizet: *Carmen*

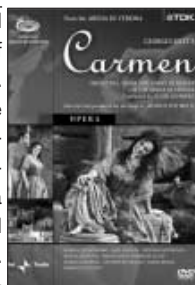
Marina Domashenko (Carmen), Maya Dashuk (Micaëla), Cristina Pastorello (Frasquita), Milena Josipovic (Mercédès), Marco Berti (Don José), Raymond Aceto (Escamillo), Marco Camastra (Le Danaire), Antonio Feltracco (Le Remendado), Dario Benini (Zuniga), Roberto Accurso (Moralès), Benjamin Britten Children's Choir, Orchestra, Choir and Corps de Ballet of the Arena di Verona, Alain Lombard, conductor
Stage Director: Franco Zeffirelli; Video Director: George Blume
TDK DVUS-OPCAR (150 min - 2 DVDs) Sound: 2.0 & 5.1

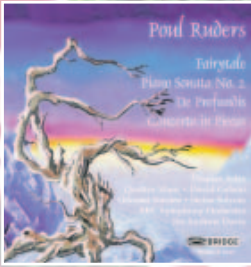
★★★★☆ \$\$\$

Franco Zeffirelli has already astonished and delighted audiences with his stagings from the tiny opera house of Busseto (*Aida* and *La Traviata*, also on DVD from TDK). In July 2003, the old showman was turned loose on the vast outdoor stage of the Verona amphitheatre to produce this magnificent performance of *Carmen*. In executing Zeffirelli's concept, Giuseppe de Filippi Venezia designed the four sets in realistic full-scale depicting old Seville, the smugglers' inn, and the mountain ravine. When required, the stage is inhabited by brilliantly costumed (by Anna Anni) multitudes, authentic *Flamenco* dancers, horses, donkeys, and carts. It is a spectacle to rival any *Circus maximus* staged in the same venue by the ancient Romans.

Marina Domashenko is kinetically seductive in the title role despite an adenoidal tendency in the lower register. Raymond Aceto (Escamillo) is also physically perfect if merely adequate vocally. No such reservations exist about Marco Berti and Maya Dashuk (Don José and Micaëla). Their singing is outstanding and their diction in French admirable. Conductor Alain Lombard is unquestionably an expert with respect to this score.

With a couple of critical exceptions, the original dialogue has been replaced by recitatives composed by Ernest Guiraud to texts supplied by co-librettist Ludovic Halévy. This maintains the momentum that is essential for arena opera. Combined with the sheer excitement of the visual feast, 150 minutes pass in a flash. Though it cannot displace favourite audio recordings of *Carmen*, this is a DVD set to return to regularly and with renewed pleasure. **WSH**





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Steven Ritter, The American Record Guide, September/October 2004

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Tamara Bernstein, National Post, June 21, 2004

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SOUTHERN ONTARIO VOCAL PREVIEW

By Joseph So

Opera and vocal fans will have plenty to cheer about in the Greater Toronto Area. In this day and age of tight arts funding, opera companies are loath to stray too far from the warhorses. So it is unusual that the Canadian Opera Company (coc.ca) will open the season with Poul Ruders' *The Handmaid's Tale* (Sept 23 – Oct 9), based on the award-winning book by Canadian Margaret Atwood. This opera has won kudos in Denmark, at the English National Opera, and most recently at Minnesota Opera. An ensemble piece, it features several fine young Canadian singers, including Stephanie Marshall, Krisztina Szabo, Frederique Vezina, and Jennie Such. Counterbalancing the adventurous programming is *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Sept 25—Oct 8), headlined by the returning Russian soprano Marina Mescheriakova, who got her North American start in Toronto. Twenty-eight years old, La Scala-trained Japanese tenor Yasuharu Nakajima makes his Canadian debut as Edgardo. Local favourite baritone Russell Braun sings Enrico. The baroque company Opera Atelier (operaatelier.com) has been expanding its repertoire lately—first offering Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* two seasons ago, and now *Don Giovanni* (Nov 11—19) at the Elgin Theatre. OA recently toured Korea with this production. Opera Ontario (operaontario.com) starts its new season with *Don Pasquale* in Hamilton and Kitchener-Waterloo (Oct 16—29), and the relatively new Royal Opera Canada (RoyalOperaCanada.com) puts on *La Traviata* (Sept 30—Oct 23) and *Eugene Onegin* (Nov 11—Dec 4), with shows split between the Living Arts Centre in Mississauga and the Toronto Centre for the Arts in North York.

There is no shortage of star power on the concert stage either. Renée Fleming drops by Roy Thomson Hall on Oct. 2nd to appear with the Toronto Symphony (tso.ca) under its new permanent conductor Peter Oundjian, and Jane Eaglen makes her long-awaited Toronto debut with the TS and Andrew Davis (Dec 2, 4), in a program billed “A Wagnerian Journey.” It is nice to welcome back the ever-green diva **Frederica von Stade** on November 10, after an absence of almost five years, as



part of the Roy Thomson Hall International Vocal Recitals (roythomson.com). Note that German baritone Matthias Goerne's September 26th recital was postponed due to illness. For those who find the cavernous RTH uninviting, the intimate Glenn Gould Studio (glenn Gould Studio, cbc.ca) is ideal. Be sure to hear two of Canada's best voices, baritone Brett Polegato and soprano Erin Wall, in a duo concert with the COC Orchestra under Richard Bradshaw (Dec. 1). On the program are arias and duets from operas by Jules Massenet, including *Manon*, *Thais*, and *Herodiade*.

TORONTO PREVIEW

By Peter Phoa

2004-05 marks **Peter Oundjian's** first official season as Music Director of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. He has guested with



major orchestras including Berlin, Houston, Colorado, Los Angeles, NDR Hanover, and has upcoming guest appearances with Boston, Chicago and Detroit. One of Oundjian's seminal experiences occurred when he was a stu-

dent at Juilliard, conducting at a series of Master Classes with legendary Maestro von Karajan, having both Ozawa and Eschenbach in the audience. A violinist, he leapt to prominence as the first non-Japanese member of the world-renowned Tokyo String Quartet. But when his violin career was sidelined because of dystonia in his left hand, his conducting career soared. Toronto audiences will have the opportunity to investigate the charming, new man on the podium as he is at the helm of many of the most attractive concerts this year.

