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Winter 2005

ISSUE 07

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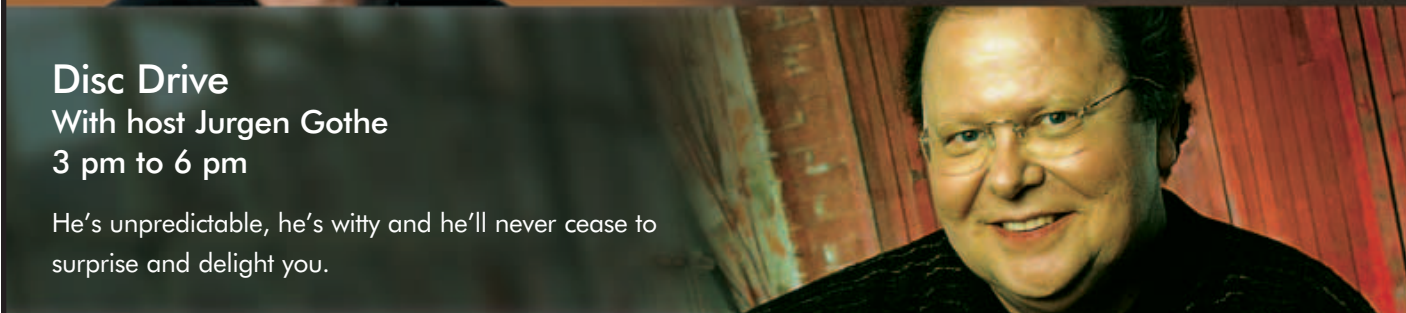
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Street Date: March 2005

Deadline for Advertising: January 25, 2005. Visit ads.scena.org for details.

Publisher La Scène Musicale / The Music Scene
Directors Wah Keung Chan (pres.), Sandro Scola, Dean Jobin-Bévins

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CD/Books Editor Réjean Beaucage

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Distribution

Southern Ontario, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver & Victoria

Printer Transcontinental Interweb

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National Sales (non-musical)

Relations Media (450) 661-8200

info@scena.org • Web : www.scena.org
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The Music Scene is the English Canada sister publication of *La Scena Musicale*. It is dedicated to the promotion of classical music.

It is published four times per year. Inside, readers will find articles, interviews and reviews. TMS is published by La Scène Musicale/The Music Scene, a registered non-profit organization. *La Scena Musicale* is Italian for *The Music Scene*.

Subscriptions

Surface mail subscriptions (Canada) cost \$20/yr (taxes included) to cover postage and handling costs. Please mail, fax or email your name, address, telephone no., fax no., and email address. Donations are always welcome. (no. 14199 6579 RR0001)

Ver : 2004-11-10 © La Scène Musicale / The Music Scene.

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ISSN 1703-8189 (Print) ISSN 1703-8197 (Online)

Canada Post Publication Mail Sales Agreement No. 40025257

For Advertising

(514) 948-0509

<http://ads.scena.org>

Notes from the files of scena.org

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David Dong Qyu Lee and Frans Wolfkamp, director of *Music in Me*

2004 Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques announces Winners

Vancouver countertenor David Dong Qyu Lee was the discovery at the 11th annual Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques Gala held on November 7th, 2004. Lee was selected by the Vienna Volksoper for the role of Oberon in their 2005-06 production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Thanks to Music in Me, Lee, whose debut recording has just come out on ATMA, will embark on a concert tour of the Middle East. The annual Gala allows young singers to be heard by several European opera directors. This year's event featured 15 promising Canadian young singers as well as three visiting artists from Europe. The Public Prize was awarded to Spanish tenor Jorge Luis de León Hernández, who also won a future role at the Volksoper. Soprano Jessica Muirhead won the Grand Prize of \$2000 and an audition tour of Europe in 2005-06, with other winners of tours and training being Michèle Losier, Anik St. Louis, Angela Welch, Pascal Charbonneau, Lambroula Maria Pappas, Etienne Dupuis and Katherine Whyte. For future auditions, visit westisland.ca/lyrichoregra20. **WKC**

Winners of Chopin piano competition to compete in Warsaw

Avan Yu of Vancouver, Donna Lee of Toronto and Thomas Yu of Saskatoon, will be representing Canada at the 2005 International Chopin Piano Competition next fall in Warsaw. These three Senior Category winners (ages 16-27) of the 2nd Canadian Chopin piano competition held in Mississauga from October 18th to 22nd also shared cash prizes totaling \$18,000 with their Junior Category counterparts (ages 12-17) Cissy Zhou of Toronto, Vicki Ning Wong of Richmond Hill and Daniel Wong of Mississauga. Marc Durand, Marilyn Engle, Marietta Orlov, John Perry, and Piotr Paleczny, the latter of The Frederic Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw, made up the distinguished panel of judges. In addition to the cash prizes, first and second prize winners Avan Yu and Donna Lee earned a residency at the Banff Music and Sound Program. The last winner of the Canadian Chopin Piano Competition, event held every five years, was Li Wang. **DD**



Rudolf Berger, director of Vienna Volksoper, and Jorge Hernández

Music Sharers Sense Strength in Numbers, Study Finds

Music sharers are not being deterred by the fear of lawsuits or criminal prosecution, according to a four-year consumer study recently released by **Markus Giesler**, professor of marketing at York University's Schulich School of Business. "People who download music and swap files do not believe they are at risk," said Giesler. "There is a growing sense of strength in numbers. The greater the number of people who engage in the practice, the less likely they are to feel at risk of being sued or prosecuted." Meanwhile, on October 28th, the Recording Industry Association of America announced a fresh round of copyright lawsuits, this time targeting 750 music-sharing individuals across the United States (Canadian sharers are protected by law). This action brings the total number of such lawsuits to over 6,000. According to *New Scientist* magazine, an estimated 62 million Americans are thought to have used music-sharing programs. Nevertheless, Giesler said many people, especially youths, do not believe it is unethical or illegal to share music. "This is a generation that has grown up believing that digital information available on the Internet is free," he said. Giesler – a former music label owner himself – said his findings on consumer risk and music-sharing behaviour should serve as a "wake-up call" to the music industry. **SMD**

People in the News

• Opera Lyra Artistic Director Tyrone Paterson has been appointed Manitoba Opera's Music Advisor & Principal Conductor for a three year period.

• La Scala musical director **Riccardo Muti** has walked out of an upcoming production of *La Forza de destino* at the Royal Opera House in a dispute over set design. The production, originally borrowed from La Scala, caused technical problems at the London venue. Changes had to be made to four sections of metal wall which were too heavy to hang in its fly tower, and which would have constituted a breach in health and safety rules. When Hugo De Ana, the production's Argentinean director-designer, refused to sanction the changes, Muti resigned in solidarity. According to a La Scala spokesperson, the new production was "not completely faithful to their conception." The decision has caused a ripple effect: Royal Opera's music director Antonio Pappano cancelled his engagements with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to take over direction of the production. He will be learning *Forza* for the first time.

• The **Pittsburgh Symphony** announced September 22nd that beginning in 2005-06, Sir Andrew Davis will head a team of three conductors to succeed music director Mariss Jansons, who stepped down this year. Davis will become the symphony's artistic adviser, while Yan Pascal Tortelier becomes the principal guest conductor, and Marek Janowski takes on the endowed guest conductor chair. Davis will provide programming input regarding the entire season and lead the orchestra in a variety of styles, with special attention given to the music of British and American composers. In 2006-07, he will lead a festival exploring Dvořák's music. His colleague Yan Pascal Tortelier will focus on French composers and hidden treasures of the 20th century along with music of the 21st century, while Marek Janowski will concentrate on the core German repertoire, an area in which he is a renowned interpreter. **WKC**

Major U.S. Orchestras Avert Strike

After a rough start threatened by labour disputes, the symphony season will go on in Philadelphia, Chicago, Cleveland and New York.

In Philadelphia, where the orchestra was facing a \$4 million shortfall, the contract negotiations dragged for 14 months before mayor John Street stepped in. He engaged himself personally in the negotiations, much as his predecessor had done during the 1996 strike, and brought both sides back to the table. On November 6th, he reaped the fruits of his labour and announced that a tentative agreement had been reached.

A mere 45 minutes before they were to step onstage, and only a few hours after the Philadelphia announcement, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra announced the approval of a new three-year contract with significant salary raises in exchange for a reduction in the size of the orchestra and a freeze in pension payments.

In Cleveland, where the orchestra ended the year with an annual deficit of \$4.25 million and an accumulated deficit of \$7.4 million, the musicians said their goal was to reach pay parity with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Boston has the highest annual minimum salary of the Big Five American orchestras (\$108,000), followed by Philadelphia (\$105,040), Chicago (\$104,000 – this will rise to

\$114,400 by 2007), New York (\$104,000) and Cleveland (previously \$100,620 – will probably rise in new contract). On November 5th, the Cleveland Orchestra, which has not had a work stoppage since 1980, announced that it had reached a tentative agreement with the musician's union.

The New York Philharmonic ratified its contract on October 9th. The major issues in all cases were wages, pensions and health insurance. **SMD**

Meanwhile, Canadian Orchestras Post Surpluses

• In September, the **Edmonton Symphony Orchestra** announced a surplus of \$28,126 for its 2003-04 season, a slight increase from the year before. CEO Elaine Calder attributes the surplus to a more aggressive pursuit of subscribers and sponsorship commitments, which has resulted in more than 10,300 subscriptions, and \$375,000 pledged towards the upcoming season. The ESO's debt remains at about \$700,000. Calder also announced a new three year agreement with the Edmonton Musicians Association calling for no raises this year, followed by a 4% raise in each subsequent year.

• The **Saskatoon Symphony** also announced a surplus of \$25,000 for its 2003-04 season, which leaves it with an accumulated debt of \$314,498. **WKC**



Kenneth Branagh

Branagh to Bring "Magic Flute" to Screen

Actor and director **Sir Kenneth Branagh**, famous for movies such as *Henry V*, announced that he will direct and possibly star in a film version of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, according to *The Independent*. Rehearsals and casting are due to start early next year. The film will have some arias in the original German with dialogue in English. Financial backing comes from arts philanthropist Sir Peter Moores, whose foundation has given more than £93m – principally to projects in music and the arts but also for education, health and the environment, including the recording of 80 operas in English. **WKC**

100 Most Definitive CDs

Norman Lebrecht, Assistant Editor of the *London Evening Standard* and columnist of scena.org's *The Lebrecht Weekly* has begun a series on the 100 definitive recordings of all time. Lebrecht began the series with David and Igor Oistrakh's 1961 DG recording of Bach's *Concerto for 2 violins*. Wrote Lebrecht, "The per-

formance transcends anything I have ever heard by way of musical collaboration. It amounts to an idyllic cross-generational dialogue which suggests that father and son can speak to one another with respect, detachment and principled contradiction. The two soloists are not always of one mind, and that is exactly how it should be. This is a disc that I play in moments of grief and isolation. It tells me that no man is an island, that understanding is but a bow-stroke away, and that we can always find a way to touch the ones we know and love the best." **WKC**

Visit <http://lebrecht.scena.org> or

<http://100definitivecds.scena.org>

Peter Gelb New General Manager of the Met

The president of Sony Classical, Peter Gelb will be the next General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera. "There is no cultural institution that I respect or love more than the Metropolitan Opera," said the 51 year old in a statement issued by the Met. Music director, James Levine, says he is very pleased by Gelb's appointment.

Gelb's history at the Met goes a long way back. He first worked there as an usher, a job he continued while at Columbia Artists Management Inc where he was executive producer of the TV broadcasts from the Met between 1987 and 1993. In 1995, he joined Sony Classical, the largest classical record label in the United States, where he was responsible for all aspects of the label's global operations. Gelb was previously pianist Vladimir Horowitz's manager. It was Gelb who orchestrated Horowitz's historic return to Moscow in 1986. He has won six Emmy Awards for his role as producer and director for *Marsalis on Music*, an educational television series. The successor to Joseph Volpe who has been General Manager for the past 16 years, Gelb begins the year-long transitional period next August. **DD**

Governor General's Performing Arts Awards

Joseph Rouleau, internationally-renowned opera singer, received the Governor General's Performing Arts Award for lifetime artistic achievement November 5th at Rideau Hall. After studying voice in Montreal, Rouleau began his career at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where he sang as principal bass for the company in 45 different operas in the course of 30 years. Having performed with Pavarotti, Domingo, Te Kanawa, and Callas, Rouleau continues to be respected for his work in nurturing young performers, namely through Les Jeunesses Musicales du Canada. Also receiving an award was Constance Pathy, recipient of the Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts. Celebrated for her tireless support of the arts and cultural community in the country, Pathy has lent her dedication and leadership to such organizations as Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, the Ladies' Morning Musical Club, Brome Beaux Arts, the Canadian Guild of crafts, and the Canadian Arts Summit. **DD**

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– Daniel Taylor, countertenor,
director, Theatre of Early Music

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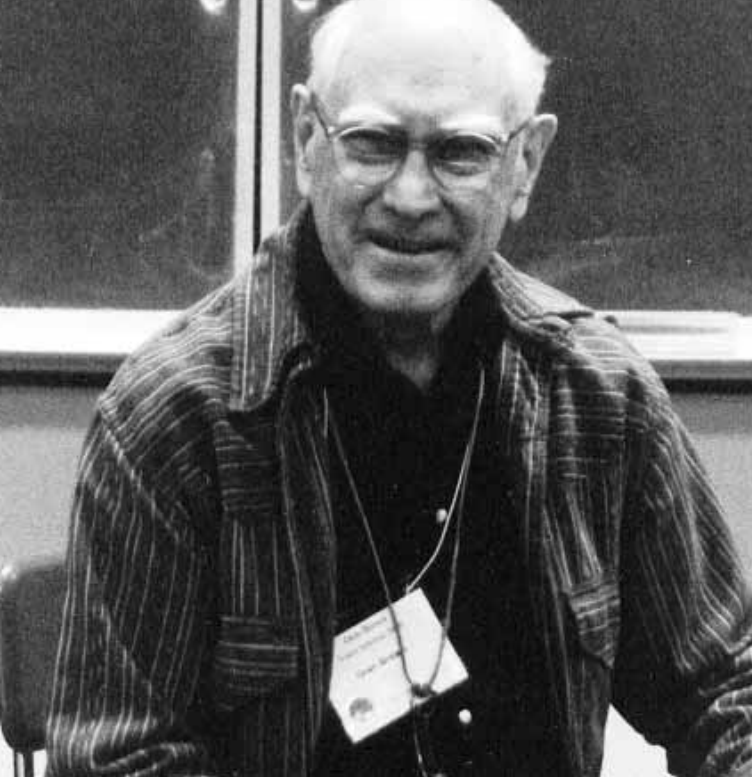
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The Vocal Legacy of Oren Brown

CLAUDEL CALLENDER

CONSIDERED A PIONEER IN THE FIELD OF VOICE THERAPY, OREN BROWN WAS KNOWN WORLDWIDE FOR HIS IMMENSE KNOWLEDGE OF THE VOICE. Aged 94 years, he passed away on March 6, 2004, in Northampton, Ma. Brown's particular approach to the voice, based on scientific facts, provided countless singers, teachers, actors and speakers with the technical *savoir-faire* to pursue their careers. For many, his legacy is monumental and his contribution to voice training unequalled.

Brown's eagerness to share his knowledge with others is in part what led him to write *Discover your Voice*. This testament on vocal pedagogy first published in 1996 and now in its 6th printing, is the fruit of a long career during which Brown carefully developed a unique approach while working for many years with some of the best physicians in the field of voice science, including the late Wilbur J. Gould. "He was one of the first singing teachers to work regularly in a medical setting, collaborating with an otolaryngologist long before interdisciplinary approaches to voice training teams were popular," writes Dr. Robert T. Sataloff, M.D., chairman of the American Voice Care Foundation. "He recognized the value of enhancing traditional approaches to voice training, utilizing scientific concepts and methodology," says Sataloff of Brown's contribution to the field of singing. The foundations of this approach came while he was working at the Washington University School of medicine in St-Louis, where he served as a lecturer in voice therapy from 1952 to 1968. "They were looking for somebody who could help patients with functional voice disorders in which the voice becomes constricted or hoarse-sounding," he recalled. "In any given case, the most important starting point is to find out how to release the interfering tensions."

Brown typically started lessons with an old recording in order to make students aware of the tonal texture. Patiently, he would build the voice the old-fashioned way, using the five basic Italian vowels i, a, e o, u. Among his favorite singers were Kirsten Flagstad, Jussi Bjorling and Pol Plaçon. For Brown, these prominent singers embodied the ideal of vocal production.

Known to some as *The Miracle Worker* and others as *The King of Voix Mixte* (a French term describing the ideal of voice production by the French School of singing during the 19th century), Brown had an astounding track record of healing voices. "Many get into problems by mimicking other singers or the sounds they hear," he warned. "95% who start singing cut their career short due to overuse." The master firmly believed it was best to do little rather than too much. "A singer should not sing more than one hour a day and that hour should be broken into 15-minute periods," he advised.

In fact, Brown's goal was to recreate the vocal ideal of the Italian Bel Canto School of singing. His vocal exercises were designed to favor the

perfect blending of the registers (supported *false* and chest voice), which, in the span of six to ten years, depending on the individual, would produce a voice capable of exhibiting flexibility, power, and above all, dynamic control. Brown conveyed to his students the true meaning of the term *messa di voce* (the swell tone exercise), where the singer is invited to initiate a tone as softly as possible and then swell this tone to a comfortable *forte* or *fortissimo* in order to conclude as he had started.

James King is among those singers who claim Brown helped them achieve the mastery of their art. A baritone, he first came to Brown in 1960 with vocal nodules, a potentially career-ending problem. Brown helped him surmount his difficulties and King went on to enjoy an international career as a leading Wagnerian tenor. Paul Helming, one of the leading Wagnerian tenors at present, also credits Brown's technique with helping him make the switch from baritone to tenor. Brown, however, did not limit himself to working with classically trained singers. Buddy Greco, Las Vegas crooner and jazz pianist, alleges he has not had a night off since Brown straightened out his singing-induced ulcers. Questioned about the difference between classical and others types of singing, Brown answered, "Finding the true natural voice is the key to healthy singing; the rest is a question of style."

His 72 year career as a voice teacher began in Boston in 1932 after he received a Bachelor's degree in music and a Master's degree in composition from Boston University. During World War II, he worked as musical advisor on the National staff of the USO while a member of the U.S. army serving overseas. The Juilliard School of Music in New York and the Mannes College of Music are among the prestigious institutions which welcomed him as a faculty member. During this time, Brown chaired on several committees and continued to teach privately in Europe, Canada, and the United States. In May 2002, he received an Honorary Doctorate in music from Utah State University and in 2000 he was awarded *The Voice Research Awareness Award of Achievement* by the American Voice Care Foundation.