Other than superstar soloists from the opera world Renée Fleming (Oct 1) and Jane Eaglen (Dec 2, 4), orchestral music lovers will have much to savour at Roy Thomson Hall. Gloriously featured in various concerti are a series of world-renowned soloists visiting Toronto. *Chopin's F-minor concerto* will be executed by master Emmanuel Ax, (Sep 29, 30). Two nights later, Toronto audiences can “Czech out” Ax's frequent collaborator Yo Yo Ma as he performs the famous *Cello Concerto* in an all-Dvorák programme. This October first concert, which also features the composer's beloved *Slavonic Dance No. 7* and *Symphony No. 9 “From the New World”*, will surely be a treat. There is more Dvorák (Nov 11, 12) with the virtuoso Sarah Chang in his *Violin Concerto*. Now 24 years old, the one-time child prodigy has blossomed into an adult artist. That evening also features the increasingly popular Janáček suite from *The Cunning Little Vixen*, a selection from Smetana's wonderful *Má Vlast* as well as newly commissioned work, *Otisk*, by upcoming Czech composer Krystof Maratka.

Other guest soloists and conductors not to be missed are James Ehnes in Beethoven's *Violin Concerto* (Oct 6, 7) under former TSO music director Gunther Herbig. At that same concert,

Maestro Herbig also leads his former band in Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No.6 "Pathétique"*. Beethoven lovers must make a note of the all-Beethoven concert (Nov 3, 4, 6, 7). The *Overture to Fidelio* is heard with the *Eroica Symphony*, and Richard Goode tackles the famous *Emperor Concerto*.



Also visiting Roy Thomson Hall as part of their Virtuoso Performances series are **Les Violons du Roy** and La Chapelle de Québec in Mozart's *Requiem* (Oct 26). Bernard Labadie, artistic director of Opéra de Montréal, leads the excellent ensemble. The National Arts Centre Orchestra sails into town (Nov 20) with Maestro Pinchas Zuckerman for Brahms' *Symphony No. 1* and Mozart's "*Haffner*" *Serenade*. Pinky leads his new wife, cellist Amanda Forsythe, in the search for crouching tigers in Alexina Louie's *Bringing the Tiger Down from the Mountain II* (for cello and orchestra).

In early music, Canada's famous baroque ensemble Tafelmusik presents *A Musical Offering*, featuring the music of Bach and Rameau, the latter of which can be heard on their recently-released, critically-acclaimed recording. In one of Canada's finest artistic collaborations, Tafelmusik joins their usual partner in crime, Opera Atelier, in *Don Giovanni* (Nov 11, 13, 14, 19) under Andrew Parrot at the Elgin. The Toronto Consort opens their 32nd season with Treasures of the German Renaissance (Oct 15, 16). Isaac's *Missa Paschale* will be heard alongside Orlando Lasso, Hans Leo Hassler and Ludwig Senfl. But lovers of countertenors should flock to hear one of Canada's finest in the field when **Matthew White** sings with Les



Voix Humaines (Nov 5, 6). The voice and viols program features a line up by Dowland, Byrd and Vallet.

At the other end of the spectrum, new music organization Soundstreams' handsome new brochure lists their opening show *Kaleidoscope* (Sept 27). Music by Canadian Harry Freedman is paired with that of Dane Poul Ruders' (composer of COC's *Handmaid's Tale*) and features the Gryphon Trio. Choral lovers must make note of Soundstreams' University Voices Gala (Nov 14). Conductor Robert Sund combines choirs from the Universities of Toronto, Guelph, Ottawa, Lethbridge, with voices from McGill and Wilfrid Laurier. Tapestry continues its excellent work in new opera with *Opera Briefs 4* (Sept 28) in the distillery district. That evening features 10 brief works from nine years of composer-librettist laboratories, which is Tapestry's ongoing effort to pair up young talents to learn how to produce new work.



Perhaps the finest young Canadian soprano, **Laura Whalen** will be heard as one of the four soloists in Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (Nov 2) at Yorkminster Baptist Church. The work will surely showcase her beautiful, creamy voice. The TMC then heads North to the Toronto Centre for

the Arts to join Kerry Stratton's Toronto Philharmonia in a Remembrance Day concert Voices of Victory. Favourite choral hits such as *Jerusalem*, *Zadok the Priest*, and *Va Pensiero* are programmed in this evening of fiery patriotism.

Other Toronto Philharmonia concerts of interest at the Toronto Centre for the Arts include the Spanish season-opener (Sept 23). The beloved and ubiquitous *Concierto de Aranjuez* is programmed alongside French music on a Spanish theme including Debussy's *Iberia*, Chabrier's *Habanera*, and the ballet from Massenet's *Le Cid*. Dashing young Canadian Daniel Bolshoy is the guitar soloist in the Rodrigo. Also at George Weston Recital Hall is Robert Cooper's Orpheus Choir. Famed British composer John Rutter starts off their season by conducting the ensemble in their opening concert (Nov 6).

Toronto Symphony Orchestra

416.593.4828 | tso.on.ca

Soundstreams

416.504.1282 | soundstreams.ca

Toronto Consort

416.964.3667 | torontoconsort.org

Tafelmusik | 416.964.3667 | tafelmusik.org

Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

416.598.0422 | tmchoir.org

Toronto Philharmonia

416.499.2204 | torontophil.on.ca

Roy Thomson Hall

416.872.4255 | roythomson.com

Orpheus Choir | 416.499.2204 | orpheus.on.ca

Tapestry New Opera Works

416.537.6066 | tapestrynewopera.com

WINNIPEG SCENE

By Andrew Thompson

The classical music scene in Winnipeg can best be described as being in a positive transition. Its major flagship organizations have undergone some rather substantial changes—albeit for different reasons—and the results are, as a whole, quite promising.

Of course, the umbrella organization for many of Winnipeg's classical musicians is the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. While things on the WSO podium have really started to come together under the baton of Andrey Boreyko, on the administrative side the WSO has had many serious financial problems over the past several years.

The depths of the situation came in the winter of 2001-02, when a month-long lockout of the musicians shook up the entire structure of the organization. After the lockout, relations between the musicians' union and management were poor, and morale was low among both WSO staff and the players—both had made substantial salary concessions just to keep the creditors at bay and prevent the organization from slipping into bankruptcy. The deficit stood at approximately in 2002. Within a year, the entire board of directors resigned \$3 million.

The solution came from the government: the province of Manitoba, along with Winnipeg's municipal powers, agreed to pay \$2.2 million toward the deficit if the WSO could come up with \$750,000 from private sources. A new board of directors was appointed by the province at the beginning of 2004, headed by Wally Fox-Decent, a man well known for his role as an excellent mediator of major labour disputes. And, finally, a new executive director was brought on board: Paul Inksetter, formerly of the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra, is now charged with the task of guiding the WSO out of the doldrums.

The goals for this 57th season of the WSO are to have 8,500 subscribers (apparently, this has nearly been achieved) and gradually restore the musicians' salaries while bringing the season back from its current 34 weeks to 36 weeks for 2005-06. All this will be accomplished within the context of a balanced budget. There is also a tour planned for the orchestra in which it will visit several northern Manitoba communities, and a visual artist-in-residence has been named to add a further dimension to the concert-going experience. Of course, Maestro Boreyko, whose international stature has been growing in leaps and bounds, is going to be conducting the WSO for about one-third of the season. His artistic contribution to this organization continues to be invaluable.

The annual Centara International New Music Festival (now in its 14th year), always a focal point of the WSO's season, will run at the Centennial Concert Hall from January 29 to February 4, 2005. This season's composer-in-residence is Leonid Desyatnikov, a composer whose St. Petersburg roots and overtly Russian sensibilities should be well-suited to Maestro Boreyko's interpretative strengths. Desyatnikov's most publicized efforts of late have been his collaborations with the eclectic violinist Gidon Kremer (most notably their forays into the tango world of Astor Piazzolla) and his work composing original music for recent productions of Gogol's theatrical satire, *The Inspector General*. Passes for this week of hot new music in the depths of a Winnipeg winter are currently on sale for \$66.00 (204.949.3999).

The Manitoba Chamber Orchestra (204.783.7377) has had a far more stable ride, and yet it, too, faces new challenges. After a very long and prosperous existence under former executive director Rita Menzies, the MCO amicably shifted power to Vicki Young. Last year was Young's first, and she has succeeded in keeping the orchestra firmly on track. Attendance at MCO concerts is strong, the audience is devotedly loyal, and the musicians have had a good relationship with the group's management. The only complication now is that the MCO is looking for a replacement for Roy Goodman, who has announced that this season will be his last on the Winnipeg podium.

The Goodman era comes to an end on May 17, 2005, with a concert of Haydn, Weber, and Mozart. Goodman's tenure with the ensemble has been a productive one: his experience in early classical repertoire and its corresponding period performance has brought a new twist to the MCO, as its string sound has always been grounded in the Romantic aesthetic. It is therefore most appropriate to showcase his artistic contributions through the presentation of a Haydn symphony (the

Oxford), a Mozart symphony (the *Jupiter*), and the Weber *Clarinet Concertino*.

A tragic court jester will ring in Manitoba Opera's year as **Gaetan Laperrière** brings his much-acclaimed *Rigoletto* to the stage on November 6, 9, and 12, 2004 (204.780.3333). Since reducing its season to two operas and a formal concert, Manitoba Opera has worked hard to increase its audience by using Canadian talent and crowd-pleasing productions. Judging by the success of the last *Rigoletto* staged in Winnipeg (within the last ten years or so) and the well-received direction of Larry Desrochers, these three nights should be electric.



Virtuosi Concerts (204.786.9000), led by its ever-vigilant impresario Harry Strub, is going to present the winner of the 2003 Honens International Piano Competition, Xiang Zou, on March 12, 2005. Zou hails from China and attended that incredible cultural pedestal that is the Shanghai Conservatory. He is the youngest-ever winner of this prestigious competition. In fact, his performance of Rachmaninov's *Third Piano Concerto* with Sir Neville Marriner – the performance that won him the Honens prize – is still avidly discussed in pianophile circles. He is an artist to watch.

Probably the biggest choral event of the season features a three-way effort from the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Winnipeg Singers (204.989.6030), and the Winnipeg Philharmonic Choir (204.896.7445). On March 26, 2005, conductor Yuri Klaz will bring his two choirs to the Centennial Concert Hall to present the Fauré *Requiem* to the masses. Klaz has proved himself to be a thoughtful proponent of choral music since arriving in Winnipeg. His Russian background has provided a whole new source of music in Manitoba's predominantly German choral landscape. Also on the bill with the Fauré will be Verdi's *Stabat Mater* and Bach's *Fourth Cantata* (204.949.3999).

EDMONTON SCENE

By Gordon Morash

From the way civic and provincial birthdays are being celebrated in Edmonton, one almost feels that music has no real place at the party. With twin centennials occurring in the provincial capital—Edmonton's in 2004, and Alberta's in 2005 – the classical music celebrations are muted, at best. Few of the city's instrumental or vocal ensembles have scheduled any salutes to the march of time, and that includes premières of commissioned works, Alberta repertoire, or even visits by accomplished expat soloists. The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra is the exception.

Ottawa will be the closest venue for centenary celebrations by Edmonton performers, as the two-week-long Alberta Scene festival takes residence at the National Arts Centre in April and May, opening with the homegrown and home-set opera *Filumena*. Former Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and Pro Coro Canada composer-in-residence John Estacio co-wrote the opera with Calgary playwright John Murrell, and it tells the true story of Filumena Lassandro, an accomplice of the notorious Crowsnest Pass booze-runner Emperor Pic. She would be the only woman to be hanged in Alberta. (Proper operatic stuff, that.) The work opened in February 2003 in Calgary and was broadcast nationally on CBC-Radio.