Oren Brown gave his last master classes in Germany in the fall of 2003 at the age of 94. After retiring in Northampton in 1999, he kept teaching private students at the local Community Center. The mentor of many – at least sixteen of Oren Brown's students have sung at the Met, including renowned baritone Bo Skovhus – Brown will be remembered for his outstanding contribution to the field of voice therapy and voice teaching: "The foundations he laid have been invaluable not only in facilitating the evolution of voice into an interdisciplinary medical subspecialty, but also in allowing voice pedagogy to evolve into a more sophisticated and scientific discipline," declares Sataloff.

Anyone who wishes to contribute to the memory of this great teacher can do so by sending a donation to the Oren L. Brown Memorial Voice Scholarship Fund, Office of development & Public affairs, Juilliard School, 60 Lincoln Center, New York, NY 10023. For more information and comments on Oren Brown, please visit the New England Nats website: www.nats.org/newengland ■

McGill: Balancing Performance and Research

DANIELLE DUBOIS



UNIVERSITIES ARE IN THE TALENT BUSINESS AND MCGILL'S FACULTY OF MUSIC IS NO EXCEPTION. IN ITS 100 YEARS OF EXISTENCE, THIS LEADING CANADIAN MUSIC SCHOOL HAS LEARNED A THING OR TWO ABOUT RECRUITING AND FOSTERING MUSICAL TALENT. "McGill has surpassed Boston and Yale," says Don McLean, Dean of the Faculty of Music. "It's on its way to becoming the go-to place for musical training." With a total of thirty programs being offered at the undergraduate and graduate level and a myriad of high-calibre performance groups – an opera studio, three jazz bands, two wind ensembles, a contemporary music ensemble, a baroque ensemble, three choirs and a Beethoven orchestra – it is not surprising that approximately 800 students choose to pursue their studies at McGill's Faculty of Music every year.

Award-winning scholars and the relative maturity of McGill's programs are not the only things drawing students to the university. Many of them come for Montreal and all the city has to offer, both inside and outside of the musical community. "The mix of people in this city is really interesting. There's always a bubbling and prickling – that kind of buzz," observes Douglas McNabney, chair of the performance department and viola teacher. Indeed, no other Canadian city can boast of such a number and array of high-quality music groups and professionals. Thanks to this breadth, the Faculty has been able to develop partnerships with performance groups such as the Société de Musique Contemporaine du Québec (SMCQ), thereby providing students with unique learning opportunities. For students intent on finding the teacher capable of helping them perfect their art, there is no underestimating the value of working with faculty members or instructors who are also leading musicians of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra (MSO) or the Orchestre Métropolitain, for example.

The exchanges between professors and students, as well as the quality of the instruction available, are what attracted violinist Emmanuel Vukovich to McGill. After four years studying at New York's Juilliard School, this Calgary native spent one year working on an organic farm, where he developed an interest for the environment. Enrolled in the Bachelor of Music Interpretation program since September 2003, he has no regrets about his decision to come back to Canada to study with André Roy and Denise Lupien. "More important than the name or the reputation of the school is the feeling that you're supported by professors and fellow students. There's a real sense of community at McGill," says Vukovich, who adds that it is nice not to feel like just another cookie being cut out of the same mould.

A member of the Lloyd Carr-Harris Quartet, Vukovich declares he has many more opportunities to perform at McGill than he did at Juilliard. According to McNabney, the growth of the performance department – a trend observable in many North American universities – is one of the most significant developments at the Music Faculty since its creation in 1920. Half of the music students at the Faculty are enrolled in perform-

ance and participate in the 450 concerts the department puts on every year. "The stage is the best teacher," exclaims McNabney. Luckily for them, McGill students have a well-established and supportive public in Montreal.

However, reconciling performance studies with more traditional academic studies has not always been easy. "An ongoing challenge has been to make the case that performance studies belong in a university setting," explains McNabney. For Vukovich, studying performance at a university allows him to combine two of his passions – music and environmental studies – something he could not have done at a Conservatory. There is also no doubt that a university setting is essential to non-performance students enrolled in programs like music theory, musicology and composition. "Music students have transferable skills," says Dean McLean, who adds that many go on to study in other fields. He gives the example of medicine, a college where music students account for a large part of entering students.

If an increase in performing opportunities seems a matter of due course in a discipline where expectancy levels constantly increase, the graduates of thirty years ago, let alone those present at the Conservatorium's beginnings in 1904, would probably be astonished at the importance science and technology have come to occupy at the Faculty of Music. Central to the study of music, McGill administrators see the development of science and technology as essential for the future. The creation in 2000 of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Music Media and Technology (CIRMMT) is telling of the multi-disciplinary direction in which music education is headed. CIRMMT consists of a group of researchers in science, engineering, medicine and music from four Quebec universities focusing on music and sound, and the perception of sound. For performers, the challenge will be to find ways in which these new technologies can be taken up and applied to their art. "We're constantly adapting in order to express ourselves," McNabney remarks.

Sustaining this sort of forward momentum at the Faculty of Music has not always been an easy task. In the 1960s, the Faculty faced hard times when a drop in numbers threatened its closure. Financial cutbacks in the early 90s also presented a great challenge. Yet, if McGill is enjoying a healthy dose of success at present, Dean McLean credits it to risk-taking and a continued commitment to foster excellence in specific areas by people involved at the Faculty.

"We're always going to be needing renewal," says Dean McLean, who sees the attainment of a balance between creative aspects and research as one of the elements on which the Faculty of Music will continue to focus. Nevertheless, its educational goal remains the same – the expression and understanding of great works of art. With graduates of McGill's Music Faculty occupying positions at various universities and performing in major orchestras and opera companies across the world, it would be hard to argue that this music school is not fulfilling its vision. ■

Education News

DANIELLE DUBOIS, WAH KEUNG CHAN, SASHA M. DYCK

The Royal Conservatory in Toronto

The construction of the new TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning, future home of the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) in Toronto, is well underway. One of the features of this project will be The Michael and Sonja Koerner Concert Hall. The 1,000-seat hall will be exploited as an educational resource for students, teachers and artists via a whole range of distance learning tools. The architects (Kuwabara, Payne, McKenna, Blumberg Architects), and the acoustician (Sound Space Design with Aercoustics Engineering Ltd), were also given the task of renovating McMaster Hall to its original grandeur. Students of the RCM Community School planning to pursue professional music careers will finally get a taste of how it feels to perform on an internationally competitive stage. They will also have at their disposal 165,000 square feet of academic and performance space, with 80 state-of-the-art practice and teaching studios, a multipurpose rehearsal hall, fully wired classrooms, a comprehensive library, and a new-media and broadcast centre. In a June press release, the RCM announced that 74% of the \$60 million needed for the project had been raised. Students and teachers of RCM have set up temporary headquarters at 90 Croatia Street while they await the completion of the new Centre planned for September of 2006.

Despite the relocation, the RCM is going ahead with new projects. It has recently expanded its popular World Music Centre by adding Canadian Celtic fiddling, tabla, sarod, tin-whistle, samba, pan-flute and sitar to the

course list. A new partnership with the Escola de Samba de Toronto, a school based on traditional samba schools in Brazil, is also part of the expansion. **DD**

The Victoria Conservatory of Music

The year 2004 marks the 40th anniversary of the Victoria Conservatory of Music. With only 40 students and a faculty of 12 at its beginnings, the Conservatory has come a long way since its inception in 1964. It now boasts a student body of 2,000 and a faculty of over 100 whose teaching studios and three performance venues, including the 800-seat Alix Goolden Performance Hall, are housed in a magnificent heritage building, the century-old Metropolitan United Church. Instrumental to the development of Victoria's Conservatory of Music were the husband and wife team of Dr. Robin Wood and Winifred Scott Wood. Invited in 1965 to leave their flourishing careers at the Royal Academy of Music in London to assist at the new music school, they agreed to stay for two years. Forty years later, they were still teaching Victoria students about the mysteries of the piano. Both were awarded Lifetime Achievement Awards last February for their immense contributions to the Conservatory of Music and the art of music in Canada. A gala in honour of the 40th anniversary featuring some of Victoria's finest musicians was held around the same time. Two days later, the musical community sadly learned of Robin Wood's death.

Other recent happenings at the Victoria Conservatory include the release of the CD entitled *Début*, the first CD ever produced by

the Conservatory, featuring some of the Conservatory's most talented students aged 10 to 26. The Ensemble Sine Nomine, which performs under the auspices of the Victoria Conservatory of Music has also released a debut CD entitled *Plain Chant*. The recording contains an eclectic range of selections, from Gregorian chant, to 13th century organum, hymns by Hildegard von Bingen, and early motets by Dufay and others. **DD**

Concordia Purchases Grey Nuns Campus

Concordia University announced in June the purchase of the downtown Grey Nuns Mother house and campus, which will effectively double the size of Concordia's downtown campus by 2022. The transfer of property will begin in 2007 when the university takes possession of half of the mother house.

Rector Dr. Frederick H. Lowy initially indicated that the building would house Concordia's Faculty of Fine Arts. "Currently, Concordia's fine arts departments are spread out across the city," said Christopher Jackson, dean of the faculty. "Next year, the visual and digital arts will be moving to the new Engineering Building. But we are working towards consolidating the other fine arts departments in the Grey Nuns complex."

This will require that Concordia's Department of Music move from its current home at the Loyola campus where it has been housed since 1974. For students, the extra facilities will include more and better practice studios. Jackson does not necessarily envisage a rise in the number of enrollments, however. "It's not just about giving new and more space,



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which is desperately needed; the move would also stimulate cooperation among the different fine arts disciplines," he said.

For the university, integrating the arts is an important step for the future. In 2001, in partnership with UQÀM, the university created the Hexagram research centre, which consists of multidisciplinary teams integrating media arts and technologies. Although Concordia's Faculty of Fine Arts is the largest in Canada, integration has not been easy. "Proximity is a big deal," said Jackson.

Looking ahead, Jackson hopes that the proposed Master's in Performing Arts program will be in place by the time of the move. **WKC**

New Faculty and Money at the University of British Columbia

Students thinking of applying to UBC's School of Music will be glad to hear that violinists Jasper Wood and Eugenia Choi, as well as tenor Roelof Oostwoud, have been appointed as Assistant Professors. "We are excited beyond words to introduce these musicians to the community, and we are positive that their presence at UBC will contribute widely to the outstanding level of musical activity in Western Canada," said Jesse Read, Director of the School of Music. All three Canadian musicians have much to boast of. Edmonton-native Eugenia Choi, an avid supporter of contemporary music, has been acclaimed for her beautiful lyricism, thrilling technique and dynamic

style. Her colleague Jasper Wood, a rising star on Canadian and international concert stages, has recorded CDs for Naxos and Disques Pelleas. Roelof Oostwoud began his stage career with the Canadian Opera Company. Other operatic and concert engagements with companies of Covent Garden, the Netherlands Opera, La Scala, and Deutsche Oper am Rhein soon followed.

Another sure attraction for future musicians is the School's new June Goldsmith Scholarship. The endowment comes from the friends of the founder and Artistic Director of the Music in the Morning concert series. Members of the series board clandestinely raised over \$400,000 in honour of June and the 20th anniversary of the series. The first annual award will be announced in December.

For more information, you can check the UBC's new website at www.music.ubc.ca **DD**

Dr. Joni Mitchell

McGill University granted a Doctor of Music *honoris causa* to the great singer, musician and poet **Joni Mitchell** on October 27th, in conjunction with a symposium celebrating the institution's 100 years of music education. The symposium, titled "Exploring the Art and Music of Joni Mitchell," brought together musicologists, critics, visual and performance artists and Mitchell herself. Speaking to her fellow music faculty graduates, Mitchell urged them to "think about balance in art" and to value music's emo-



Joni Mitchell

tional, as well as intellectual, content. "The music I like is a balance of opposites," she said.

One of the most influential women of her generation, Mitchell has been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the Juno Hall of Fame. In 1995 she received the Billboard Magazine's Century Award for Creative Achievement, and was awarded both the Governor General's Performing Arts Award and Sweden's Polar Prize (together with Pierre Boulez) the following year. Three days after the McGill celebration, Mitchell was made a Companion of the Order of Canada, the country's highest honour, by Governor General Adrienne Clarkson. The GG's office took the opportunity to praise the newly-minted Dr. Mitchell for "engaging and inspiring audiences and musicians for some 40 years." **SMD**

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Higher Music Education Guide 2004

To help students find information on music education, this edition of *The Music Scene* offers a guide to the major educational institutions in Canada. An information coupon is available on page 17. Happy searching!

BRITISH COLUMBIA



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Programs offered

Post-secondary Foundation Year (1 year) and Diploma in Music (2 years): majors in Piano, Collaborative Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello, Classical Guitar, Flute, Voice, Composition, Jazz Studies

Teacher Training: majors in Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello, Classical Guitar, Flute, Voice

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Summer Jazz Workshop: big band and combo experience with established jazz artists

Self-directed studies: instruction at all levels in piano, voice, orchestral instruments, theory, composition. Ensembles, chamber music, Opera Studio, master classes

Facilities

Alix Gooldeen Performance Hall (800 seats)
Robin and Winifred Wood Recital Hall (100 seats)
Teaching and practice studios, ensemble rehearsal rooms, Gym space, Music Library

Teachers

7 full-time, 110 part-time

Students

45 full-time, 1800 part-time

Tuition fees

Foundation Year: \$4,000 (Domestic) \$9,600 (International).
Diploma in Music: \$5,000 (Domestic) \$12,000 (International).
Teacher Training: \$2,000 plus fees for Theory and individual instruction.

Description

The Victoria Conservatory of Music provides professional music education and outstanding performance venues in a beautiful century-old heritage building. Students benefit from small classes, considerable one-on-one instruction, and performance opportunities.



SCHOOL OF MUSIC, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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miriamn@interchange.ubc.ca
www.music.ubc.ca

Programs offered

B.Mus. in Composition, Opera, Voice, Guitar, Harpsichord, Music Scholarship, Orchestral Instruments, Organ, Piano and General Studies
B.A. Major, Minor and Honours in Music

Graduate Programs

M.Mus. in Composition, Piano, Orchestral Instruments, Organ, Harpsichord, Guitar, Opera, Voice, and Choral Conducting
M.A. in Musicology, Music Theory, and Ethnomusicology
D.M.A. in Composition, Piano, Voice and Orchestral Instruments
Ph.D. in Musicology (concentrations:

Historical Musicology, Ethnomusicology, Music Theory)
Diploma in Collaborative Piano Studies
Diploma in Music Performance

Facilities

Recital Hall (289 seats)
The Chan Centre for the Performing Arts (1200 seats)
Gessler Hall (80 seats)
Practice studios
Computer music studio
Music library
Multimedia centre

Teachers

28 full-time, 60 part-time

Students

270 undergraduate, 100 graduate

Tuition fees

B. Mus. (30 credits) \$4,011 (Canadian, landed immigrants)
B. Mus. (30 credits) \$16,260 (non-Canadians, visa students)

Description

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sca@sfu.ca
http://www.sfu.ca/sca

Programs offered

B.F.A. (Music major)
B.F.A. (Extended minor in music)

Teachers

28

Students

350

Tuition fees

Domestic: \$2,310/year
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Co-op term fee: \$403.00/semester

Description

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Programs offered

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Performance, School Music, Music
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B. Mus. / B. Ed., M. Mus. in Applied
Music, Choral Conducting, and
Composition.
M.A. in Theory, Musicology and
Ethnomusicology
Ph. D. in Theory, Musicology and
Ethnomusicology
D. Mus. in Piano or Organ, Choral
Conducting, and Composition

Facilities

Recital hall (450 seats), Studio 27
Theatre (80 seats), practice studios,
computer music studio, music
library, Canadian Centre for
Ethnomusicology

Teachers

20 full-time
30 part-time

Students

Undergraduate: 130
Graduate: 50

Tuition fees

B. Mus. / B.A. \$4,550; non-
Canadians \$11,700
Graduate \$4,000; non-Canadians
\$7,100

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Graduate Program

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Facilities

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Theatre Auditorium (seats 849)

Practice rooms
Electro-acoustic music studios
Computer-assisted instruction lab
Multimedia classrooms
Music therapy clinic

Faculty

25 full-time
65 part-time

Students

310 full-time

Tuition fees

1 academic year, full-time: \$4,106

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Faculty: 80

Students: 135

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Undergraduate Programs

BFA Honours in Music (performance,
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BA Major, Minor and Honours in
Music (history, theory)

Graduate Programs

MA in Musicology; Ethnomusicology;
Composition; Jazz Studies; Popular
Music Studies
PhD in Ethnomusicology/Musicology;
Jazz Studies; Popular Music Studies
Combined MBA/MA in Music

Faculty

102: 21 full-time, 81 part-time

Students

405 undergraduate, 55 graduate

Tuition fees

(1 academic year, full-time):
Undergraduate - \$4,180 (domestic)
\$11,220 (international)
Graduate - \$4,785 (domestic)
\$11,270 (international)

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Students: 550

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Facilities

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Sherbrooke (1900 seats).

Faculty

5 full-time, 26 part-time

Students

86 full-time, 67 part-time

Tuition

(1 year, 30 credits): (approx. \$3,837)

Description

Ever vigilant of new developments in the world of musical study, the University of Sherbrooke's School of Music is renowned for its vitality and for the high quality of its programs. The five options available to Bachelor of Music students all aim to meet the demands of the professional sphere while producing versatile and

independent musicians; proof is the high number of the school's graduates currently working in the musical field. The Master of Music in Performance allows students to develop autonomous skills while producing diversified and complete artistic portfolios. The program includes concert performance in venues across the region. Several specializations are possible. The Master of Music in Choral Conducting is offered as a number of intensive sessions designed to meet the specific needs of conductors working in the field. The program takes place in part at the Centre Longueuil.



MUSIC DEPARTMENT of CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Fine Arts
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Montreal, Quebec H4B 1R6
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FAX: (514) 848-2808
Email: music@concordia.ca
Website: http://music.concordia.ca

Undergraduate Programs

Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA)
BFA in Electroacoustic Studies
BFA in Integrative Music Studies
Specialization in Jazz Studies
Specialization in Music
Performance Studies
Specialization in Music Composition
Minor in Electroacoustic Studies
Minor in Music

Graduate Program

Diploma in Advanced Music
Performance Studies

Facilities:

7 Electroacoustic Studios

Digital 16-track Recording Studio
Oscar Peterson Concert Hall - 600 seats

Teachers

10 full-time
53 part-time

Students

176 full-time
110 part-time
10 graduate

Tuition fees

1 academic year, full-time:
Canadian - QC Resident: \$2,637.60
Canadian - Non-QC Resident:
\$4,827.60

Description

Concordia's Music Department provides a rich environment for students from diverse backgrounds to perform, compose and improvise in different languages including jazz, classical, and electroacoustics. The focus on contemporary music is informed by a diversity of historical styles and genres studied through analysis, history, and performance. The vibrant Faculty of Fine Arts provides excellent opportunities for collaborations.



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Teachers

3 full-time
35 part-time

Students

50 full-time

Tuition fees

1 academic year, full-time:
\$3,000
International students:
\$4,714 more

Description

Building on a tradition of excellence at Marianopolis, music students benefit from the program's association with the Faculty of Music at McGill. All music students take private lessons with instructors at McGill University. Students also participate in the University orchestra, choirs, wind symphony and other large and small ensembles. The size of the department allows for individual attention from teachers and for a warm personal atmosphere.



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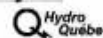
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Making the Festive Magic Work

HOLLY HIGGINS JONAS

LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING," WROTE AMERICAN POET JAMES WELDON JOHNSON. WITH THE APPROACH OF THE HOLIDAY SEASON, THOUSANDS OF CHOIRS ALL OVER THE LAND ARE PREPARING TO DO JUST THAT IN THEIR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CONCERTS. Audiences in most towns can look forward to one or more performances of Handel's *Messiah* — a perennial favourite. Curious about what really moved them in this masterwork, I asked ten top Canadian choral conductors throughout the country two questions. The first was: "When conducting a performance of Handel's *Messiah*, are there any specific sections that especially speak to you or thrill you?"

Here is what Vancouver conductor Jon Washburn had to say: "My all-time favourite *Messiah* chorus has got to be 'Unto us a Child is born,' which I love for its infectious dance rhythms and the joyous exclamations 'Wonderful! Counsellor!'. But my reasons are not wholly musical. In December 1964, I was doing my student teaching near Chicago when my daughter was born. After being up all night dealing with that event, I got to conduct a portion of the school's Christmas concert, including this chorus. The word 'child' in this context has had a double meaning for me ever since."

Diane Loomer, also from Vancouver, loves the beauty, poise, and elegance of the opening "Sinfonia," followed by the beautiful solo "Comfort ye My people." She feels the music gives a sense of assurance that all is once again right with the world. She also loves the imaginative musical pictures Handel conveys through the orchestral scoring.

CBC choral concert host and director of the Kitchener-Waterloo Philharmonic Choir, Howard Dyck, appreciates the *Messiah's* integrity. "The exuberant choruses are exciting, of course," says Dyck, "but what thrills me most is the serenity of 'I know that my Redeemer liveth' following the 'Hallelujah' chorus. And at the end, I'm always moved by that holy baroque choral dance, 'But thanks be to God.'"

Worthy is the lamb

Calgarian David Ferguson continues to be impressed musically and moved emotionally by the final choruses of the work, 'Worthy is the Lamb,' 'Blessing and honour,' and 'Amen.' "Not only do they present a magnificent blending of inspiration and craftsmanship, they constitute a monumental testament to Handel's faith."

Winnipeg-born Brock McElheran, agreed with Ferguson, as did Montreal conductor Patrick Wedd. "What I find constantly thrilling is the combi-

nation of the declamatory 'Worthy is the Lamb' followed by the way Handel builds the counterpoint in the 'Amen.' Throughout the 'Amen' the text is minimal, thus allowing Handel to focus on musical expression," explains Wedd.

The final measures of the 'Amen' section are worthy of special mention says Douglas Dunsmore of St. John's, Newfoundland. "All the imitative entries have one final statement, with the sopranos and tenors on the high As cascading towards the final amens, at which point all voices unite in chords sounded together, completing this magnificent chorus and the work itself. There is such a feeling of grandeur, joy, and optimism that it practically lifts me off the podium."

Conductor Noel Edison from Elora, Ontario, enjoys, for his part, the poignant, dramatic, even operatic nature of the four-chorus sequence of "Surely He hath borne our griefs," "And with His stripes," "All we like sheep," and "He Trusted in God."

Anything but *Messiah*?

"I don't care if I never hear the *Messiah* again," says Paul Murray, Halifax organist and choral conductor, "except were I to conduct or accompany it. My favourite portion is the solemn orchestral intro-



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duction, the energetic *fugato* and the lovely recitative 'Comfort ye My people' that follows." Nevertheless, he prefers choral works such as Bach's *Magnificat*, Benjamin Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb* or *St. Nicholas*, or Vaughan Williams's *Hodie*. Murray also mentions Sweelink's *Hodie Christus Natus est* and Victoria's *O Magnum Mysterium* as quintessential to the Christmas spirit, along with carol books.

Second question . . .

Paul Murray had got ahead of me by answering my second question: *In your opinion, are there any choral works that can rival the Messiah as a Christmas season performance?*

An overwhelming majority selected the Bach *Christmas Oratorio*, a sequence of six different cantatas centred on the period between Christmas and Epiphany, as a worthy alternative to the *Messiah*. "This is a magnificent work that constantly draws you in at many different levels," comments Noel Edison. "It isn't often performed in Canada, however, as Canadian audiences cling to the English-language family of choral works, thus making compositions such as Benjamin Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols* a popular alternative in the festive season."

Both Bach and Camille Saint-Saëns wrote a *Christmas Oratorio*, and these were David Ferguson's choices. Incidentally, he pointed out that the great popularity of the *Messiah* at Christmas is somewhat ironic considering Handel's first performance of the work was at Easter – and in Dublin, no less!

Pleasing Canadian audiences

Robert Solem of Saskatoon cited the *Messiah*'s "recognition factor" as a big influence in pleasing Canadian audiences. Solem feels that the Bach *Christmas Oratorio* contains a heavier intellectual component and that translations from the German language can pose problems. He considers Respighi's *Lauda per la Natività del Signore* a wonderful choral contribution to the Christmas season, and he especially enjoys the soaring soprano solo.

Diane Loomer agreed. "Rarely performed, it contains glorious writing for orchestra and voices, and overflows with tunefulness and the promise of Christmas. It is so Italian, full of tremendous verve and vitality, yet achingly tender at times."

Respighi's *Lauda* also got the nod from Patrick Wedd, along with Berlioz's charming *L'Enfance du Christ*. But he, like Dunsmore, Washburn, and Dyck, identified the Bach *Christmas Oratorio* as the *Messiah*'s closest rival: "In this work, Bach allowed himself to compose more descriptively than in his other cantatas. We have shepherds' music and angels' music. He wears his emotions more on his sleeve."

Jon Washburn's views the work as a challenge to the latter's Yuletide supremacy because it "also tells the Christmas story with alternating sensitivity and celebration."

Howard Dyck treasures the Bach *Christmas Oratorio* as much as the *Messiah*. "The music is utterly sublime from first to last, but Bach also reveals a deep, penetrating theological insight that views the joy of Christmas from the sobering vantage point of Golgotha. In his breadth of understanding, Bach is so wonderfully removed from the cheap, easy answers offered by much of contemporary Christianity."

Choirs sound better singing the *Messiah*

The last word goes to Brock McElheran: "It's pretty hard to beat the 'Hallelujah' chorus. When conducting it with full forces, you can rest assured that you are thrilling more listeners than with anything else you conduct. When performing 'Worthy is the Lamb' through to the end of 'Amen,' choirs usually sound better than they do in anything else they ever sing. The persistent 'ah' of the 'Amen' is like one long voice lesson!"

"There's an astonishing dearth of great Christmas music," McElheran added. "*Messiah*'s two chief rivals are, of course, the Bach *Christmas Oratorio* and Vaughan Williams' *Hodie Christus Natus est*. But, in addition to *Messiah*'s musical and spiritual qualities, generations of choral societies have balanced their budget by programming *Messiah*. It's a sure-fire sell-out."

Participants: Douglas Dunsmore, Howard Dyck, Noel Edison, David Ferguson, Diane Loomer, Brock McElheran, Paul Murray, Robert Solem, Jon Washburn, and Patrick Wedd. ■




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Siegfried Through the Lens

BY MISHA ASTER

Photo: Michael Cooper

WHY SIEGFRIED? *Das Rheingold* is the most compact and optimistic, *Die Walküre* the most lyrical and dramatically self-contained, while *Götterdämmerung*, which concludes the *Ring* epic, is gripping and cataclysmic; but of the four operas comprising Wagner's Nibelungen cycle, *Siegfried* rarely gets mentioned as anybody's favourite. Yet, as François Girard openly confesses, "As soon as Richard Bradshaw asked me to join the Canadian Opera Company's (COC) *Ring* project, I rushed to the record store, bought and listened to the whole thing in a very short time. From the first listening, *Siegfried* was definitely my choice."

Why should this lengthy, dramaturgically awkward transitional link in the *Ring* odyssey appeal to the man renowned for award-winning films such as *Thirty-two Short Films About Glenn Gould* and *The Red Violin*? "Because *Siegfried* is the most abstract opera, and therefore, most welcoming for a director."

Taking a short break from rehearsing a new adaptation of another 'abstract' piece, Kafka's *The Trial*, at the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde in Montreal, Girard is thoughtful in approaching his upcoming Wagnerian encounter: "Perhaps it is my film experience speaking," he slowly elaborates, "but I don't think opera works when you try to create naturalistic impressions. For me, *Siegfried* is exciting because it is so introspective – a total journey into one character's mind."

In *Siegfried*, set some twenty years after the fateful events of *Die Walküre*, the surviving son of Siegmund and Sieglinde has been raised in the woods by the dwarf Mime. Impetuous and arrogant, the young Siegfried, whose mother died in childbirth, knows no fear, nor anything of his ancestry; he is naive, save for what he has learned from Nature. "He is a completely childlike character trying to discover his past," recounts Girard. "Every scene is an attempt to reconnect fragments of that past."

This idea of reconstructing the title character's genealogy is central to Girard's interpretation of the piece: "For me, Siegfried *is* the forest, while everyone else is either Siegfried or a fragment of him." Translated visually, Girard describes how "[...] about twenty bodies will be suspended above Siegfried's head as fragments of his psyche, while all the characters – Mime, the bear, the Wanderer/Wotan, the dragon – will be dressed like Siegfried. It is a kind of Jungian approach, showing everything existing in someone's mind, through Siegfried's personal lens."

The one exception to this pattern of psychological identification is Brünnhilde, the God Wotan's favourite daughter. At the conclusion of *Die Walküre*, Wotan remorsefully condemns

Brünnhilde to an imprisoning sleep on a fire-encircled mountain rock as punishment for her gross disobedience. It is said then, and reiterated early in *Siegfried*, that only a hero who knows no fear will one day penetrate the ring of fire, awaken the Walküre and claim her as bride. "She is the only character not dressed like Siegfried, because once he has connected the fragments of his past, of his self, Siegfried is ready to meet 'the other'. She is Brünnhilde," explains Girard. "Their third Act scene crowning the evening of *Siegfried* is one of the most musically beautiful, and touchingly human, sequences of the cycle."

The challenging visual and dramatic interpretation put forth by Girard was realised in collaboration with Michael Levine, the COC's *Ring* designer and director of *Das Rheingold*, who is described as the project's all-purpose 'glue'. Having previously worked together to create the acclaimed COC's Stravinsky double-bill of *Symphony of Psalms* and *Oedipus Rex* in 1997 (revived in 2002), Girard praises Levine as "a truly great artist." He adds, "For me this is Michael's *Ring*. He is the one making the connections, pulling the ideas together into a completely organic process." Generating sets and costumes to accommodate the wishes of four different directors, including Girard's, while at the same time retaining a sense of integrity to the whole certainly is a daunting task. "*Siegfried* is one stop on a longer journey," Girard comments, further lauding Levine's creative versatility. "While Michael is drawing the continuity, in this opera we are able to add this spontaneous extra dimension of re-framing everything through Siegfried's own eyes."

Along this journey of self discovery, Siegfried slays the dragon Fafner, claiming the powerful ring formerly in the dragon's keep for his own; he then kills his duplicitous ward Mime. Finally, in a haunting confrontation with Wotan, whom he does not know or recognize, Siegfried humbles his once mighty grandfather to fatalistic resignation.

But not only does *Siegfried* tell the story of a character's maturation, it also encompasses an important span of development in the composer's own life. "It is fascinating to see how the man changed, to see what he discarded and what new meanings he discovered along the way," Girard comments as he reflects on the biographical parallels between Siegfried and Wagner's own life.

Wagner began work on a 'pre-quel' to his outline for *Götterdämmerung* (or *Twilight of the Gods*) in the late 1840s, and started compositional sketches for *Siegfried* in tandem with *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* in 1851. He completed the first two operas and was working on the second Act of *Siegfried* when other projects forced

him to set the *Ring* aside. It was not until the late 1860s, by which time he had written *Tristan und Isolde* (1865) and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1868), that Wagner returned to his epic project. But, while the leitmotifs established decades earlier still formed the kernel of his musical language, a full twenty years separated the beginning of Wagner's work on *Siegfried* from its completion (1871). In the intervening period, Wagner's harmonic and motivic sophistication had radically advanced, as had shifted some of the composer's thematic preoccupations. Thus, *Siegfried* does not only reveal itself as a study of one character's evolution, but it also charts the musical and intellectual maturation of its creator.

The composer's background is, for Girard, of keen significance. As director he feels that, "The musical journey of *Siegfried* is as important as its theatrical dimension." Girard reveals how he imagines a "bare, clear slow-moving" staging, which he hopes will reflect Wagner's 'hanging world'. "It is my great ambition," he continues, "to achieve the dramatic force [of the opera], yet let the music speak for itself. The challenge is to re-scale the audience's 'clocking' to make the experience of four hours feel like one breath." With a genuine sense of wonder in his voice, Girard expresses his desire to "reach the meditative state of the music."

Heading to rehearsals in a few short weeks, Girard is well aware of the inevitable comparisons his *Siegfried* will have to bear with last season's *Die Walküre*, not least because that production's stage director, Atom Egoyan, has also made his reputation primarily as a film director. "I know Atom well," Girard graciously comments, "and deeply respect his work. I did not attend his rehearsals last year, but we have certainly talked about our thoughts on the *Ring*." That said, audiences might be encountering an aesthetic different from Egoyan's come January. Whereas Egoyan was particularly interested in evoking many of the 'extra-dramatic' moral and political themes underlying Wagner's work, Girard seems confident that strong images and clear storytelling will be sufficient for the ideas to be self-generating. "The work," he sums up, "ultimately belongs to the audience. All connections are possible, new layers, new meanings will continue to bounce back at you. It is this continuous flow of ideas that makes the *Ring* so great." COC audiences shall soon get a taste of these interesting ideas as they discover what *Siegfried* looks like through François Girard's eyes. ■

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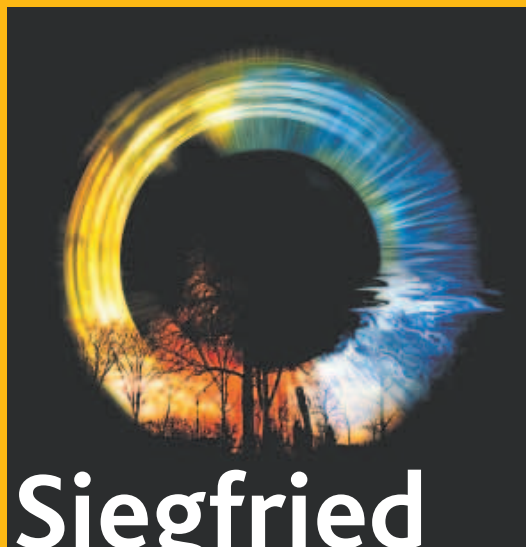
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ROBERT JORDAN

WHEN SHE WAS APPOINTED THE NEW MUSIC DIRECTOR OF THE VICTORIA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA LAST YEAR, TANIA MILLER SIMULTANEOUSLY BECAME THE FIRST FEMALE AND THE SECOND-YOUNGEST PERSON (AFTER YANNICK NÉZET-SÉGUIN, MUSIC DIRECTOR OF THE ORCHESTRE MÉTROPOLITAIN DU GRAND MONTRÉAL) TO LEAD A MAJOR CANADIAN ORCHESTRA. Along with Peter Oundjian, music director of the Toronto Symphony, she is one of only three Canadian-born conductors leading major orchestras in the country. For someone in her mid-thirties who did not take up conducting seriously until the age of 25, Miller has come a long way in a very short time.

Of course, there are those curmudgeonly enough to dispute that the Victoria Symphony is a *major* Canadian orchestra. But even if the orchestras in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec are bigger bands with larger budgets, none is more plucky and resourceful – nor more beloved by its community – than Victoria's 50-member symphony orchestra.

A sense of community has always been important to Miller, who was born into a not-particularly-musical family in Foam Lake, Saskatchewan, a small dot on the highway about two hours northeast of Regina. Not a likely place, one might think, to foster a symphony orchestra conductor. Nonetheless, Miller has nothing but praise for her town of origin.

"I was fortunate to be in a small community that absolutely supported the arts and to have parents that supported the arts," she stresses earnestly over the phone from her Vancouver home. "It was a normal thing for parents of that time to put their children into piano lessons, organ lessons, choir, that sort of thing. I was the one person in the family that was going in that direction."

Miller remembers attending her first orchestra concert at the age of 16 – the Regina Symphony played Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. "It had a huge impact on me," she says. "The sound of that orchestra and watching somebody else up there was all part of forming my desire to become a conductor."

After high school, Miller entered the music program – "an excellent one," she remarks enthusiastically – at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. During her university years, she played the organ and piano and worked with bands and choirs, a task which required that she do some musical directing. Somewhere along the way, probably when she was the organist and choir director at Saint Thomas-Wesley United Church in Saskatoon, the impetus to conduct began to gather momentum. "All of this was, for me, still not quite right," she remembers. "I enjoyed working with the kids and was inspired by that but I knew there was something else I wanted to do – that I wanted to conduct more."

So much so that she enrolled in conducting courses at the University of Calgary for three straight summers after graduating from the

University of Saskatchewan. During her second year there, she met H. Robert Reynolds who invited her to come to the University of Michigan as his student. "That was really my big break because I probably wouldn't have had the courage to go off to Michigan without somebody saying, 'Come!'. It was from that point on that I began to look at conducting as my next step."

Reynolds was only one of many influential teachers at Michigan. Some of these mentors include Kenneth Kiesler, from whom she learned technical conducting skills, as well as how to decipher a score in order to fully understand a composer's intentions. Miller admits learning a great deal too from Martin Katz, one of the world's most influential opera coaches. Nevertheless, it is harpsichordist Edward Parmentier whom she credits as having had the most profound influence on her musical thinking.

"He was the type of musician who didn't go anywhere halfway," she says. "Every place he went was something he believed in with such conviction. For him every musical phrase needed to be taken apart and studied carefully and he needed to make music something that was extraordinary every time. He showed me how important the detail in each musical phrase was and it applied, for me, to everything I did from then on. His real depth of commitment to the music was very inspiring."