The ESO will also perform works by Albertans in Ottawa, yet aside from the world première of composer Malcolm Forsyth's *Double Concerto for Cello and Viola* in October, there is no programming of other new born-in-Edmonton compositions for the orchestra's current season. All is not lost on the performers' front, however, as the orchestra is welcoming home pianist Angela Cheng (Oct 1-2), baritone Nathan Berg in *Messiah* (Dec 9-11) and organist Bruce Wheatcroft (May 27-28).

In the Canadian classical world, Edmonton is known for its excellent 1,800-seat concert hall, the Francis Winspear Centre for Music, and the Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, the 2,700-seat acoustically-challenged "barn" that is home to Edmonton Opera, as well as the touring companies of *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon* and *Stomp*. As part of its birthday present to arts groups, the provincial government embarked upon a refurbishment project for both Edmonton's Jube, and its twin facility in Calgary. This has meant the displacement of Edmonton Opera for its 41st season, which from the point of view of artistic growth, has not been a bad development. Faced with the loss of its venue from July 2004 to Sept 2005, Edmonton Opera has pulled



together an audacious season that has the company performing a Weill cabaret (*Weill in Weimar, 1929*) in a refurbished movie house, a four-recital series (featuring the EO Chorus, Sally Dibblee, **Benjamin Butterfield** and John Tessier) at the 500-seat Festival Place in nearby Sherwood Park, a collaboration with theatre company Workshop West of *The Emperor of Atlantis* in both play and opera formats at the Citadel Theatre, and, at the Winspear, performances of *Lakmé* and *Porgy and Bess*.

While the lineup might not satisfy the aficionados of grand opera, the edginess of EO's season could be enough to grab a new audience. Sometimes a birthday present comes wrapped in a different hue of paper, but with a bow all the same.

Also on the move, but for completely different reasons, is the Canadian Chamber Orchestra, the ensemble conceived by Grzegorz Nowak after the former ESO music director left that orchestra three years ago. Audiences for the CCO's first two seasons were not huge and that, coupled with a lack of marketable open booking days at the Winspear, will move the orchestra to the TransAlta Arts Barns theatre complex on the south side of the city. Mind you, by press time, there had been no official announcement of a third season. Nowak, who also leads the SWR Radio Orchestra Kaiserautern, New Warsaw Philharmonic, Sinfonia Helvetica, Festival Musique & Amité, Vancouver Chopin Society, Poznan Philharmonic Orchestra, and Poznan Opera said in August that he foresees a four-concert season beginning in December.

Meanwhile, the ESO continues its search for a new music director, and has named Kazuyoshi Akiyama as its principal guest conductor for the season.

And so, to five highlights of the 2004/05 Edmonton:

Alberta Scene ... and Heard in Edmonton: Piecemealed through four concerts is what

appears to be the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra's program for the two-week Alberta Scene festival in Ottawa. Two Malcolm Forsyth pieces are featured – the world première of *Double Concerto for Cello and Viola* (Oct 22-23), and a reprise of the Edmonton composer's Juno Award-winning *Atayoskewin*. John Estacio's *Bootlegger's Tarantella* from his opera *Filumena* has its Master's series debut (Oct 1-2), and Edmonton expat Allan Gordon Bell's *Symphonies of Hidden Fire* has a second airing (Nov 5-6) after its well-received première in 2003. (Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, 780.424.1818, www.edmontonsymphony.com)

The Emperor of Atlantis: This collaboration between Workshop West Theatre and Edmonton Opera is part theatre and part opera (Nov 13, 14, 17, 18, 19 and 20). The world première of Calgary playwright Stephen Massicotte's *The Emperor of Atlantis* tells the story of the creation in the Therisienstadt concentration camp of the satiric opera by composer Viktor Ullmann and librettist Petr Kien. The pair would die at Auschwitz, but the opera survived – and its world première follows the play. At the MacLab Theatre in the Citadel Theatre complex. (Edmonton Opera, 780.424.4040, www.edmontonopera.com)

Mozart Requiem: As part of an enlarged seven-concert series, the nationally acclaimed 25-voice chamber choir Pro Coro Canada continues its Good Friday concert tradition with a performance of the ultimate Mozart work (Mar 25). Soloists for the evening are alto Mireille Rijavec and bass Paul Grindlay. This season also initiates the first in a series of annual concerts featuring Haydn's late masses, beginning on Oct. 3 with *Mass in Time of War*. (Pro Coro Canada, 780.420.1247, www.procoro.ab.ca)

Music at Convocation Hall/Faculty & Friends/The Year of Czech Music: With its pair of series featuring faculty and invited soloists, the University of Alberta has one of the city's best-kept secrets, as well as one of Edmonton's oldest venues. This season, in addition to the regular series, a further four concerts observe the centennial of Antonín Dvořák's death. In a combination of well-known repertoire and rarities, cellist Tanya Prochazka performs the *Cello Concerto in B Minor, Op. 104*, while on the choral side, the internationally-honoured University of Alberta Madrigal Singers (which, in February, performs in Los Angeles for the national convention of the American Choral Directors Association), the U of A Concert Choir, and the University Symphony Orchestra perform Dvořák's *Te Deum* and the little-known overture *Domov Muj (My Home), Op. 62* (Oct. 28-29). Leonard Ratzlaff and Michael Massey share the conducting duties. Con Hall

is on the U of A campus. (University of Alberta, Department of Music, 780.492.3263, www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/music)

Les Violons du Roy: Con Hall is also the venue for the appearance of Les Violons du Roy (Nov 9) for the Edmonton Chamber Music Society, which celebrates its 50th season. Conductor Bernard Labadie last appeared in Edmonton this past February when he led the Da Camera Singers in the Fauré *Requiem*. The November program contains works by Purcell, Corelli, Telemann, Bach, Handel, Vivaldi and Geminiani. (Edmonton Chamber Music Society, 780.433.4532, www.freenet.edmonton.ab.ca/ecms)

THE CALGARY SCENE

By Kenna Burima

As fall arrives in a sunless Calgary, the only relief from the soon to be cold weather may be to venture into the concert halls and experience what the Calgary classical music scene has to offer.