Thanks to the synergy of many highly gifted student colleagues around her, Miller found the atmosphere at Michigan, where she obtained both her Master's and Doctorate of Musical Arts, inspiring enough to create opportunities of her own. In 1998, she founded Michigan Opera Works whose first production was Handel's *Semele*. Her podium abilities attracted the attention of German conductor Bruno Weil, who invited her to become assistant conductor at the prestigious Carmel Bach Festival in California.

Beginning in 2000, she was assistant and then associate conductor of the Vancouver Symphony for four years. Meanwhile, long-time music director Peter McCoppin relinquished his post with the Victoria Symphony. Dutch conductor Kees Bakels took over for a couple of seasons, but as of 2001, the orchestra found itself looking for a music director once more. This time, it searched diligently for two years before deciding on Miller. So far, no one seems to be disputing the choice.

Miller certainly seems to be hitting it off with the Vancouver Island critics. "The calibre of the concert was truly world-class," opined *Times Colonist* critic Adrian Chamberlain of the Victoria Symphony's Butchart Gardens concert last Labor Day weekend. "A fine performance with much excellent detail and a genuine feel for the architecture of the work," wrote Deryk Barker ten days later in the same newspaper about Miller's rousing interpretation of Leoš Janáček's brassy, rhythmic *Sinfonietta*. "The audience was buzzing after the first half of the evening at her passionate conducting of two very diverse selections," raved Lexi Baines in the *Cowichan Valley Citizen* when Miller

Victoria

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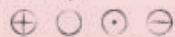


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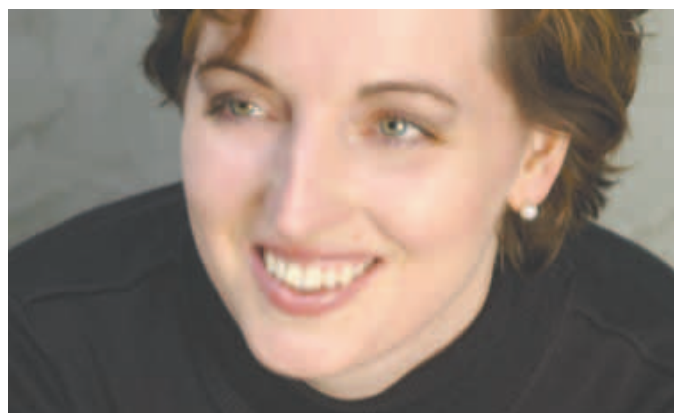
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led the orchestra in a repeat performance of the Janáček concert. Since critics are usually enthusiastic about the new music director in town, time alone will tell whether or not the buoyant reviews continue.

Frequently described in those reviews is the positive response of the audience – Miller generates an enthusiasm that keeps them coming back for more. Not to worry, the music director is sure to have plenty for them to choose from. With strong ideas about repertoire choices, Miller is more than willing to explain to the audience what there is to hear, especially in less familiar pieces. "I try to talk a little bit at each concert to make a connection with the audience about the music," she explains. "I also think it's good if you can look specifically at a few composers in a season so people can get an understanding of who Janáček really was or what other symphonies Tchaikovsky actually wrote. I also feel strongly that every program must have something that is new or fresh to an audience, along with something that is mainstream."

There certainly is no shortage of music outside the mainstream symphonic repertoire that would be not only fresh for most concertgoers, but accessible and enjoyable as well. Take for instance the orchestral works from two classic films from 1945: Miklos Rozsa's piano concerto from *Spellbound* and the "Concerto Macabre" penned by Bernard Herrmann for *Hangover Square*. Despite possessing tremendous dramatic and



Photos: Destrube Photography

atmospheric power in the context of the films for which they were written, these two works seldom appear on orchestra programs. With solid musical values of their own, there is no reason for these works to be ignored thinks Miller, and if her initial inquiries reach fruition, pianist Sarah Davis Buechner should appear with the Victoria Symphony next season to perform them.

Although bios and press releases insist she works extensively in Baroque and contemporary music, Miller's musical empathies are in fact much broader. "In the last five years, I've been working in every period and love to work in every period," she explains. "I feel confident in the kind of work I do with the Romantic and Classical repertoire when I work with orchestras."

"I'm very passionate about Classical repertoire and am always thrilled to be working with Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven," she continues, "but at the same time, I love the depth, the long phrases and lines of the Romantic repertoire. Brahms, for instance, has always been one of my favorite composers. I can also turn around and say that I love the rhythm and energy of Stravinsky and some of the more contemporary repertoire."

"My goal in Victoria is to make live classical music exciting and thrilling so that people just don't want to miss the performances and want to be a part of what we are doing," Miller says firmly. "The struggle for orchestras is how to bring audiences along with them. There's such a wide variety of composers and repertoire out there that audiences have perhaps not made a connection with them."

Even if those grumbling curmudgeons are correct about the Victoria Symphony not being a major Canadian orchestra, their assessment merely leaves the door wide open for Miller to walk through. Thus far it appears she has the requisite determination, musical skills and rapport with musicians and audiences alike to turn it into an absolutely top-flight ensemble. ■

Info: victoriasymphony.ca



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The Vancouver Recital Society—25 Years of Possible

DANIELLE DUBOIS

Artistic director of the Vancouver Recital Society Leila Getz. Photo: Chick Rice

WHEN LEILA GETZ FOUNDED THE VANCOUVER RECITAL SOCIETY (VRS) IN 1980, PEOPLE TOLD HER THE DAYS OF RECITALS WERE OVER. “THEY THOUGHT I WAS NUTS!” EXCLAIMS THE ORGANIZATION’S ARTISTIC DIRECTOR. NOW RECOGNIZED AS A LAUNCHING PAD FOR YOUNG TALENT, THE VRS HAS ALWAYS PUT THE EMPHASIS ON MUSICAL EDUCATION. “I strive to have more people understand the incredible quality and special magic of the music presented to them,” she says. “If audience members walk out of a concert feeling better than they did going in, I’m happy.”

Over the years, Getz has proved that it is possible to awaken the public’s interest in previously unknown talent. “The music world is small,” claims Getz, who adds that it is often through reading and word of mouth that she hears of promising young artists. Yet what power of divination allows her to distinguish great artistry from the merely adequate? “You can tell a lot from a tape of a live performance,” comments Getz, for whom an intimate setting is key in the presentation of chamber music.

The list of artists who have delighted Vancouver audiences is indeed impressive; on it figure such greats as Anne Sofie von Otter, András Schiff, Joshua Bell, Steven Isserlis, Bryn Terfel, Angela Cheng, Scott St. John, James Ehnes, Richard Raymond and Jon Kimura Parker.

With a track record that has made it a model for presenters across North America, it is not surprising that audience members of the VRS, such as Diane Merrill, have come to trust Leila Getz’s instinct. A resident of Bellingham, Washington, Merrill and her husband often make the 50-mile trek to Vancouver, weather permitting. “We are the co-discoverers of wonderful new talent,” says Merrill, who comments that many of her friends living in other locations south of the border have to go to New York to hear concerts comparable to those she attends in Vancouver.

With over 2000 subscribers, the VRS can count on a core of 700 loyal music lovers to fill the seats of the Vancouver Playhouse, the Orpheum Theatre and the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts year after year. Audiences are drawn by the hope and excitement of perhaps hearing the new Yo-Yo Ma, Cecilia Bartoli or Maxim Vengerov, all artists who appeared in the VRS’s series long before becoming household names.

Audience members are not the only ones who keep coming back to the VRS’s series – established musicians often make appreciated returns as well. There are no fancy receptions and hefty pay checks to lure them, only a sense of proximity with the public, which is readily observable on stage as well as in the wings, where audience members are welcome to speak with the performers. The orchestration of such meetings by the VRS has had lasting effects – both musicians and audience members have met and married under its auspices! Although this familial atmosphere has by now become second nature within the VRS, it was, at the beginning, a simple matter of necessity. Getz speaks warmly of her family residence serving as both hotel and practice studio. This explains perhaps how her dog Figaro came to develop a particularly keen musical sensibility. “When someone great plays, he always lies under the piano, while when it’s me or anyone else, he couldn’t care less,” says Getz.

The amicable atmosphere is one of the reasons Getz never tires of her job:

“That’s why so many great musicians love to come back and are ready to do anything for us.” In lean years gone past, anything has sometimes meant playing benefit concerts. Despite the VRS’s success, staying afloat has been a constant battle. Revenues from ticket sales (55 to 60 per cent) are for the most part topped off by fundraising and corporate sponsorships. The newest sponsor is HSBC Securities, the first corporate sponsor to fund an entire season of concerts – a timely gift perhaps, but one that testifies to the difficulty of securing support for the arts.

Apart from its regular recital series, the VCR hosts the Vancouver Chamber Music & Song Festival. First organized for Expo 1986, the festival welcomes young musicians from all over the planet and pairs them up. Although most have never performed together before, the results are often astounding. This commitment on the part of the VRS to youth also extends to the young people in the audience. In an effort to foster a love of music in a younger public, the VRS recently created a Youth Club which offers children and teenagers aged 8 to 17 discounted tickets, advantageous seats and additional occasions to meet with performers. “Because both the performers and the spectators are young, they relate to each other very well,” explains Getz, who is herself the mother of two children.

Hard Work Rewarded

Leila Getz’s determination has been recognized by numerous awards, among them the Order of Canada in 1995. Despite such recognition, the artistic director remains humble. “I don’t have time to think about what I do or how I’ve done this. However, it’s when I see Grigory Sokolov’s DVD Live in Paris that I realize how lucky we are to have such wonderful performers come here,” she comments. Patrons such as Diane Merrill agree. However, in her fan letter to Getz she attributes this luck to the genius of the artistic director herself. Getz was first introduced to music in her hometown of Capetown, South Africa, where she began taking music lessons at the age of five. Growing up, she remembers hearing such greats as Yonty Solomon and Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli perform – she was even the designated page turner for many concerts of the such.

Her fierce determination combined with passion is what kept Getz’s dedication to the VRS alive. “I worked for nothing for six years but I got a wonderful education,” says the artistic director who adds that, when accepting awards, she often thinks of those doing similar work as in smaller communities. In the last 25 years, she has remained faithful to her philosophy: “The most important thing is to know what you don’t know and look for answers. The second is to have a sense of humour and tenacity,” advises Getz who says she’s not ready to retire any time soon.

To celebrate its quarter century, the VRS has invited Yefim Bronfman, a performer in its very first series, to play Schumann and Prokofiev. Tickets for the November 28th performance are being sold starting at \$7 apiece, the same price they were at Bronfman’s Vancouver recital debut in 1981. It should be an evening of celebration and remembrance sure to be accompanied by a due measure of nostalgia. ■

Reviews

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★★★★★ a must!
 ★★★★★ excellent
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Reviewers

JKS Joseph K. So
 MV Michael Vincent
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ORCHESTRAL

Robert Simpson: Orchestral Works

Symphony No. 11, Variations on a Theme
 by Carl Nielsen: City of London Sinfonia,
 Matthew Taylor, conductor
 Hyperion CDA67500 (54 min 55 s)

★★★★★ \$\$\$\$

A prolific composer of symphonies and string quartets, Robert Simpson, who died in 1997, occupied a unique position in British music. An authority on the music of Beethoven, Bruckner, Sibelius and Nielsen, Simpson edited the two volumes of *The Symphony* (published in 1966 and 1967), which remain key references for the analysis of the essence of symphonic form. This CD issued by Hyperion constitutes the last of the cycle which was begun eight years ago. Indispensable for Simpson admirers, it lives up to the excellent recordings of the previously released Symphonies Nos. 1–10 under the direction of Vernon Handley. Designed in two movements for a Classical-sized orchestra, Symphony No. 11 is more intimate than its two immediate predecessors; this makes it a persuasive starting point for collectors unacquainted with the ingenious Simpson and his music. The opening of Symphony No. 11 offers a seductive *Andante* while the second movement advances to an inexorable climax with a strange, rustling coda. Simpson dedicated the 1990 composition to Matthew Taylor who directs what can be considered the definitive account here. The Nielsen Variations (1983), a perfect complement to the symphony, is emblematic of Simpson in his expansive good humour. The album is dedicated



to the memory of Ted Perry, the late founder of the Hyperion label and the man responsible for providing us with the full measure of Simpson's music on record. **WSH**

Mieczyslaw Weinberg: Symphonies, Vol. 2

Symphony No. 4, Rhapsody on Moldavian Themes, Sinfonietta No. 2: National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra (Katowice), Gabriel Chimura, conductor
 Chandos CHAN 10237 (59 min 56 s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

The life of Mieczyslaw Weinberg (1919–1996), known in the USSR as Moishe Vainberg, could provide sufficient material for a dramatic TV mini-series. 1903 saw his family flee the deadly anti-Jewish pogroms of their native Moldavia. In 1939, Weinberg escaped the German invasion of Poland which later claimed the lives of his parents and sister. He found refuge in the Soviet Union and continued musical studies in Minsk. Evacuation to Tashkent followed, but when Dmitry Shostakovich found much to admire in Weinberg's First Symphony, a relocation to Moscow was arranged in 1943. Other notable events in Weinberg's life include the murder of his father-in-law, a prominent Jewish theatrical figure, by the secret police in 1948. In 1953, Weinberg was himself arrested on charges of Zionist conspiracy. Nonetheless, Shostakovich's support and the timely expiration of Stalin brought Weinberg liberty, and he went on to a prolific composing career.

While he may have written his music in the USSR, the Katowice musicians and Gabriel Chimura reclaim Weinberg for Poland with this second volume of the Weinberg symphony cycle from Chandos. To an even greater degree than Volume 1 (which coupled Symphony No. 5 and Sinfonietta No. 1 - CHAN 10128), it heralds the re-emergence of a 20th century symphonist of distinction. Dedicated to Revol Bunin, another persecuted composer, the Symphony No. 4 which was first performed in 1961 is given a thrilling performance here. Particularly worth sampling is the immaculate horn solo which opens the third movement and the dancing finale of the fourth. The couplings are also of the highest quality and an authoritative booklet note is provided by Per Skans. The remaining 24 symphonies and chamber symphonies in the Weinberg cycle have definitely become a delicious prospect. **WSH**

Dmitry Shostakovich: Ballet Suites Nos. 1–4

Russian Philharmonic Orchestra,
 Dmitry Yablonsky, conductor
 Naxos 8557208 (60 min 07 s)

★★★★☆ \$

Shostakovich found himself in an awkward position between Zhdanov's 1948 purge of the 'formalists', and Stalin's death in 1953. To make a living, he turned to composing film scores and patriotic music; his serious works were covertly filed away in a drawer. The four ballet suites Shostakovich composed during this period were confections of earlier

works edited by Levon Atovmyan. The recycling exercise was intended to yield light music suitable for radio broadcasts. Of the total 21 numbers, eleven were extracted from the ballet *The Limpid Stream*, proscribed during the 1930s in the wake of the Lady Macbeth scandal. Thrown into this melee were also bits and pieces gathered from film scores and other sources. Result: the ballet suites are not traditional 'dance music', nor are they light. They are nevertheless well conceived pieces which dance, float, dive, turn somersaults, and have audiences laughing up their sleeves. Particularly thrilling is the Suite No. 2, where Dmitry Yablonsky puts down his baton to give us an eloquent cello solo. The playing of the Russian Philharmonic under his direction is even better than that of its single competitor (N. Järvi and the Scottish National Orchestra, CHAN 7000/1). Note that Yablonsky has previously recorded *The Bolt Suite* (Naxos 8555949), which is the basis for the Ballet Suite No. 5. **WSH**

Arthur Honegger: Orchestral Works

Symphony No. 3 'Liturgique', Pastoral d'été,
 Mouvements symphoniques: Rugby, Pacific 231
 and No. 3: New Zealand Symphony Orchestra,
 Takuo Yuasa, conductor
 Naxos 8555974 (65 min 04 s)

★★★★☆ \$

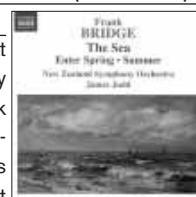
Composed in 1945–46, Honegger's Symphony No. 3 is an agonizing portrayal of the horror, obscenity and devastation of the war. Anyone having heard Herbert von Karajan's classic account of the work (DG 447 435-2) knows to what extent his personal experience of the destruction influenced his interpretation. There is no doubt that Takuo Yuasa's marginally less intense relation with the symphony favours the clarity of its long lines – the performance is of exceptional quality. The New Zealand SO demonstrates, especially by its rendition of the *Liturgique* which is scored for a very large orchestra (triple woodwind, 4 horns, piano, percussion and strings), that it can slug it out in the heavyweight division and triumph. Also noteworthy is the remainder of the programme which is rendered with piquant and elegance. A worthwhile addition to any collection of 20th century music. **WSH**

Frank Bridge: Orchestral Works

Enter Spring, The Sea, Summer, Two Poems
 for Orchestra: New Zealand Symphony Orchestra,
 James Judd, conductor
 Naxos 20th Century British 8557167 (62 min 17 s)

★★★★☆ \$

This disc provides a great introduction to the vividly expressive music of Frank Bridge (1879–1941). It contains excellent performances of three of his most significant works: *The Sea* (1911), *Summer* (1915), and *Enter Spring* (1927). Bridge is recognized as the most progressive British composer of his day, and the first to forego key signatures in the manner of Alban Berg. In the sixty-plus years having elapsed since



his death, Bridge has chiefly been remembered as the musical mentor of the juvenile Benjamin Britten. Renewed interest in his music has been generated by the appearance of a complete cycle of the orchestral music from Richard Hickox and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. The inconvenience of the Chandos series, which has reached Volume 5, is that the works cited above are spread among three full-priced discs. While Hickox draws dynamic playing from the Welshmen, James Judd's musicians produce more spontaneous and idiomatic, if lighter-toned, performances. The Naxos bargain alternative is therefore recommended without reservation to those making their first acquaintance with Bridge. **WSH**

Gustav Mahler: Symphony No. 9

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra,
Riccardo Chailly, conductor

Decca 475 6191 (89 min 56 s - 2 Hybrid SACDs)

★★★★★ \$

"Tradition is sloppiness!" exclaimed Gustav Mahler, the conductor, whenever precedent was cited to oppose his creative intentions at the Court Opera in Vienna. When it comes to Gustav Mahler the composer however, there is a lot to be said for tradition in Amsterdam. The first orchestra to perform all of the Mahler symphonies, the Concertgebouw has put its sacred trust in the hands of masters such as Willem Mengelberg, Eduard van Beinum and Bernard Haitink. This set, conducted by Riccardo Chailly, is an impressive addition to the tradition. Chailly can certainly not be accused of "squeeze[ing] out the face-flannels of Mahler's exhibitionist self-pity," as the famous British record producer, Walter Legge, once put it. Rather, Chailly presents the music in accordance with his objective view of it. His approach reveals that there was plenty of life left in Mahler, even as he became aware of impending mortality. Contemplation of death is flanked in this performance with rugged good humour, contempt for absurdity, and the sheer joy of creative power. This outlook is as fresh and challenging as Chailly's recent account of the Third, which is once again made possible by an outstanding orchestra, as well as expert engineering. Recorded immediately following a performance of the symphony at Chailly's farewell concert this past June, it is the concluding issue in the conductor's distinguished Mahler cycle for Decca. This recording deserves shelf space beside von Karajan's 1982 version from DG. **WSH**



VOCAL

Ludwig van Beethoven: Missa Solemnis

(Coupled with the Violin Concerto) Jascha Heifetz, violin, Jussi Bjoerling, Zinka Milanov, Bruna Castagna, Alexander Kipnis, The Westminster Choir, NBC Symphony Orchestra, Arturo Toscanini, conductor
Guild 2248/9 (121 min 05 s - 2 CDs)

★★★★☆ \$

Eleanor Streber, Nan Merriman, William Hain, Lorenzo Alvary, The Westminster Choir, New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, Bruno Walter, conductor

Music and Arts CD 1142(1) (78 min 06 s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$

There exist two Golden Age live performances of the *Missa solemnis*. Toscanini's, the subject of this new release, was recorded at a benefit concert on December 28th, 1940. The Walter performance closed the Philharmonic's season eight years later. Most collectors of vintage material will make their choice on the basis of ingrained preference for respective conductors. It can be said that Toscanini directs the more dramatic account while Walter's is more visionary and humane. Relative timings are very close between the two. This is important to note since Toscanini became swifter with advancing years. In the opening *Kyrie*, it is probable his trumpets and timpani red-zoned the sound engineer's gauges. Although this type of eruptive emphasis is characteristic of the entire performance, it is interesting to discover the extent to which Toscanini exploits the details of the musical shifts in Beethoven's score. His version offers quite a contrast to the Walter interpretation which the eminent critic of the day, Olin Downes, described in the following manner: "It had such sweep and vision ...Details and property were secondary considerations."

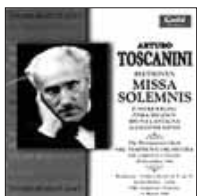
The other feature of the Toscanini disc is Jascha Heifetz's March 1940 performance of the Violin Concerto. Hearing Heifetz come off automatic pilot at bar 300 and powerfully engage with the Concerto is enough to make this CD worthwhile. **WSH**

Arvo Pärt: Choral Works

Cantate Domino Canticum Novum (Psalm 95), Berliner Messe, De Profundis, Summa, The Beatitudes, Magnificat: Jurgen Petrenko, organ, Elora Festival Singers and Orchestra, Noel Edison, director
Naxos 20th Century Choral 8557299 (52 min 12 s)

★★★★☆ \$

This selection of some of Pärt's most approachable music is timely indeed. The Elora forces perform these exquisitely wrought devotional works grounded in Gregorian chant in a style sure to console and comfort all souls in these turbulent times. For this recording, Noel Edison chose the 1997 revision of the *Berliner Messe* which is written for choir with string accompaniment, as is the *Magnificat* of 1989. The choir rides Jurgen Petrenko's subtle organ pedal for the *Cantate Domino*. A low-lying organ *ostinato* is also featured



in *De Profundis*, along with a bass drum and tubular bell. Interesting also are *The Beatitudes* of 1990-91, Pärt's first setting of an English text. With the help of his radiant voices and perceptive instrumentalists, Edison illuminates each item in the programme. The effects achieved are remarkable and nowhere more so than in the *Summa*, a work of faith composed in a repressive communist state. Religious conviction is not absolutely necessary to be moved to introspection by these performances; an all-embracing spiritual aura is freely dispensed to all listeners. **WSH**

Cleopatra

Arias from operas by Graun, Hasse, Handel, and Mattheson

Isabel Bayrakdarian, soprano

Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra,

Jeanne Lamon, music director

CBC Records SMCD 5233 (66m 18s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$

It is our great good fortune that the newest international star, Canadian Isabel Bayrakdarian, continues to record for a Canadian label – this CD represents her third solo album for CBC Records. Taped in conjunction with a series of concerts with Tafelmusik in Toronto last winter, the unifying theme on the disc is *Cleopatra* by various Baroque composers, a brainchild of CBC producer Neil Crory. Other than the familiar Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, the selections are rare gems; the Mattheson opera actually represents a world premiere recording. The Hasse arias come from *Marc Antonio e Cleopatra* which Bayrakdarian sang in Paris last season. With her ingratifyingly bright tone and sparkling coloratura, coupled with a vivid personality that shines through in no uncertain terms, Bayrakdarian is at home in this repertoire – sufficient proof is provided by the opening aria, a 7-plus minute *tour de force* of non-stop coloratura taken at a very brisk tempo which is enough to tax the resources of any singer. Her *staccato* attacks which barely miss achieving a Bartoli-like precision are without the hard-edged aggressiveness of the Italian diva. Much of it is exciting, on-the-edge singing, and a testament to Bayrakdarian's technique. The Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra under its long-time director Jeanne Lamon sounds full and rich, even if the tempo seems occasionally driven. The recorded sound is cool and spacious. Given the unfamiliarity of the program, brief but pithy notes by Crory himself are most welcome. Another winner. **JKS**



Alfred Deller: Portrait of a Legend

Selections from opera, stage music, sacred, solo, and folk songs

Alfred Deller, countertenor

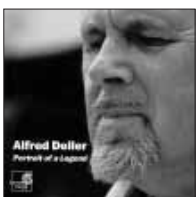
Harmonia Mundi HMX 290.261.64

(4 CDs; 213m 47s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the death of

Alfred Deller, who died in 1979 at the age of 67. Harmonia Mundi has issued this commemorative edition, drawn from the label's extensive archives. Given the current countertenor craze, one easily forgets that not too long ago, a man singing in the alto range was considered a curiosity at best. In this respect, Deller was a pioneer in bringing respectability and acceptance to the countertenor voice, especially in early music. Deller's sound may have lacked the size and richness to equal the likes of current countertenors David Daniels and Andreas Scholl, but his instantly recognizable lyric timbre and the impeccable musicianship he demonstrated in everything he did more than makes up for it. Listeners will get a good idea of his artistry from the over 200 minutes of music provided on the four discs. Particularly enjoyable are the folk songs which have a disarming simplicity. Testimonials from famous musicians, among them René Jacobs and Nikolaus Harnoncourt, can be found in the nicely produced booklet. Though these recordings were made in the last decade of his life, Deller's voice was still fresh, with little diminution of power. Not meant to be heard in a single sitting unless you are an incurable countertenor buff, devotees of Deller and early music in general will find much pleasure from frequent samplings. **JKS**



CHAMBER MUSIC

J.S. Bach: Keyboard Works

Fantasia and Fugue in A minor, BWV904 & BWV944, Aria Variata, BWV989, Sonata in D major, BWV 963, Partie in A Major, BWV832, Suite in F minor, BWV 823, Adagio in G major, BWV968, Fugue in C major, BWV953, Jesu, meine Zuversicht, BWV728, Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten, BWV691: Angela Hewitt, piano

Hyperion SACDA67499 (SACD Hybrid - 67 min 42 s)

★★★★★ \$\$\$\$

This is the fourteenth and concluding disc in Angela Hewitt's survey of the solo keyboard works of J.S. Bach. Although this CD is nothing short of a miscellany, there is no hint of a 'last things' approach to the music. In



fact, the sequence of the disc's 32 tracks work very well as a recital. The recording begins and ends with pieces entitled, *Fantasia and Fugue in A minor* which originated in the composer's Weimar period (1714-1717). The most substantial work in between is the *Aria Variata 'alla Maniera Italiana'* with its ten variations. As always, every miniature piece receives its full due. Hewitt has already exhausted the supply of critical superlatives in her devotion to Bach. Those who have loyally followed the Hyperion cycle will find that this terminal issue meets and exceeds the stringent standards which she set for herself. Hewitt presents a Bach of sensitivity and integrity for our time and always. Enjoyment of the disc is enhanced by the performer's lively and informative booklet note. Conventional CD sound quality is in the demonstration class. SACD playback (stereo is preferable to multi-channel) is as close as most of us will ever get to having Miss Hewitt and her concert Steinway perform in our listening rooms. **WSH**

CONTEMPORARY

Dove: Flight

An Opera in Three Acts

C. Robson, C. McFadden, R. Coxon, M. Plazas, N. Willis, A. Taylor, G. Magee, S. Page, A. Mason, R. Van Allan

Live performance (September 1999)

from Glyndebourne Festival Opera

London Philharmonic Orchestra,

David Parry, conductor

CHANDOS 10197(2) (2 CDs; 129m 12s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

A success at its Glyndebourne premiere in 1999, Jonathan Dove's airport opera, *Flight*, was staged by Antwerp Opera two seasons ago and is to be revived at Glyndebourne next summer. Dove's musical language is pleasant and accessible, if not particularly memorable – the orchestration is dramatically apt but rather formulaic. With a surfeit of melodrama and intentional comic touches squeezed into a little over two hours, the opera has the feel of musical theatre. The accompanying essay claims this opera contains the first onstage childbirth – although only by a few months as Poul Ruders' *The Handmaid's Tale*, premiered in 2000, also has a birthing scene, albeit



under much less pleasant circumstances. The best music is reserved for the two leads, Bill (Richard Coxon) and Tina (Mary Plazas) who both sing beautifully. Countertenor Christopher Robson is impossibly shrill as the Refugee, fact that is not helped by the deliberately hysterical vocal line; ditto for the Controller (soprano Claron McFadden), whose music is a mix of Brünnhilde and Queen of the Night. Still, this opera probably makes for entertaining theatre. Taped live, there is plenty of audience reaction in the form of laughter and applause, making one wish the visual element to complement the sound were present. David Parry leads the London Philharmonic with a sure hand, and the sound is excellent for a live recording. A good choice for the curiously-minded. **JKS**

Les Scènes de Quartiers: Music of Patrick Roux

Canadian Guitar Quartet

Electra, ECCD-2064 (55 min 9 s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

The rising popularity of guitar quartets is surprising. Gone are the days of the typical Segovian solo classical guitarist. It is now commonplace to find brilliant classical guitarists shunning solo concert careers in favour of forming duos (Sérgio and Odair Assad), trios (Montreal Guitar Trio) and quartets (Canadian Guitar Quartet). Quartet fever is still fervent with The Canadian Guitar Quartet, who has just recently released its second album entitled *Les Scènes de Quartiers*. The CD features an array of compositions written by its most prominent member, Patrick Roux. Although the ensemble playing successfully brings out the numerous subtleties of Roux's Piazzolla-inspired compositions, the pieces themselves are often lacklustre. The album begins with a collection of five short pieces entitled "Tango contretemps/Go" that attempt to capture the split personality of tango music (angular and rhythmic versus sensuous and lyrical). The album moves smoothly into various programmatic works such as "Bidonville" – a musical depiction of a Brazilian shantytown – and "Clin d'Oeil au Bal de Quartier" – a delightful interpretation of the first meeting of Roux's parents in Marseille, France. Perhaps the most standout piece on the album is "Carnival", which explodes into a dazzling display of virtuosic



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excitement! The CD concludes with a lukewarm concerto for guitar and orchestra, which unfortunately suffers from a flatly textured orchestration. **MV**

Zhou Long: Rhymes

Poems from Tang (1), The Rhyme of Taigu, Da Qu (2), The Future of Fire (3): Shanghai Quartet (1), Jonathan Fox, percussion (2), Philharmonic Chamber Choir, Singapore (3), Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Lan Shui, conductor
BIS-CD-1322 (69 min 52 s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$

It would be fair to conclude from the compositions featured on this disc that the music of Zhou Long (b. 1953) is more idiomatically Chinese than the orchestral works produced by his distinguished émigré colleagues. Conductor Lan Shui was a contemporary of Zhou at Beijing's Central Conservatory. In Lan's opinion, "Zhou Long was always the most individual of those Chinese composers. To me, Zhou was the most reflective, the most poetic... As a composer he creates a complete world." That last remark aptly reminds us of Gustav Mahler's famous definition of the symphony. In his compelling and unique style, Zhou gives us music of exquisite scope and of complex emotionality that we tend to associate primarily with Mahler. Zhou Long draws inspiration from the literary fragments of the Tang Dynasty. *Poems from Tang* is a 30 minute concerto for string quartet and orchestra. The first movement emerges mystically while the succeeding three project vivid orchestral whirlwinds. *The Rhyme of Taigu* for orchestra is just as forceful. Percussion is prominent in all of the pieces presented here and particularly in *Da Qu* for percussion and orchestra (21:14), a piece in which Jonathan Fox takes the lead as the energetic soloist. The CD ends with *The Future of Fire* (5:17), a wordless work for chorus and orchestra, which is derived from Zhou's personal experience of the Cultural Revolution.

For most of us, this album is a first introduction to a promising composer. The Singapore SO rises to the occasion magnificently and the Bis recording is of exceptional quality. Collectors seeking original and excitingly penetrative music should not hesitate to purchase this CD. **WSH**

DVD

Jacqueline du Pré: In Portrait

Christopher Nupen Documentary

Elgar Cello Concerto & Beethoven Ghost Trio

With Daniel Barenboim, Pinchas Zukerman, Sir John Barbirolli, the New Philharmonia Orchestra

BBC Opus Arte (155 m)

★★★★★ \$\$\$

Christopher Nupen's documentary, in which viewers are treated to a 1967 live performance of Jacqueline du Pré, is making a most welcome return on DVD. In her tragically brief career cut short by

multiple sclerosis, cellist Jacqueline du Pré displayed an exceptional musicality, technical bravura, and a heart-on-sleeve emotionalism that was uniquely her own. Although few of us had the privilege of seeing this luminous persona perform live, hearing and seeing du Pré pour her heart and soul into her music-making via recordings and film footage never fails to move. The Elgar cello concerto heard here, arguably her signature piece, set the standard by which all subsequent interpretations continue to be measured. Given her premature death, Nupen's documentary reflects an almost unbearable poignancy to du Pré's playing. (It is somewhat comforting to know that her instruments are in good hands, one being in the possession of the great Yo-Yo Ma). Included in this release is the new introduction filmed in 1981 which shows a still vital though wheelchair-bound du Pré giving bowing instructions to a student. The look du Pré gives her student, one of affection, mixed with a touch of envy and sadness, is heart-wrenching. Among the people interviewed in the documentary are her mother, Barbirolli, and her then husband Daniel Barenboim. As a bonus, we get a brief introduction by Nupen himself, a gallery of du Pré snapshots, and "Allegro Molto", a compilation of memorable moments from various documentaries on Allegro Films. This desert island disc, my first 6-star selection, is an essential addition to one's music library. **JKS**



Thomas Hampson: Voices of Our Time

Lieder from Des Knaben Wunderhorn

and Lieder und Gesänge aus der Jugendzeit

Thomas Hampson, baritone; Wolfram Rieger, piano

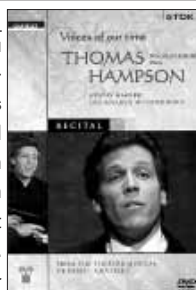
Live performance (Théâtre Musical de Paris –

Châtelet 25 October 2001)

TDK (91 m)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$

Like Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau before him, American baritone Thomas Hampson is likely to appeal to intellectual listeners. Although also an opera singer, Hampson spends a substantial amount of time on the recital stage. When attending his *liederabend*, one is always visited by a sense of nostalgia whether it be brought on by the rediscovery of a forgotten piece, or again, by a fresh interpretation of something familiar. This recording, with songs selected from the well-known Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, is no exception. Hampson presents the songs in three groups, namely 'Fables and Parables of Nature and Man', 'Humoresques and Ballads – Scenes of Separation and War', and 'Ballads and Allegories – Transcendence of Life'. Such thoughtful programming is an art in itself, and Hampson's audience is the richer for it.



The format of this series – performance interspersed with the comments of the soloist and accompanist introducing the songs – is well-suited to Hampson, as he always has interesting things to say. He begins his interview tentatively, as if at a loss for words but soon relaxes and offers us valuable insights into the music. Hampson exhibits a complete mastery of his art through the command of his medium-sized light baritone voice, which is firm and expressive. Pianist Wolfram Rieger offers the needed self-effacing support. This is undoubtedly one of the most satisfying releases from the wonderful *Voice of Our Time* series. **JKS**

W.A. Mozart: Così fan tutte

Daniela Desi (Fiordiligi), Delores Ziegler (Dorabella), Allesandro Corbelli (Guglielmo), Jozef Kundlak (Ferrando), Adelina Scarabelli (Despina), Claudio Desderi (Don Alfonso), Orchestra and Chorus of Teatro alla Scala, Riccardo Muti, conductor

Stage Director: Michale Hampe,

Video Director: Ilio Catani

Opus Arte OALS3006D (187 min) Sound 2.0

★★★★☆ \$\$\$

Opus Arte is a British DVD label which has prospered through collaboration with the BBC. It has now diversified with a mid-priced line, the 'La Scala Collection' which offers re-issues of Italian television productions. This account of *Così fan tutte* was filmed live in 1989. It is the best of the half-dozen titles released so far in the Scala collection and may very well be the finest performance of *Così* available on DVD.



Once the neglected orphan of Mozart's mature operas, *Così fan tutte* is now a star in the realm of DVD releases. There is a Glyndebourne production, a period instrument version with Sir John Eliot Gardiner and Daniel Barenboim's modern vulgarity from Berlin. Muti's *Così* goes right to the top of the list however since it succeeds in capturing the elusive spirit of the opera to a greater degree than any rival.

The musical and vocal distinction achieved here owes much to Muti's command of the score and his ideal pacing. The singers are perhaps less memorable for the solo numbers but the ensembles are examples of cohesive and sympathetic perfection. The audio balance between the stage and the pit is very fine. Marvellous sets and costumes by Mauro Pagano put the piece in perfect character.

Shortcomings? There are two minor cuts (Numbers 7 and 24). While the cinematography is excellent, we could do without seeing so much of the Maestro in action. Unfortunately, there are only English subtitles provided and the 'La Scala Collection' booklets are not terribly useful. True, full librettos are included but without any translation, these will only come in handy if you are seized by an urge to sing along with the chorus. Recommended regardless. **WSH**

P.I. Tchaikovsky: Mazeppa

Nikolai Putilin (Mazeppa), Sergei Aleksashin (Kochubey) Larissa Diadkova (Lyubov), Irina Loskutova (Maria), Viktor Lutsiuk (Andrey), Nikolai Gassiev (Drunken Cossack), Kirov Orchestra, Opera Chorus and Ballet, Valery Gergiev, conductor
Stage Director: Irina Molostova,
Video Director: Brian Large
Philips 074 194-9 (174 min) Sound: 2.0 & 5.1

★★★★☆ \$\$\$

Mazeppa has always been overshadowed in Tchaikovsky's operatic output by *Eugene Onegin* and *Pique Dame*. This DVD offers convincing evidence that when endowed with the spectacular might of the Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg, *Mazeppa* can be counted among the composer's masterpieces for the stage. Uneven in parts perhaps, the style in which this opera depicts private lives fouled in lethal affairs of state is as compelling as that of Verdi's *Don Carlos*.