Calgary Opera has redefined their 2004/2005 season as the Jubilee Auditorium undergoes extensive renovations. Producing opera without a home hasn't slowed them down as Calgary Opera begins their season with *Lakmé*, October 21 and 23 at the home of the CPO, the Jack Singer Concert Hall. Leo Delibes' tale of loyalty, cultural clashes, forbidden love, and sacrifice will be a semi-staged production featuring an all-star cast, the Calgary Opera Chorus, and the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra.

The addition of a vocal recital series begins on November 25 with the first of

three recitals at the Eckhardt-Grammatté Hall in the Rozsa Centre where soprano Laura Whalen will perform with tenor **Marc Hervieux**. The season continues with a recital featuring soprano Valdine Anderson and mezzo-soprano Kimberly Barber on February 3, 2005. Tenor John Tessier performs on May 5.

CPO continues on with its struggle to find a place in the hearts, minds and



the ears of Calgarians. Concertos are the fall theme with pianist Richard Raymond performing Bartók's Piano Concerto October 15 and 16 along with David Angus, conducting Tchaikovsky's 5th Symphony. On October 27 Rosemary Thomson leads the CPO with performances of Haydn's Surprise Symphony and Symphony no. 1 by Beethoven. Prize-winning 18-year-old cellist Arnold Choi will assuredly garner praise for his performance of Haydn's C major Concerto. November 19 and 20 guest conductor Michael Güttler leads the CPO in a concert of Beethoven and Brahms with Naida Cole making her CPO debut. The concerto season culminates November 24 as principal Baroque Conductor Ivars Taurins directs the CPO in a performance of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* with baroque violinist extraordinaire, David Greenberg

The Mountain View Connection 2004-2005 concert season features five programs which emphasize the juxtaposition of words, poetry, art and music.

"Liederkreis" features a journey with Robert and Clara Schumann and their circle of friends, including Brahms and Mendelssohn in an evening of letters and music with guest soprano Katherine Whyte. Their November 14 concert "Paris and the fin-de-siècle" features composers from Paris evoking the early years of the twentieth century. The chamber works of Fauré, Debussy and Ravel come alive in this



concert featuring returning Montreal musicians Olivier Thouin and **Yegor Dyachkov**.

The January 23 concert features the music of Spain and the rarely heard pieces from Turina's *Las Musas de Andalucia* featuring upcoming Canadian soprano Eve Rachel McLeod in a programme of music for voice, string quartet and piano by De Falla, Obradors and poems by Federico Garcia Lorca.

The University of Calgary Celebrity Series presents the award winning string quartet Lafayette String Quartet December 10 and 11. Later this season the quartet will be performing the entire Beethoven Cycle in Winnipeg. As a prelude to this exciting venture, this per-

formance program will include two Beethoven quartets taken from his early and middle periods. The Opus 18 No. 5 in A Major and Opus 59 No. 2 in E minor from the Rasoumovsky Quartets and arrangement of two Shostakovich's Preludes and Fugues.

The Celebrity Series begins the new year January 14 and 15 with "Apollo's Banquet," an evening of instrumental and vocal music from seventeenth-century England. Two of the most celebrated early music specialists in the world, Ellen Hargis and David Douglass, join forces with Victor Coelho and Neil Cockburn in a diverse program of songs and dances featuring music taken mainly from the hugely popular music books published by John Playford. The concert paints a colourful pic-

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ture of life in seventeenth-century England through dance tunes, virtuoso solo work, theatre songs, ballad tunes and airs by Henry Purcell. This performance is a co-production with Early Music Voices Concert Society.

January 24 to 29 the University of Calgary comes alive with The Happening: New Music Festival. Each day the festival features noon concerts, lectures, seminars, electroacoustic concerts, and evening concerts with the music of Calgary composers Allan Bell, David Eagle, Hope Lee, Shane Fage, Arthur Bachman, John Estacio and ex-Calgarian Kelly Marie Murphy. Performers include musicians from New Works Calgary, Das Chicas, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and University of Calgary ensembles.

In conjunction with the new music festival, the first and hopefully annual New Music Conference takes place. The Cage Conference: Dynamic, Insightful, Intrepid: Pushing the Boundaries of Music and Art January 27 to 29. Attending, speaking and performing will be Gordon Mumma who, from 1966 to 1974, along with John Cage and David Tudor, was one of the three composer-musicians with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, for which he composed four commissioned works.

VANCOUVER SCENE

By Robert Jordan

"Two tickets to Yo-Yo Ma and the Vancouver Symphony, please." As in most Canadian cities, it's pretty well business as usual on the classical music scene in Vancouver these days. Most performing arts organizations are handling their finances capably—probing deeper into donors' wallets, taking advantage of every meager governmental crumb thrown their way, marketing subscriptions with ruthless efficiency.

Many Vancouver organizations with the means to do so bring in big international names and often use the depth and breadth of local talent. The city is the richer for it: to go for big-name performers at the expense of local players is as bad as ignoring them for the purely local scene, which would become far too inbred for its own artistic health.

It is encouraging to see a number of new works dotting season schedules – and I don't mean pieces like *Afternoon of a Faun*. Music in the Morning, for instance, is presenting the third and final act of its recent commission, Vancouver composer Janet Danielson's opera *The Marvelous History of Mariken of Nimingen*. With much zeal, groups like Vancouver New Music, the Turning Point Ensemble and Standing Wave bring extraordinarily high performance values to newly-composed music, usually to small but enthusiastic audiences.

However, among the major organizations in town, it sometimes feels as though any piece not from the standard repertoire appears on a concert program only because of some carefully-plotted marketing strategy, rather than a deeply felt artistic conviction in the face of presentation impracticalities. There are no looming Vancouver performances of works such as Havergal Brian's *Gothic Symphony* or Kaikhosru Sorabji's *Opus Clavicembalisticum*, performances of the latter having met with great success wherever they occurred, despite its rigorous intellectual demands and four-hour-plus length.