The opera's many attractions include a terrific overture, Cossack pageantry with exuberant dancing, a diabolical triple-cross betrayal, a terrifying dungeon scene, a gruesome public execution, an orchestral battle interlude enhanced by an on-stage military band, a duel to the death and a mad scene to rival *Lucia*.



The historical panorama was derived by the composer and Victor Burenin from the epic poem *Poltava* by Alexander Pushkin. The eponymous Cossack Hetman was a historical figure, a vassal of Peter the Great who sided with the Swedes against Russia in 1708 and lost. It is also a historical fact that *Mazeppa* eloped with his god-daughter Maria Kochubey. In this respect, the plot is almost *Don Carlos* in reverse: the heroine ditches a virile youth in favour of an aged political windbag.

Exquisite singing and characterization, glorious playing under Gergiev, lavish costumes and intelligent set design make this production more than worthy of the standards of the Philips Mariinsky opera cycle. Collectors who have already acquired Gergiev's *Prince Igor*, *Ruslan*, *Boris* and *Pique Dame* can proceed with confidence. **WSH**

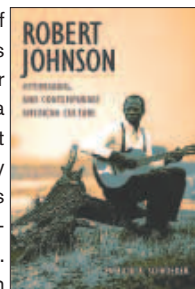
BOOK

Robert Johnson: Mythmaking and Contemporary American Culture by Patricia R. Schroeder, 192p., University of Illinois Press

★★★★☆

Let me begin by stating what this book is not: it is not a simple biography, and it is certainly not for anyone who would ask the question: "Robert Johnson... isn't he the blues guy who sold his soul to the devil?" This book, as the title implies, is a musicological study presented in two parts: the first

is an exploration of Johnson's life and death as fact, or myth, as Schroeder concludes; the second is a contextualization of Robert Johnson in contemporary culture through various media, may they be film, theatre, literature or the web. Schroeder begins with an exploration of various hypotheses surrounding the important stages of Johnson's existence, and of the critiques made by her colleagues. From there, she gradually moves from historical fact to present-day myth where Johnson is presented as a historical figure; this is her way of contextualizing the bluesman in contemporary culture, which she does by outlining fictional works where Johnson plays various symbolic roles. Johnson is pinpointed as signifier on many fronts, and Schroeder strengthens her arguments by comparing and contrasting similar works. This book is unique in that it is the first to source all the factual and the fictional information surrounding Robert Johnson and the first to identify the impact that lost or contested information has had on constructing a myth out of his life events. Although Johnson has been greatly mythologized in popular culture, I wouldn't be surprised if this book changes the overall perspective of Johnson and the way in which he is presented in the history of the blues. **MV**



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

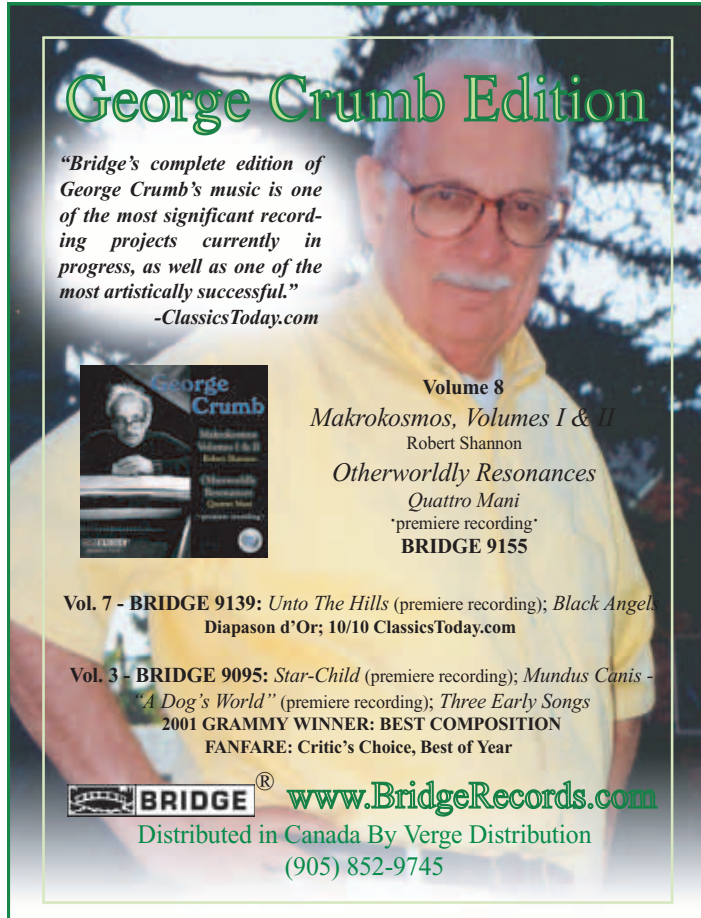
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Tamara Bernstein, *National Post*, June 21, 2004

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The Unknown Vivaldi

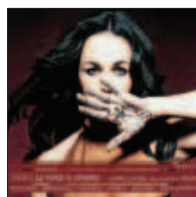
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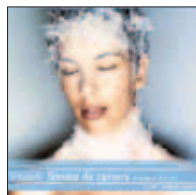
Concerti per flauto traversiere



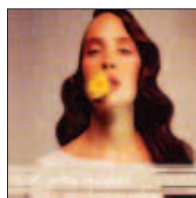
La verità in cimento



L'Olimpiade



Sonate da camera



Juditha triumphans

VIVALDI, AN UNRECOGNIZED COMPOSER? THE AFFIRMATION IS SURE TO RAISE A FEW EYEBROWS. EVERYONE KNOWS VIVALDI. Everyone can hum, or at least recognize, certain parts of his famous *Four Seasons*, one of the *Top 10* classical works of all time. Outside of his instrumental music however, there appears to be a void. True, there is the famous *Gloria*, but do the majority of music lovers know that Vivaldi composed other sacred music works as well as numerous operas? Hearing the same instrumental works repeated time and again leaves us with the impression that we know the whole of Vivaldi when in fact, a large part of his work remains neglected.

Since 2001, Naïve - Opus 111 has been working on a monumental CD edition appropriately entitled "Vivaldi Edition." Initiated by the musicologist Alberto Basso, the edition undertaken by the *Istituto per i Beni Musicali in Piemonte*, of which Basso is the president, should constitute approximately fifty recordings released over a period of 10 years. The story behind this edition is worth mentioning. Everything began at the national university library of Turin in 1930, where Antonio Vivaldi's manuscripts, after having passed through many hands in the space of two hundred years, finally found a secure resting place. The content of the 27 volumes, 450 works in all, constitutes a genuine treasure. Alberto Basso carefully reviewed these works and catalogued them into different sections: sacred and profane music, concertos for strings or for solo instrument, cantatas, operas, etc. In total, there are 296 concertos for one or many instruments, strings and bass continuo, 60 sacred works, 15 psalms, a dozen motets, three serenades of great magnitude, about thirty cantatas and another twenty operas. Some of these works had not been performed since the 18th Century and Alberto Basso, believing they deserved to be heard, began having the music published in order to make it accessible to the public. This was achieved in part thanks to the collaboration between Opus 111 and the *Istituto per i Beni Musicali in Piemonte*.

La Scena Musicale has received certain volumes of this edition – it is not an exaggeration to state that the releases are, on all levels, exceptional. Renowned baroque artists such as Barthold Kuijken and the Academia Montis Regalis, the Concerto Italiano and Rinaldo Alessandrini, the Freiburger Barockorchester and Gottfried von der Goltz were solicited for the recordings. There are, furthermore, many indications of the care given the publication: detailed notes on the works and their interpreters, explanations on the choice of interpretation of instruments like the bass continuo and the tuning fork, on the tempi, as well as on the technical details of the recording instruments used, accompany the discs. All together, these elements suffice to convince the listener of the worthiness of this previously unknown music and promises that the discoveries to come will be just as enjoyable.

Vivaldi's Instrumental Music

The large corpus of Vivaldi's instrumental works is to be found in the manuscript conserved in Turin: 307 compositions which can be performed. We will not find sonatas for a single instrument however, nor the concertos for violin composed before 1720 (there are a few rare exceptions,

conserved by Vivaldi as mementos, perhaps). Among these instrumental discs, let us signal "Sonate da camera" (OP 30252), "I Concerti di Dresda" (OP 30358) and "Concerti per flauto traversiere" (OP 30298). The latter, with Barthold Kuijken as both soloist and conductor of the Academia Montis Regalis, distinguishes itself from the two others by its sobriety. In these concertos for flute, Kuijken does not give the impression of reinventing Vivaldi; rather, he conducts and plays well aware that the music is sufficient unto itself. His playing is precise, always impeccable and without great extravagance. This is, after all, not a showy repertoire.

Vivaldi and Opera

Perhaps the greatest surprise comes from Vivaldi's operatic works. The two works presented, *L'Olimpiade*, with the Concerto Italiano directed by Rinaldo Alessandrini (OP 30316), and *La verità in cimento*, with l'Ensemble Matheus directed by Jean-Christophe Spinosi (OP 30365), are infused with great dramatic inspiration, particularly during the recitatives, where expression takes precedence over all else. Although all the arias follow the outline of the *aria da capo*, Vivaldi eludes monotony with his melodic invention and the variations he introduces. We recognize the ardour of Vivaldi's instrumental music, which is perfectly rendered by the interpretations of Alessandrini and Spinosi. I must admit having a weakness for Alessandrini since his recordings of Monteverdi's madrigals at the end of the 90s – he demonstrates yet again that he merits my affection. The orchestra is expressive and the support of the recitatives adds to the whole without restricting the rhythm of the lyrics. The same applies to the playing of Spinosi and his Ensemble Matheus, who push the contrasts yet further. In the opening Sinfonia, you might ask yourself how to adjust the volume. Still, the effects are usually justified by the action explicit in the text. There is no reason not to explore Vivaldi's operas more seriously and perhaps even to stage them here. The disc "Vivaldi Operas" (Naïve OP 30401) proposes selected pieces of recorded works for the "Vivaldi Edition". These few arias, duets and other pieces can provide one with a general idea of the music, but much is added by the dramatic context.

Sacré Vivaldi !

Despite being an ordained priest, it was long believed that Vivaldi had composed very few sacred works. The discovery of the Turin manuscript contributed in reestablishing the facts. With close to sixty sacred works of vocal music, Vivaldi proved he was also capable of composing church music. Among these works is *Juditha triumphans* (OP 30314), the only surviving oratorio of the four Vivaldi composed. The instrumentation is much richer in this oratorio than in the operas. We find two trumpets and kettledrums, two clarinets, a soprano pipe, a viola da gamba, a mandolin and theorbos.

Astonishing to our ears, this music must have been just as magnificent when the orchestra of the Pietà, composed entirely of women, performed these uncommon sounds from behind a black veil – (in order to avoid disturbing the gentlemen of course!). ■

Translated by Danielle Dubois

How the Met Was Fixed

NORMAN LEBRECHT



THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE IN NEW YORK REGARDS ITSELF, WITH SOME JUSTICE, AS THE WORLD'S GREATEST. In America, it has no close competitor: the Met's annual deficit can exceed the entire operating budget of its nearest rival.

As the sole gateway to US fame, the Met has a monopoly on singing talent. Renee Fleming, Magdalena Kozena, Anne-Sofie von Otter – divas beyond the reach of Covent Garden – appear several times each season at the Met. Everything the Met does is massive. With 3,800 seats to sell, programmes are familiar and stagings spectacular. The archetypal Met show involves a gold curtain, several zoo animals and Franco Zeffirelli. When the Met sneezes, the rest of the opera world catches pneumonia.

So when the Met replaces its manager, the implications are felt sooner or later by everyone who sings, plays or attends opera in any setting larger than a church hall. And when the new boss is picked in a backroom deal, beyond artistic or public scrutiny, that's cause for alarm. And when I tell you that the new man has done more over the past decade to remove classical music and opera from public consumption, you will understand that the simmering scandal at the Met has the gelnite to blow a hole in opera far larger than all the petty mishaps of English, Scottish and French national operas put together.

Here's what happened – and you are reading it here first because the New York Times has exempted the meeting place of Manhattan's social elite from investigative reporting. Last February, Joseph Volpe announced his retirement. Volpe, 64, a former stage carpenter, had been hit by three seasons of bad box-office, a slump he blamed on 9/11 though it had more to do with stale productions. It took a new Magic Flute this season by Julie Taymor, director of Disney's *Lion King*, to remind Met audiences that opera could still be fun.

A search committee was duly formed by Beverly Sills, New York's favourite homegrown soprano and now chair of the Met. There were two obvious candidates. Michael Kaiser, who runs the Kennedy Center in Washington, had

been a turnaround wizard at Covent Garden; he did not sound too keen on the job. Deborah Borda, on the other hand, was.

Borda revitalised the New York Philharmonic in the 1990s before being lured by sunshine, the new Disney Hall and a \$600,000 salary to Los Angeles. In an overwhelmingly male milieu, the diminutive Borda added verve and vigour. She toughed out long nights with trade unions and kept conductors firmly in check. She was ready to take the Met by storm.

Inevitably, she raised hackles. One search committee member muttered after seeing her that no woman could run the Met. Sills grumbled that Borda lacked operatic experience. Still, Borda was looking the best option when Plácido Domingo threw his sombrero into the ring. As well as singing around the world and occasionally conducting, Domingo runs the opera companies of Washington and Los Angeles. His candidacy was not treated seriously.

Sills, getting anxious, took a call from an old friend. Ronald Wilford, 77, is president of CAMI, the world's biggest classical artists agency, representing more than 100 conductors, including the Met's music director, James Levine. He also looks after most big singers.

Wilford confided in Sills that Peter Gelb, president of Sony Classical and his longterm protegee, could be about to lose his job in the coming Sony-BMG merger. Would she do him a personal kindness and see Gelb? Sills convened the search committee informally on October 26. They met Gelb and liked him enough to call him back for an interview the next day. Sills' co-chair, Ben Rosen, warned Borda privately to withdraw her candidacy. But by the time she called the recruitment firm two days later, Volpe was already telling his orchestra that Gelb was his successor and that he had 'a lot to learn.' Speed, secrecy and collusion prevailed.

If Gelb's credentials were convincing, the fix might be condoned. But Gelb is a contentious figure. The son of a New York Times executive, he worked his way up from coat-hanger to Wilford's maestros to making films about them.

Sony in the mid-90s gave him its loss-making classical label to run – and a chance to fulfil his personal dream of making Hollywood movies.

Neither role worked out quite as intended. Gelb's only feature film, *Voices*, about the English composer Peter Warlock, was released direct to video. At Sony Classical he stripped out classical music, announcing "I know what good music is, I just don't want to record it." Another catchphrase of his was: "I'd rather lose a million on a movie score than make \$10,000 on a small shit," – meaning a mainstream classical CD.

Gelb set about buying film soundtracks and mining the mongrel seams of crossover. He had the classical cellist Yo Yo Ma play country music and the pop star Billy Joel perform piano suites. The gimmicks worked – *Titanic* sold 11 million CDs in the US – but the novelty soon wore off. Gelb's job was now on the line. He was 51 and, as they say, ready for a new challenge.

He is, however, spectacularly unqualified to run an opera house. He has no experience of unions, of fund-raising, or of meeting and greeting customers. Aloof and unphysical, he is the antipode of the ebullient Volpe, who once threatened to throw Gelb across the Met Plaza and may feel the urge to again while they share an office in the coming year.

The qualities that Gelb brings are an acute commercial eye and an alliance with Levine (whom he hired to conduct Disney's *Fantasia* 2000). Gelb can also spot talent. He gave Taymor an early break in 1992 for shooting *Oedipus Rex* in Japan. He has recently backed the British movie composer Rachel Portman to make a televised opera, *The Little Prince*.

But unless Gelb has undergone a Damascene conversion this past week, his contempt for artistic values and his adulation of mass entertainment point to an historic shift in Met priorities – and hence in the agendas of opera singers and opera houses the world over. Gelb boasts that 'art can be both commercially successful and artistically successful' – in that order. Divas will have to learn to change their tune. This is the dawning of a new age of Popera. ■

Holiday and Winter Concert Picks

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Peteris Eglitis and Frances Ginzer, *Siegfried*, Canadian Opera Company. Photo: Michael Cooper



Salvatore Licitra

SOUTHERN ONTARIO VOCAL PREVIEW

BY JOSEPH K. SO

Cheer up opera lovers! With winter just around the corner, we can count on plenty of fabulous voices to warm the cockles of our hearts. How about a Jules Massenet *Soirée*, with the Canadian Opera Company (COC) Orchestra and Richard Bradshaw, featuring two of the hottest young artists around, soprano Erin Wall and baritone Brett Polegato? Wall proved her abilities when she stepped in at the last minute to replace ailing Finnish diva Karita Mattila on the opening night of the Chicago Lyric Opera's *Don Giovanni*, opposite the great Bryn Terfel. Polegato is no slouch himself; having just made his Paris Opera debut, he is already looking forward to spending next summer at the Glyndebourne Festival (Dec. 1, Glenn Gould Studio). The COC Ensemble Studio's annual production is, as usual, a hot ticket. Presented this year is Britten's light comedy *Albert Herring* (Nov. 30, Dec. 2, 3, 5, call 416-363-8231). For a change of pace, be sure to walk up the street to Roy Thomson Hall (RTH) to hear the long-await-

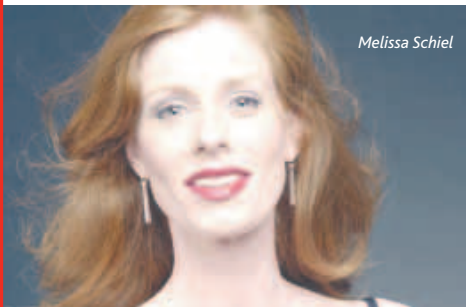
ed Toronto debut of Wagnerian soprano Jane Eaglen, in a program of – what else? – Wagner, with the Toronto Symphony under the baton of Andrew Davis (Dec. 2, RTH, 416-872-4255).

Ring in the New Year with operetta is now a tradition. Toronto Operetta Theatre's production of Imre Kalman's *Countess Maritza* runs Dec. 26m, 28, 29m, 31, Jan. 2m, 5m, 7, 8 (416-366-7723). Attila Glatz celebrates the 10th anniversary of *Salute to Vienna* (Jan. 1, RTH, 416-872-4255).