Never a group to be bound by conventional boundaries between classical and other music, the Little Chamber Music Series That Could has proven that it can (perform original and invigorating concerts, that is). There's certainly the will or the local performing scene, if not always the derring-do and the financial resources to back it. But, as the LCMSTC has proved continually, the boundaries between classical and other kinds of music are not always so clearly defined. As much as the clas-

sical scene is constrained by the warhorse paddock, popular music listeners are entrapped in Top-40 mentality. When both sides realize there's a lot more out there, there will be more universal artistic growth.

My top five Vancouver concerts for the 2004-05 season are chosen partly from how much I love the music, partly with an eye to how often a piece has been or is likely to be played in town. Single tickets for all concerts except the *Blaze of Berlioz* series must be obtained from Ticketmaster at 604.280.3311 or www.ticketmaster.ca. Organizations' websites and phone numbers are provided for information purposes.



For me, *the* concert of the season is Mahler's *Symphony No. 3* (Oct 2 & 4) by the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra (www.vancouversymphony.ca; 604.876.3434) conducted by **Bramwell Tovey** with mezzo-soprano Susan Platts, the women of the Vancouver Bach Choir and the Vancouver Bach Children's Chorus. I've not heard Tovey conduct Mahler yet but it has been nine years since the orchestra last did Mahler's Third and, the climate for classical music being what it is these days, it'll probably be double that before the orchestra tackles it again.

No problem with my second choice, though: the first-ever production of *Der Rosenkavalier* (Oct 16-23) by Vancouver Opera (www.van-opera.bc.ca; 604.683.0222). It's also American soprano Deborah Voigt's world debut as the Marschallin and with stage direction by Vancouver Opera regular, David Gately, it promises to be an engaging show. The music is gorgeous, the story poignant, the characters believable and, though this season's *Madama Butterfly* is Vancouver Opera's third in less than a decade, *Rosenkavalier* is unlikely to be back anytime soon.

There are not many song cycles out there that can hold an entire concert hall full of people utterly rapt for an entire evening but, right from its opening bars, Schubert's *Winterreise* grabs the listener by the lapels and does not let go. English tenor Ian Bostridge accompanied by Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes

(October 23) have really been making waves with their performances – and recording – of the piece. Controversial their approach may be, but not sensational, not willfully idiosyncratic. *BBC Music Magazine* lists only four North American appearances by Bostridge and Andsnes this season, so this evening presented as part of the 25th year of the Vancouver Recital Society (www.vanrecital.com; 604.602.0363) is unmissable.

Under the auspices of Friends of Chamber Music (www.friendsofchambermusic.ca; 604.437.5747), the legendary Borodin Quartet, still going strong after nearly 60 years, is in town April 12 to play just two pieces, the fifteenth string quartets of Beethoven (Op. 132) and Shostakovich (Op. 144). Although some maintain the present group is a mere shadow of the original Borodins, there is the matter of founding member cellist Valentin Berlinsky still being on board, anchoring the group securely in its established performing tradition.

For sheer brazenchutzpa, the *Blaze of Berlioz* event out at the UBC School of Music (www.music.ubc.ca; 604.822.5574) gets my fifth vote, partly because last year's bicentennial of Hector Berlioz's birth barely rippled Vancouver's classical waters. Playing a certain amount of catch-up to remedy this, the UBC School of Music is presenting an all-day symposium (with local and invited Berlioz experts) on December 4 with subsequent concerts of Berlioz's music seldom, if ever, performed in Vancouver—the colossal *Grande Messe des Morts*, for instance, as well as *Lelio* and the *Symphonie Funèbre et Triomphale*. Though not professional performances, standards of play at university music schools and conservatories are extraordinarily high and often have the kind of zeal that lends itself well to Berlioz.

THE VICTORIA SCENE

By John Defayette

This Fall/Winter promises to be the best musical season to date for Victoria. The repertoire of the various concerts offered challenge both young and old. The greater Victoria Youth Orchestra (250.360.1121) has 3 concerts featuring Haydn and Liszt, followed by a Verdi programme and finally Franck.

The Civic Orchestra (www.civicorchestraofvictoria.org) opens the season with a Beethoven, then British Light Brigade selections; an annual sing-along Messiah and in the Spring Sibelius, Mozart, Vogler and Schumann, and a final concert of Brahms with the Malaspina singers.

This year marks the 10th anniversary year of the Victoria Chamber Orchestra (250.595.2094) with a celebration of Russian composers. This is followed by a young people's Christmas concert, then some old and new music (also billed for a Salt Spring Island performance) and it will end its season with a concerto featuring the winner of the Louis Sherman competition. Klement Hambourg and friends are returning with a baroque concert as an opener followed by a musical collage, then a poet's muse and concludes the season with a piano quartet.

The Early Music Society (250.882.5058) has a special 20th anniversary concert in October with an additional 6 concerts planned. There are many events at the Victoria Conservatory of Music (www.vcm.bc.ca) such as the Lieder competition music week in November. There is an Opera studio performance and a La Mélodie Française concert. The U Vic Music Department always has many worthwhile offerings (www.finearts.uvic.ca/music/events).



An innovative approach this year by Tania Miller's Victoria Symphony (www.victoriasymphony.bc.ca) is their "Compose Your Own Season" in which subscribers may select 6 or 10 concerts! My choice includes Mardi Gras Pops, Mello Cello, Bach's Brandenburg Concertos, soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian, Bach Mass-B Minor and Handel's Love Duets with countertenor **Daniel Taylor**. Pinchas Zukerman, virtuosic violinist and National Arts Centre conductor will perform a not-to-be-missed programme on Nov.18.

The Pacific Opera Victoria (250-385-0222) has an interesting season of 3 operas which includes Bellini's *Norma* directed by conductor-in-residence Giuseppe Pietraraoia with the lead sung by BC-resident lyric-spinto soprano Barbara Livingston. This opera runs from Oct.7-16. In the new year, Timothy Vernon directs we can look forward to Leos Janacek's *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Feb. 10-19) and Puccini's *Tosca* (April 21-30).



Manfred Eicher
Photo: Roberto Masotti

The Marriage of Sound and Silence

MARC CHÉNARD

ECM Records at 35

ALMOST SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1969, THE INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED GERMAN LABEL ECM HAS MADE USE OF THE CATCHPHRASE "THE NEXT BEST SOUND TO SILENCE" TO PROMOTE ITS HIGHLY DISTINCTIVE ARTISTIC VISION (A *MOT D'ORDRE* FIRST COINED HERE IN CANADA BY THE JAZZ MAGAZINE *CODA*, IN A 1971 PIECE REVIEWING SOME OF THE LABEL'S EARLY TITLES).

Known worldwide for its unique aesthetic, both aurally and visually, the company owes its current day success to its founder's vision and tenacious belief in it. Unlike the majority of independent record producers who got into the business as music lovers, Manfred Eicher was a classically trained double bassist who had equal interests in contemporary music, jazz, and free improvised music.

ECM had found its imprimatur pretty much from the onset, one that rapidly became identifiable to the listening audience. What music fan nowadays does not recognize the sound of any one of its recordings, immaculately balanced and enhanced with its signature reverb effect? The fledgling label's following steadily grew because of its new concept in sound, but the producer also received much flak for it, which may have led to his reluctance to grant interviews.

A choice of sound first and foremost

To understand the producer's musical mindset, one needs to consider his background. His instrument, the double bass, is precisely characterized by a broad and reverberant sound, which is in keeping with the sonic imaging of the majority of his productions. Beyond that, his training in Western classical music obviously influenced his way of hearing music, in contrast to the way that listeners of popular music (including jazz) are

conditioned to hearing it. Whereas the pop idiom is basically pulse-oriented and thus more concerned with generating rhythms to push the music ahead horizontally, classical music is primarily organized by the vertical layering of sounds into shifting harmonic relationships.

After listening to a number of recordings found within ECM's massive catalogue of over 900 releases, one finds that these two key factors – the instrument and the producer's musical background – are the defining cornerstones of this label's aesthetic. The ethereal sounding albums of Norwegian guitarist Terje Rypdal epitomize it, as do the airy flights of fancy of his compatriot saxophonist Jan Garbarek, not to mention the early recordings of current guitar superstar Pat Metheny. And what better proof can we have than the launching of the "New Series" exactly 20 years ago, with composer Arvo Pärt leading the way to a whole line of titles devoted exclusively to classical and contemporary music?

ECM appeared at a time when the United States was setting all the trends in the jazz recording business. European labels, for their part, were by no means inexistent, and were more than ready to document whatever those touring or exiled Americans were up to. Yet the free jazz insurgency hitting the Old Continent in the latter part of the 1960s spawned a series of labels more intent on documenting their own players than the visiting stars. Such was the case with the ICP collective in Holland, the founding of Incus Records in England by Derek Bailey and Evan Parker, and Free Music Productions (FMP) in Berlin, founded in exactly the same year as the Munich-based ECM.

Yet, in that era when music embarked on a decidedly more radical path, Manfred Eicher

chose differently, guided by his own practical musical experience. In its beginnings, ECM did test turbulent waters, releasing albums by the American free jazzer Marion Brown, London's Derek Bailey, as well as the Music Improvisation Company. But before too long, the label settled into calmer waters, most notably with "Crystal Silence" (the vibraphone-piano duo of Gary Burton and Chick Corea, the latter having also recorded the first solo albums for the label). The first real watershed, however, would come with the arrival of Keith Jarrett, whose first solo studio session "Facing You" was only a prelude to the ambitious Bremen-Lausanne set and the label's all time top seller, the "Köln Concert" (its sales now topping the four million mark). Presently having recorded exclusively for the label for more than 25 years, Jarrett has contributed decisively to ECM's visibility. Over that period, he has issued a steady stream of releases at the helm of his Standards Trio (with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette), by far the single most heralded output for the label.

A visual cachet

As important as the sonics are, looks have to be factored into the label's overall success in the marketplace. Other stateside companies like Verve, Blue Note, or Impulse knew this, and part of their mystique was, and is, based on that as well. To wit, ECM's producer sensed this from the beginning, in that a record was not only an object to be listened to, but also one to be looked at. To that effect, the work of his longtime graphic artist Barbara Wojirsch (now retired) was crucial, and she more than anyone else created its unique imagery, whose main feature was the casting aside of the obligatory artist shot on the cover and the flipside liner notes. Instead, there were desolate landscapes, monochrome backgrounds, or ambiguous images, the covers adorned with clean-lined fonts that were also used on the flipside for the listing of discographical information. In any event, this new tack in album design caught the eye of a public willing to be tweaked by something out of the ordinary.

Now recognized for his contributions to the music world (including several prestigious prizes, one of them a Grammy Award as producer of the year in 2002), Manfred Eicher prides himself in his work without boasting about it, and his low profile in public is very much in keeping with most record bosses in the field. Always on hand during taping sessions, he eggs things along quietly, sometimes proposing alternative courses of action when certain impassés arise. Without a doubt, he has made his mark in the music business, and his life's work is readily available to be enjoyed, discussed, and critically assessed. All in all, ECM has produced one of the most significant musical outputs in the last half of the previous century and, most likely, for many more years to come. ■