Wagnerites, look forward to the arrival of January, and with it, *Siegfried*, the second installment of the COC Ring. Soprano Frances Ginzer returns as Brünnhilde, and is joined by tenor Christian Franz (Siegfried), who will be making his Canadian debut. Also of interest are Canadian bass Phillip Ens, who brings his celebrated Fafner to Canada for the first time, as well as Canadian tenor Robert Künzli (Mime); now based in Europe, it has been many years since Künzli sung locally. British bass Pavlo Hunka, the excellent Hunding from last season, returns as Alberich. After the rather chaotic-looking set of *Die Walküre*, there is much curiosity as to what *Siegfried's* is going to be like (Jan. 27, 30, Feb. 2, 5, 8, 11, Hummingbird Centre). For the more tradition-bound, COC is bringing back the perennial favourite *La Bohème*, in a classic production

by Wolfram Skalicki (Jan. 23, 26, 29, Feb. 1, 4, 6, 10, 12, Hummingbird Centre, coc.ca). And let us not forget Opera Ontario, now celebrating its 25th anniversary. On the agenda is Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio*, with American soprano Madeline Bender and Canadian tenor Benjamin Butterfield (Feb. 5, Kitchener-Waterloo; Feb. 12, 17, 19, Hamilton, 905-527-7627).

On the recital stage, big-name tenor Salvatore Licitra makes his Toronto recital debut with Eugene Kohn at the piano, in a program of Italian arias (Jan. 22, RTH). Québec soprano Frédérique Vézina brings her interesting voice with its unique smoky timbre to Music Toronto, in a wide-ranging program of songs by Mozart, Berg, Cecile Chaminade, Granados, and Obradors (Jan. 13, Jane Mallet Theatre, 416-366-7723). When it comes to imaginative pro-



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gramming, the Aldeburgh Connection takes the prize. Upcoming concerts in its marvellous Sunday afternoon series include "Valse des fleurs," a Russian program of songs by Glinka, Dargomyzhsky, Mussorgsky and Tchaikovsky, featuring Donna Brown, Anita Krause and Michael Colvin (Jan. 23, 416-735-7982). As well, "Metamorphoses" with one of Britten's most haunting works, the *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid*, sung by Nathalie Paulin and Colin Ainsworth (Mar. 13, Walter Hall). Not to be missed is a Brahms Liederabend. The centerpiece is the divine *Alto Rhapsody*, with Platts and the COC Orchestra joined by the Men's Chorus under the direction of Richard Bradshaw. Also on the program is pianist André Laplante. (Jan. 25, Glenn Gould Studio, 416-205-5555)

SOUTHERN ONTARIO SYMPHONIC, CHORAL, EARLY, NEW MUSIC

BY PETER PHOA

Deck the Halls with Sounds of Jolly – Messiah, Messiah, Messiah

Those in the mood for tidings of joy may choose from the many *Messiahs* in Southwestern Ontario this festive season. The biggest of them all will feature the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir led by Martin Haselböck for four performances (Dec. 15-19). Calgary-born American soprano Erin Wall, a recent Cardiff Singer of the World finalist and Richard Tucker award winner, rejoices greatly alongside leading Québec contralto Marie-Nicole Lemieux.



Howard Dyck

Soloists James Westman, with his famously beautiful bass, and international tenor Stuart Neil round out the star-studded cast. (416-598-0422)

Those who appreciate a more period-informed performance should check out Tafelmusik's *Messiah* at Trinity St. Paul's (Dec. 15-18). Toronto soprano Gillian Keith takes time off from her stellar career in Europe to return home and join excellent counter-tenor Matthew White and baritone Brett Polegato. For those dying to sing along, please restrain yourselves until Tafelmusik presents its *Sing-Along Messiah* at Massey Hall (Dec. 19). Then (and only then) can you unleash your inner diva, raise your voice and outtwitter, outbray, and outblast your horrified neighbour (416-964-6337). For those wanting a *Messiah* à la brève, the Toronto Classical Singers and the Tallisker Players present their popular highlights version where only the best tunes are sung. Jurgen Petrenko leads his group at Christ Church Deer Park (Dec. 12). (416-443-1490)

Messiah in Kitchener is presented by the Menno singers, the Mennonite Mass Choir, and the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony at The Centre In The Square (Dec. 3, 4). Tenor soloist is Terence Mierau, who is heard throughout Southern Ontario this festive season. Often in Europe singing concerts and opera, Mierau is also home for the holidays for the Guelph Chamber Choir's *Christmas Oratorio* alongside lovely mezzo-soprano Anita

Krause at the Church of Our Lady (Nov. 27). Mierau then sings another *Messiah* in Hamilton (Dec. 13). Boris Brott leads the National Academy Orchestra and the famous Elmer Iseler Singers in that performance at West Highland Baptist Church. Also retelling the story of Christ's birth, life, and death are Canadian soloists – bass Daniel Lichti, Switzerland-based soprano Gillian Grossman, and lush contralto Melissa Schiel. (905-525-7664)

Anything but Messiah

Those who have had enough Hallelujah Choruses to make them want to shriek and run away should take note of these several choral alternatives. Tafelmusik celebrates the music of M. A. Charpentier – the concert *A French Baroque Christmas* (Dec. 1) is programmed to honour the 300th anniversary of the composer's birth and will feature his Christmas oratorio *In nativitate*, as well as his final mass composition *Missa assumpta est Maria*. In addition, the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir presents a *Festival of Carols* (Dec. 7). This program of Christmas music, sing-along carols and seasonal anecdotes will be heard at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church.

The Tallis Scholars make a welcome return to Roy Thomson Hall (Dec. 7). If you like your Renaissance choral music hauntingly pure and seamlessly blended, then be sure to hear England's foremost *a cappella* ensemble perform the music of Palestrina and Lassus in all of its aching beauty. For something more exuberant, check out the Toronto Consort's presentation of the festive Praetorius *Christmas Vespers* (Dec. 10, 11). Along with voices of the ensemble, this performance features a plethora of period instruments – recorders, violins, cornetti, sackbuts, theorbos, and keyboards all making a joyful noise. (416-964-6337)

Another December offering which promises to be lively is *An Indigo Christmas...De Mornin' Come* (Dec. 15, 17) with the Nathaniel Dett Chorale. Internationally recognized for its wonderful

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J.S. Bach Christmas Oratorio (Weihnachtsoratorium)

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exploration of Afro-centric vocal styles and techniques, it is joined by the noted Signal Hill Alumni Choir from Tobago. They perform at the Toronto Centre for the Arts. If children's choirs are more your thing, check out the Christmas Concerts of the boys of St. Michael's Choir School (Dec. 10, 11) and the Toronto Children's Chorus (Dec. 18). In another part of the city, Robert Cooper leads the Orpheus Choir in an exploration of the festive music of Spain and England in *Welcome Christmas!* (Dec. 18). This evening, held at Metropolitan United, also features Conrad Susa's *Carols and Lullabies*. (416-530-4428)

The Kitchener-Waterloo Philharmonic Choir presents Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* (Dec. 18) at The Centre In The Square. Presenting Bach's most overtly joyful work at Christmas while saving *Messiah* for Easter is in keeping with the European tradition. Perhaps more Canadians will follow suit and explore this fantastic collection of six cantatas by Bach. Kudos to conductor Howard Dyck for leading the way.

Music for the New Year

There are thankfully many musical libations we can knock back to ease the dreariness of a prolonged winter and to bring us some New Year cheer. Those with philistine children must bring their offspring to the Toronto Symphony Orchestra's *One...Two...Three Pianos!* (Jan. 15, 16). Expand their little horizons at this concert full of Mozart's most accessible pieces, namely his "*Jeunehomme*" *Piano Concerto*, *Concerto for Two Pianos*, and *Concerto for Three Pianos*. André Laplante, Angela Hewitt, and Louis Lortie are the soloists – Peter Oundjian leads this pianogasm. The tremendous trio is followed a few days later by more Dazzling Mozart (Jan. 19, 20); among the masterworks performed will be the Horn Concerto No. 3, where astounding French Horn player James Sommerville is sure to show off his chops. Lortie also returns to the keyboard for the fiery Piano Concerto No. 24 in C-Minor. (416-593-4828)

Those bold enough to travel North during February to experience Nordic Legends (Feb. 17, 19) can warm themselves in the familiar cloak of Grieg's *Piano Concerto*. Capturing the Chopinesque nature of the work will be noted Chopin player Garrick Ohlsson at the piano. Ohlsson first leapt to prominence as the winner of both the Montreal and Chopin Piano Competitions, and has since carved a career covering a wide selection of the keyboard literature. The other half of the program features great Dane Carl Nielsen's Fourth Symphony, *The Inextinguishable*. One of his best-known pieces, it is perhaps the most overtly Romantic in style and certainly the most lush of his works.

Soundstreams presents *Gravity and Grace: the music of Alan Gordon Bell and Erki-Sven Tüür* (Jan. 18). As part of their mandate to support new work and promote cross-pollination, Soundstreams often offers intriguing programming by pairing disparate living composers (one Canadian, one not) and pre-

senting concerts on various scales. Ultimately, its efforts help promote Canadian music in foreign lands. Artists performing this evening include the Amici Chamber ensemble and conductor Michelle Moure. (416-205-5555)

The original early music diva Emma Kirkby returns to Toronto for concerts with Tafelmusik (Feb. 2-6). Having sung professionally for over 25 years, she remains at the top of the period voices with her silvery, clear tone. Despite having over 100 recordings, Kirkby is at her best in live performances, and has an evening of Salamone Rossi's music programmed. (416-964-6337)

WINNIPEG SCENE

BY ANDREW THOMPSON

Two of Winnipeg's top choirs, both led by artistic director Yuri Klaz, will present Christmas concerts this December. The Winnipeg Philharmonic Choir's traditional "Christmas With the Phil" performance on Dec. 12 will include music by Healey Willan and Conrad Susa. Those who have attended this event in the past know to expect a journey through the ages as the Phil performs carols from ancient times and distant lands. (www.wpg-philharmonic.mb.ca)

On Dec. 19, the Winnipeg Singers who tend to specialize in more obscure and, occasionally, technically demanding repertoire, will be joining forces with the Northern Brass to feature carols and motets at Crescent Fort Rouge United Church. (www.winnipegsingers.com)

The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra (WSO) will play two types of concerts this holiday season. On Dec. 10, 11, and 12, soprano Monica Huisman and tenor Benoît Boutet join Maestro Andrey Boreyko for a fairly traditional program. Those looking for something slightly out of the ordinary however, might want to attend an evening of Polish music being held at the Centennial Concert Hall on Dec. 9. Lutoslawski's 20 Polish Christmas Carols should give the evening a true Old World sentiment, while complementing Wieniawski's second violin concerto, sure to provide just the right amount of fireworks.

In fact, the WSO will leave nothing to be desired by fans of Lutoslawski this year. On Dec. 3 and 4, Maestro Boreyko performs his Concerto for Orchestra – along with some Mozart and Bartok – in a concert which promises a great deal of musical excitement.

For the 2005 season, the WSO focuses, somewhat appropriately, on the music of colder climes. On Jan. 13 and 15, Dmitry Liss teams up with pianist David Jalbert for one of the most adventurous programs of the year featuring Dvorak's expansive Piano Concerto Op. 33 and Carl Nielsen's Symphony No. 4, *The Inextinguishable*. The excerpts from Grieg's Peer Gynt thrown into the mix are sure to maintain a comfortable level of familiarity. There will be more Grieg on Feb. 10 when

Jeffrey Neufeld performs the Piano Concerto which Michelle Moure conducts. This concerto, too, is in keeping with the northern focus: Sinding's lovely *Rustle of Spring* and Alfvén's *Midsummer Vigil* join two Sibelius Legends on the evening's musical menu.

The pops portion of the WSO's season is no less interesting. On Jan. 7 and 8, the WSO presents a Lon Chaney Double Feature Weekend. Instead of performing at the normal Centennial Concert Hall, the musicians will take their stands over to the Burton Cummings Theatre where they will work with silent film aficionado Donald Hunsberger in providing the accompanying music for *The Phantom of the Opera* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. In past seasons when the WSO played along with Bugs Bunny cartoons and Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights*, tickets sold out. Make sure to get yours early.

The real centrepiece of the WSO's winter is of course the Centara Corporation International New Music Festival (Jan. 29 to Feb. 5). This year's festival brings Russian Leonid Desyatnikov as the Distinguished Guest Composer. Desyatnikov has worked with Maestro Boreyko before, and his appropriately titled choral symphony, the *Rite of Winter*, will kick off the festivities. (www.wso.mb.ca)

As an appetizer for the New Music Festival, one might do well to attend GroundSwell's concert on Jan. 15. It is being held at Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers Studio at 211 Bannatyne, and it promises to be a multidisciplinary night of storytelling through music, dance, electronics, and spoken word. A key player in the proceedings will be Mexican flautist Alejandro Escuer. (www.gswell.ca)

For those who find all this new music a little much, refuge is to be found in two concerts of chamber music presented by the Winnipeg Chamber Music Society. The first, on Jan. 9 will feature music of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert, while the second, on Feb. 20 is reserved for Haydn and Brahms. They will nevertheless have to share the stage with a modern composer, Gary Kulesha, whose work *Variations on a Theme* by Benjamin Britten will also be performed. (www.wcms.mb.ca)

The WSO is not the only ensemble focusing on music from northern countries. On Feb. 27, The Winnipeg Singers present a show called *Fabulous Finnish: Songs from Scandinavia and the Baltic*. Fans of the genre will be familiar with such composers as Sibelius, Madetoja, Palmgren and Rautavaara. Artistic Director Yuri Klaz has demonstrated his fondness for music from the Baltic republics in previous concerts; this venture further north should be right up his alley. (www.winnipegsingers.com)

The Manitoba Chamber Orchestra's (MCO) Jan. 11 and Feb. 23 events will showcase Canadian violinist Susanne Hou and bandoneon virtuoso Daniel Binelli. In the continuing search for Maestro Roy Goodman's replacement, musician favourite Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Swiss born Baldu Brönnimann will be the guest conductors for the respective evenings. As usual, the MCO's

exploration of exciting and unique repertoire travels across the world to present music from Piazzolla to Shchedrin. (www.manitobachamberorchestra.org)

Finally, Virtuosi Concert Series has a full slate in the winter months ahead. On Jan. 8, pianist Kemal Gekic returns to play some Chopin and Liszt; Feb. 5, mezzo-soprano Julie Nesrallah joins guitarist Daniel Bolshoy in a recital of predominantly Spanish repertoire; oboist Philippe Magnan and pianist Jamie Parker perform on Feb. 19; one week later, on Feb. 26, the Duke Trio presents a special programme entitled Russian Allegories, with guest artist Anita Krause singing some of Mussorgsky's Nursery Songs. (www.virtuosi.mb.ca)

EDMONTON SCENE

BY GORDON MORASH

Festive traditions are designed to grow, and one such choral setting has brought together on the Francis Winspear Centre for Music stage an average of 10 choirs, the occasional left-to-his-own-devices-in-Edmonton-for-Christmas soloist (such as Ottawa countertenor Matthew White, who joined the carol chorus three years ago), organist Jeremy Spurgeon on the Davis Concert Organ and 1,800 or so musically adept friends in the house.

The event is a free one-hour choral concert-cum-singalong fundraiser for the Edmonton Christmas Bureau. Since its inception five years ago, the event has become a close to standing-room-only bonbon that is broadcast throughout the province by CBC Radio – last year drew more than \$21,000 in donations from its audience. This year's concert is on Dec. 23 from 12-1 pm and features singers from Pro Coro Canada, the Richard Eaton Singers, the Edmonton Opera Chorus, the Columbian Choirs, the Greenwood Singers, and three choirs from the University of Alberta (the Madrigal Singers, Concert Choir and Mixed Chorus).

But the festive season at Winspear actually begins at the end of November and by the time Christmas Day finally rolls around, a total of nine orchestral or classical performances will have been held in the 1,800-seat concert hall. All of these, of course, highlight vocal works, the musical stock-in-trade for "the most wonderful time of the year."