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Justin Time

Charles Lloyd and Billy Higgins: Which Way is East

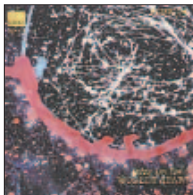
ECM 1878/79

Recorded at the home of Charles Lloyd, this intimate musical document explores the surfaces and depths of his art in conjunction with the late drummer Billy Higgins. With a long list of credits ranging from Bo Diddley to Joshua Redman and Lloyd himself, Higgins may well be best remembered for his work in the Ornette Coleman quartet of the late 1950s. For his part, Lloyd's greatest claim to fame was his late 1960s quartet featuring Keith Jarrett. In this latest of a whole series of ECM releases, we are treated to a compelling listen, a clearly tasteful and imaginative experience of musical maturity. From Lloyd's opening free-blowing flute interlocked with Higgins's percussion washes and rhythmic inventions, we embark on an eight-section aural journey, with a spiritual undercurrent breathing life into an array of worldly delights. This worldly aspect pervades the first disc, as reflected in tune titles like "What is Man," "Divans," and "All This is That." The second disc brings out more of a spiritual, comforting quality, most notably in "Desire," "Devotion," and "Surrender." One will appreciate the wide range of musical expression, ranging from Coltrane-like sheets of sound to Cecil Taylor abstractions, eastern melismata, the street soul of the blues, and incantatory passages. Also of note is the variety of instruments heard, Lloyd not only using his customary tenor and flute, but Tibetan oboe, guitar, piano, and some vocals, too. Higgins plays more than his traps, implementing a wide array of percussion instruments. This set displays the best qualities of both musicians, Lloyd for his spiritual vibe and Higgins for his ability to lay down some irresistible earth(l)y grooves. **PS**

**Peggy Lee Band: Worlds Apart**

Spool / Line 24

In the six years since the inception of her "band," a sextet including her partner drummer Dylan van der Schyff, Vancouver cellist Peggy Lee has issued three recordings, all of which have been issued by the Canadian indie Spool Records. In this latest entry, she and her associates maintain the course first established in the initial release. In spite of a somewhat boisterous opening track, there is a basic thread of mellowness to the music of this nine-track, 52-minute side. While this band's instrumentation of trumpet (Brad Turner), trombone (Jeremy Berkman), bass (André Lachance), cello, drums, and guitar (Tony Wilson) may appear very jazz-like, the compositions (all by Lee) are more folksy in nature, almost pastoral, as in the closing piece "Lookout," which even conjures up a kind of Western prairie lands imagery. To wit, there are distinctive stylistic signatures, most notably the near consistent use of ostinatos and pedal points underpinning ensembles and solos alike, which was also very prevalent in previous albums. Of note throughout is the importance of the guitar, for it acts as the main axis (both harmonic and rhythmic) around which the other instruments revolve. Unlike your more typical jazz record, whose quality is measured by the strengths of its individual contributions, this one is more of an ensemble effort; what we have here is a group serving a leader's personal musical vision, one that is not so much informed by jazz stylings, but rather by a range of more traditional music. In sum, this release (and its predecessors) may well appeal to the more average listener, at least in relation to most other titles on this label, which generally devotes itself to experimental kinds of music-making. **MC**

**Hugh Ragin: Revelation**

Justin Time JTR 8502-2

For his fourth release on Justin Time, trumpeter Hugh Ragin teams up with reedist Assif Tsahar (tenor sax, bass clarinet), bassist William Parker, and his drummer cohort Hamid Drake. With such driving and rhythmically inventive players in tow, the leader offers us a side with nary a dull moment. Indeed, each and every piece on this set (nine in total) is distinctive, from the opening "Restoration Intensive" with all of its intervallic, cubistic clarity, to the closing "Next Time," a concise, pointillistic piece with a wide range of "extended techniques." Of the remaining cuts, "Battlefield" stands out both for its crisp military-like rhythms and Ragin's tour de force articulation on trumpet. "Wormwood," in contrast, shows Parker at his tonal pallet, bowing out some expressive, non-diatonic sounds with the rest of the band providing an effective backdrop. Elsewhere, "Speak to the Mountain" opens like a stampede of wild horses, whipped by Drake's snapping snare and Parker's relentless bass. Both bluesy and hard boppish, "Kamal's Gift" is a hard swinger, thanks to Drake and Parker pushing it forward, with Ragin displaying his virtuosity to good effect. "Night Life" is yet another swinging post-modern bop ride, with the bass taking us out on the town. "Revelation," however, is the calm center of this offering, one that begins with a quiet modal statement on bass clarinet and shifts through some kaleidoscopic explorations of the Negro-spiritual-meets-New-Orleans-march character taken on by the tune. This is Ragin's most adventurous set for the label, and it reveals the full extent of his chops, which are given free reign in this piano-less quartet format, while being further enhanced by the Parker-Drake team, a rhythm section second to none in today's contemporary jazz scene. **PS**

**Cecil Taylor / Matt Maneri: Algonquin**

Bridge 9146

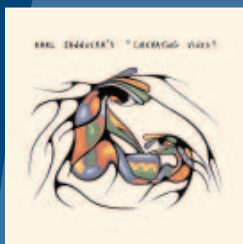
Originally commissioned by the Smithsonian Institute and premiered at a concert held in February 1999, "Algonquin" is a suite-like piece in four movements, the first and last being extended duo performances (of 30 and 13 minutes), the middle two being briefer solo outings by each of the players involved. Of the two, pianist Cecil Taylor needs little by means of introduction, for his reputation as the uncompromising fountainhead of the American New Thing, a.k.a. Free Jazz, is second to none. In contrast, Matt Maneri, here heard as a violinist, is a kindred spirit of sorts, a free player who has emerged out of his father Joe's footsteps, who is best known as a pioneer of micro-tonal improvisation. While there is an age difference of 30 years between the two, the younger Maneri more than holds his own in the face of Maestro Taylor's unbridled energy. At times, when the action gets fast and furious, some of the violinist's filigrees tend to get lost in the pianist's fireworks, and one might have wished for a closer miking, something that could have been achieved in a studio instead of a live setting. What's more, some extraneous audience noises are heard in a couple of places. Basically, the duo pieces achieve some dizzyingly intense moments, whereas both solos are restrained, reflective, if not serene in spots. All in all, this is a solid duo outing, but one that could have benefited from a more ideal recording environment. **MC**





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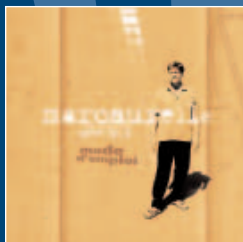
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