The University of Alberta Mixed Chorus and Faculty of Education Handbell Ringers with conductor Robert de Frece and organists Marnie Giesbrecht and Joachim Segger begin the musical season on Nov. 29 with their annual presentation of *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols for Advent and Christmas*. *Messiah* runs relatively early in the cycle from Dec. 9-11 and features the chamber setting conducted by Tafelmusik's Ivars Taurins with I Coristi and the Da Camera Singers as the chorus, and soloists Nathan Berg (baritone), Rufus Müller (tenor), Vicki St. Pierre (alto) and Ann Monoyios (soprano). Pro Coro Canada is next up, with *A Pro Coro Christmas* on Dec. 12, in a mix of

a cappella works, some audience singalong, the Concordia Handbell Ensemble and guitarist Caesar Zmyslowski. Holly Cole brings her mix of jazz and festive fare in her performance with the Edmonton Symphony orchestra on Dec. 13. And just easing its way to the dinner table is the *Holiday Spectacular* pops concert Dec. 17-18 with the ESO, Richard Eaton Singers and tenor Michael Colvin. (Francis Winspear Centre for Music, 780-429-1414)

At All Saints' Cathedral On Nov. 26, the award-winning University of Alberta Madrigal Singers present a program of pieces the ensemble will perform at its concert in Los Angeles in February at the National Convention of the American Choral Directors Association. (University of Alberta, Department of Music, 780-492-3263)

On Dec. 5 at Robertson-Wesley United Church, the Da Camera Singers perform *Music for*



Vicki St. Pierre

a Festive Season, a program of Corelli (*Concerto Grosso Op. 6, No. 8*), and a pair of cantatas by Buxtehude (*Das neugeborne Kindelein*) and Bach (*Schwingt freudlich euch empor*) with the Alberta Baroque Ensemble in a celebration of its 25th season. The popular Calgary-based husbands-and-wives ensemble VoiceScapes (singers Julie Harrison, Jerald Fast, Christine Jahn and Paul Grindlay) will be the soloists. (Alberta Baroque Ensemble, 780-467-6531)

Following the flurries of December, choral events are equally interesting throughout January and February. The Richard Eaton Singers (RES) perform the chamber version of the Duruflé *Requiem* paired with Ruth Watson Henderson's 2003 cantata with organ *From Darkness to Light* at Winspear on Jan. 21 in a choral exchange with the Mount Royal College Kantorei of Calgary. Come February, it will again perform this program with the RES in Calgary. (Francis Winspear Centre for Music, 780-429-1414)

Pro Coro Canada welcomes guest conductor Maria Guinand from Venezuela in a return engagement for *Latin Fiesta!* on Jan. 30 at Winspear. Guinand's 2002 Pro Coro debut was extremely

well received. The Kokopelli Youth Choir and organist Jeremy Spurgeon will also appear in this performance. The "Latin" in the title, incidentally, cuts two ways. Half of the dozen pieces on the program consist of "south of the border"-styled works by Einojuhani Rautavaara (*Suite de Lorca*), Modesta Bor (*Manchas Sonoras*), Astor Piazzolla (*Cuatro estaciones Porteñas*), Leo Brower (*Son Mercedes*), Miguel Matamoros (*Son de la Loma*), and a Venezuelan popular song (*Arestinga*), arranged by Alberto Grau. The remaining pieces run the gamut from Mendelssohn's *Ave Maria* and *Te Deum* to Arvo Pärt's *Cantate Domino Canticum Novum* and Knut Nysted's *O Crux* – an assorted program indeed. But if it is eclecticism you are seeking, it might be worth attending *The Lighter Side of Pro Coro* on Feb. 27 which shows the choir's jazz side in a program featuring Edmonton's veteran award-winning saxophonist P.J. Perry. (Pro Coro Canada, 780-420-1247)

Due to the refurbishment of the Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, the traditional performing space for the city's resident opera company, Edmonton Opera (EO) has reconceived its offerings for the 2004-05 season by moving performances to a restored movie house, the Winspear and the Citadel Theatre. On Feb. 5, attention will be on the opera chorus as it presents the first of four recitals being held at the 500-seat Festival Place in Sherwood Park. This will be one of the few chorus performances in which scenery, soloists and those testy plot devices will simply not matter. (After all, chorus members will tell you these elements just get in the way of opera's truly good singing.) At press time, the program had not yet been finalized but the EO stated it would feature "the best-loved opera choruses, such as *The Soldiers' Chorus* from *Faust*." (Edmonton Opera, 780-429-1000)

Finally, one event at the Winspear which routinely sells out is the one-night-only, testosterone-ridden festival devoted to men's choirs of Edmonton, under the concert title, *Men Making Music* on Feb. 18. Pride is sure to be showing on the faces of The Edmonton Swiss Men's Choir, which, in 2003, won top prize at the triennial North American Swiss Singing Alliance Festival. Joining this chorus are the Ukrainian Male Chorus of Edmonton, the Liederkrantz German Choir, and the St. David's Welsh Male Voice Choir. (Francis Winspear Centre for Music, 780-429-1414)

THE CALGARY SCENE

BY KENNA BURIMA

Many arts organizations that call the Jubilee Auditorium home are still coping with staging their 2004-2005 season in alternate venues. Calgary Opera and Alberta Ballet are particularly affected by the closure, the Jubilee Auditorium being the only venue big enough to facilitate the large-scale productions. Both are looking to the government for compensation. The Alberta Ballet's year and a

half of lobbying has been to no avail. The closure has meant smaller performances held at the Playhouse at the Calgary Tower. The Calgary Opera has also adjusted its plans accordingly and is staging smaller, more intimate recitals. Some performances are already sold out, and additional performance dates are being added. Best of all, already 75 per cent of regular season-ticket holders have already renewed their subscriptions for the 2005-2006 season. (403-262-7286)

Luckily, with the Christmas season right around the corner, there is no shortage of events. The Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra (CPO) will be busy presenting four Christmas concerts including the ever popular Handel *Messiah* (Dec. 16 and 17), as well as the entertaining Sing-A-Long *Messiah* on Dec. 18, at 2:00 pm in the Jack Singer Concert Hall. Along with the Calgary Philharmonic Chorus, Rosemary Thomson conducts soloists Ann Monoyios, Vicki St. Pierre, Alan Bennett, and Daniel Lichti. Holly Cole and the CPO provide some easy listening programming with *A Night Before Christmas* on Dec. 10. On Dec. 11, the CPO will also stage *A Flicker of Light On Christmas Night* by Christopher Sharpe and Peter Duschenes in collaboration with Platypus Theatre. The theatre company has been lauded for its immensely creative productions and its ability to educate young audiences about classical music in an intelligent, entertaining and participatory way using live actors, masks and puppets. The CPO concludes the holiday season with *A Traditional Christmas* on Dec. 21 at the Grace Presbyterian Church with Rosemary Thomson conducting Paul Grindlay and the Calgary Boys Choir.

The CPO will ring in the new year with *Suite, Songs and Symphony* on Jan. 14 and 15; hot new star soprano Erin Wall joins conductor Roberto Minczuk to sing Richard Strauss' timeless *Four Last Songs*. The Jeans 'n' Classics series continues with costumes, dialogue, comedy, live studio sounds and concert lighting in their salute to ABBAmania on Jan. 20. The homeless Alberta Ballet joins the CPO at the Jack Singer Concert Hall Jan. 22 for a romantic evening of vignettes from Bizet, Gounod, excerpts from *Cinderella* and the *Pas de Deux* from Tchaikovsky's beloved *Nutcracker*. An Olga Nickle Memorial Concert features Tchaikovsky's exciting *1812 Overture*, Beethoven's seldom heard battle symphony, *Wellington's Victory*, and Franz Schubert's best-known *Symphony No. 8 (Unfinished)* on Jan. 29. Sarah Chang performs Shostakovich's *Concerto Op. 99*, as well as a debut performance of a stirring new composition by the CPO's Arthur Bachmann on Feb. 4 and 5. The First Laureate of the 2003 Honens International



Erin Wall

Piano Competition, Xiang Zou makes his CPO debut on Feb. 25 and 26 with *The Genius of Mozart* and *Stravinsky*. (403-571-0270)

The other January happening is the University of Calgary and New Works Calgary's collaboration in staging the New Music Festival from Jan. 24-29. One of the concerts presented at this Festival will be on Jan. 25, and will feature mezzo-soprano Patrice Jegou and pianist Denna Oye as they return to celebrate 25 Years of Alberta Keys Music Publishing. This concert presents a selection of vocal and piano compositions by Allan Gordon Bell, Srul Irving Glick, Richard Johnston, Roberta Stephen and other distinguished Canadian composers. On Feb. 12, virtuoso pianist and composer Heather Schmidt returns to her hometown of Calgary to perform a programme of *New Music By Contemporary Women Composers* including Sophia Gubaidulina, Alexina Louie, and herself! Schmidt will also be presenting a workshop on Creative Improvisation in Piano Teaching and a composition master class on Feb. 13 at the Scarboro United Church. (403-246-3269).

Monday, Jan. 17, the Calgary Pro Musica Society presents an evening of Czech music with the Guarneri Trio Prague. Featuring Smetana's famous Piano Trio in G-minor, Op. 15 and Dvorak's "Dumky" trio, the use of period instruments is sure to make the performance memorable; Cenek Pavlik plays the famous violin "Zimbalist" by Guarneri del Gesu from the collection of Luigi Tarisio while Marek Jerie plays a 1684 Andrea Guarneri cello. (403-244-8277)

In February, the Mountain View Connection follows the course of Mozart's life as a composer from his early Salzburg days to his flight to Vienna, his journey to Prague and Paris, and his premature death. Featuring soprano Janet Youngdahl and pianists Charles Foreman and Kathleen van Mourik, the concert takes place on February 20 7:30 pm in the Eckhardt-Gramatté Recital Hall. (www.metafora.ca/mountainview)

The University of Calgary Music Department presents the third and final season of the Beethoven Cycle performed by professor Charles Foreman on Feb. 5. (403-220-5376).

The Land's End Chamber Ensemble is presenting a joint concert with Rosa Selvatica and conducted by Hans Graf, Feb. 6 at 1:00 pm in the Eckhardt-Gramatté Recital Hall. The night will feature cellist Beth Root Sandvoss, pianists Elizabeth and Marcel Bergmann and violinist John Lowry performing the works of John Adams and Joseph Schwantner. (403-220-6395).

These high-quality performances are sure to quench Calgary audiences' thirst for live classical music.

VANCOUVER MID-SEASON CHOICES

BY ROBERT JORDAN

Advent is just around the corner, bringing with it the usual cornucopia of Christmas musical events in Vancouver. If anything, the concertgoer is spoilt for choice, so we'll start with a few suggestions of what to hear over the Christmas season before moving on to January and February. Unless otherwise indicated, all concerts start at PSCT (Pacific Standard Concert Time - 8:00 pm).

A Christmas season is unimaginable without choral music and, for me, an annual must is the Phoenix Chamber Choir's *A Phoenix Christmas*. Even the bland, cavernous enclaves of Shaughnessy Heights United Church, where this concert is traditionally held, will feel warmer, cozier



Suzie LeBlanc

and more inviting the evening of Dec. 19. The technical and interpretive skills of this choir have won many awards, but above all, it is the warmth of presentation, joy of communication and the artful blend of unexpected and familiar that appeals to the audience that fills the church to capacity year after year. The home-baked goodies, hot drinks and affable socializing between the choir members and the audience after the show might have something to do with it as well. (604-986-7520)

Phoenix is always a treat to hear but it is certainly not the only choir in town. There are also the popular Vancouver Cantata Singers, for instance, but their only individual Christmas appearance this season is in a free concert at Holy Rosary Cathedral (Dec. 18, 2:30 pm). The choir's website tells us that this is the choir's "Christmas gift to all lovers of Christmas and its glorious choral music," without divulging more detail. At this price, be sure to get there early! (604-730-8856)

For many people, Christmas is, well, simply not Christmas if Handel's *Messiah* is not heard at least once. This year, it is the Vancouver Bach Choir's turn (Dec. 18, Orpheum Theatre). The 150-voice Bach

Choir is Vancouver's largest, so do not go with period performance expectations. Instead, enjoy the full, lush choral sound that only a large choir can generate, giving splendid sonic weight for all those familiar choruses. The wonderful soloists (Rhoslyn Jones, soprano; David Lee, alto; Roger Honeywell, tenor; and Aaron St. Clair Nicholson, bass-baritone) are accompanied by the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra conducted by Bruce Pullan. For audience participation fun, do not miss the same choir's "Sing Along *Messiah*" at 2:30 pm on the next day, also at the Orpheum. (604-280-3311)

The Vancouver Chamber Choir is as busy as ever this Christmas: on Dec. 10 in the Orpheum (with the Vancouver Cantata Singers), there is *Tromba! Choirs & Brass for Christmas* and, on Dec. 17 and 19 (3:00 pm) at Ryerson United Church, "an intimate entertainment of Christmas songs for voices and harp with guest harpist Heidi Krutzen." The latter concert is probably more my cup of tea but the former certainly sounds as though it would be a lot of brassy and boisterous fun. Heck, I might go to both. (604-732-6822)

It is not choral, but Early Music Vancouver's (EMV) Christmas presentation, *Festive Bach Cantatas for Christmas*, looks like a little jewel of a concert, especially with soloists like Suzie LeBlanc, Laura Pudwell, Colin Balzer and Tyler Duncan. They will be accompanied by EMV's Bach Cantata Project Players, directed by Marc Destrube, on Dec. 22 at UBC's Chan Centre. (604-280-3311)

After Christmas, classical music presenters in Vancouver naturally take a brief sabbatical. One of the first to break the hiatus is the Friends of Chamber Music who present the Emerson Quartet (Jan. 11), and then the Tokyo Quartet (Feb. 1), both at the Vancouver Playhouse. The Emersons are playing music by Turina, Joan Tower and Shostakovich, while the Tokyos take on Mozart, Takemitsu and Brahms. It is a great chance to hear two really great, longstanding quartets. (604-437-4769)

Not strictly classical perhaps, but on Jan. 14, Vetta Chamber Music presents the Tangissimo Trio (Linda-Lee Thomas is the pianist) in *Latin Explosion* that includes music by Horacio Salgan and Astor Piazzolla. Piazzolla especially, is popular with classical buffs, and the whole concert looks fascinating enough to engage me for an entire evening. Like all of Vetta's concerts, this one is at the West Point Grey United Church. (604-987-2784)

Once we get to February, it is a bit like it was before Christmas: the concertgoer has too many choices. But surely no-one would want to miss Ben Heppner when he returns to sing in recital at the Chan Centre on Feb. 12. Heppner's Vancouver concerts have always sold out so it would be advisable to move fast. The Chan Centre remains coy about what repertoire Heppner will sing but I doubt that his legion of Vancouver fans care – just so long as he does sing. (604-280-3311)

On Jan. 29 (St. Augustine's Church) and 30 (2:30 pm at West Vancouver United Church), Paul Dyer and Lucinda Moon, director and concertmaster of the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra join

Vancouver's Pacific Baroque Orchestra as the soloists in Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos Nos. 4 and 5*. Dyer and Moon were a triumph in Vancouver last year and their return is most welcome, since few can hear Bach's amiable masterpieces, the *Brandenburgs*, too often. (604-215-0406)

The Vancouver Recital Society, celebrating its first quarter-century this season, is bringing some fabulous performers to town. OK, season-opener Daniel Barenboim cancelled – but there's more, much more. If I had to pick one, I'd go with British pianist Paul Lewis as he starts his "multi-year Beethoven Sonata project" with sonatas 16, 17, 18 and 24 on the Vancouver Playhouse stage, Feb. 20. (604-280-3311)

A couple of Vancouver Symphony Orchestra concerts look worthwhile: ace violinist James Ehnes is in town with the underplayed Walton Violin Concerto on Feb. 19 & 21. A week later Raphael Wallfisch plays the soaring Elgar Cello Concerto Feb. 26-28 (2:00 pm on the 27). All concerts are in the Orpheum and conducted by Bramwell Tovey. (604-280-3311)

VICTORIA IN THE WINTER

JOHN DEFAYETTE

Daniel Lapp, fiddler, trumpeter, and composer has a new group – the alkemikal string quartet performs Quartet No. 1 by Peter Schickele as well as works by 7 other composers on Nov. 20. Les Coucous Bénévoles play Bach and Haydn on Nov. 27. The following night, singers and songwriters Jane Siberry and Adrienne Pierce perform. On Sunday Nov. 29, it is the turn of Anton Kuerti, pianist, and the Jacques Thibaud String Trio to woo audiences. All at the Alix Goolden Hall. (250-386-5311)

The highlight in early December is sure to be the Victoria Symphony's Dec. 4 & 6 concert with Isabel Bayrakdarian. Tania Miller leads the soprano in arias of Mozart and Rossini taken from the *Magic Flute*, *William Tell* and the *Barber of Seville*. On Dec. 10-12, the Vox Humana choir and Tania Miller present Christmas through the years. The Victoria Choral Society conducted by Michael Gormley presents Handel's *Messiah* on Dec. 17 & 18 with soprano Frédérique Vézina, mezzo Anita Krause, tenor Nils Brown and baritone Paul Grindlay. Canadian Jazz star Holly Cole takes the stage on Dec. 19 with "A Very Holly Christmas". (250-385-6515) The Victoria Symphony will ring in the New Year with a full program. First up is a Latin American Mariachi on Jan. 7. Also on the agenda: a *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Jan. 16 & 17, and Live from New York, Jan. 20, 21 & 22. A Concert for Kids is on the Jan. 23 with con-

ductor Guiseppe Pietaroia and the Magic Circle Mime. Mario Bernardi conducts and Caitlin Tully performs Tchaikovsky's violin concerto on Jan. 29 & 31 in a program which also features Schumann's Symphony No. 2. All concerts at the Royal. (250-385-6515)

A Christmas concert with the University of Victoria chamber singers under the direction of Bruce More is to be held on Dec. 3 at the Philip T. Young Recital Hall. (250-721-7907)

The next day (Dec. 4) will feature the free concert, a Tuba Christmas, at Market Square with Eugene Dowling conducting. The University of Victoria chorus and Orchestra, its conductor Janos Sandor, and guest soloists present Handel's *Israel in Egypt*. Alexander Dunn presents a guitar recital on Dec. 10. (721-8480)

A relatively new ensemble 'Aventa' – conductor Bill Linwood – performs 'Music of Gavin Bryars' on Dec. 3. Michael Ondaaje described his music as "mongrel, full of sensuality and wit and deeply moving" (250-592-9713). A Victoria favourite Charles Job conducts the Civic Orchestra of Victoria (250-658-3304) on Dec. 11 at the Alix Goolden Performance Hall. The program includes British Light music with works by Eric Coates and 9 other composers.

The Art of Byzantium with the Capella Romana ensemble and chant specialist Ionnis Arvanitis is the Early Music Society's offering on Jan. 15 at the Alix Goolden Hall. (250-882-5088). Handel's *Messiah* with the Prima Youth choir, Bruce More and Yariv Aloni conducting is on Nov. 20. The Sooke Philharmonic Chamber players and chorus present Handel's *Messiah* on Dec. 3 & 4. (250-642-2849) The Christmas Canata featuring Central's choirs and ensemble is on Dec. 3, 4, 5 at 833 Pandora Ave. (250-385-7786)

A 25th Christmas concert by the Linden Singers of Victoria (250-358-5188x231) featuring Alexandra Dunn, guitar, takes place at the 1st Metropolitan church on Dec. 8. The Sidney Classical Orchestra also has a *Messiah* program on Dec. 18 & 19 at St Elizabeth Church, Stephen Brown conductor. On Feb. 18 they perform Mozart's

Violin concerto No. 5 and Bach's double violin concerto; violinists Muge Buycellen and Nikki Chooi are the guests. (250-480-1133)

The Greater Victoria Youth Orchestra has been introducing young musicians and audiences to orchestral masterpieces for 19 years. This season, Associate Music Director Yariv Aloni interprets the works of Verdi's *Nabucco* overture and Brahms' Symphony No. 1 in C-minor, op. 68 on Feb. 12 at the University Centre Farquhar Auditorium. (250-360-1121)

In opera, Timothy Veron directs the Pacific Opera Victoria in Leos Janacek's "The Cunning Little Vixen" at the Royal on Feb. 10-19. (250-385-0222)



Teaching Music on the Spur of the Moment

Lori Freedman

MARC CHÉNARD

LIKE ALL FIELDS OF STUDY, MUSIC IS A DISCIPLINE THAT REQUIRES A LOT OF HARD WORK. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A CHOSEN FEW BLESSED WITH THE PROVERBIAL 'NATURAL TALENT', THE MAJORITY ACHIEVE WHATEVER SUCCESS THEY CAN THROUGH SHEER DEDICATION. AT A UNIVERSITY LEVEL, THE EXPECTATIONS ARE HIGH GIVEN THE MANY AREAS ONE HAS TO BE FAMILIAR WITH (THEORY, ANALYSIS, HISTORY, COMPOSITION AND/OR INSTRUMENTAL TRAINING). HOWEVER, ONE AREA WHICH HAS BEEN GREATLY OVERLOOKED IN CURRICULA IS THAT OF IMPROVISATION.

Of course, the implementation of jazz programs over the last 40 years has enabled students to acquire skills even in improvisation, yet it is provided only to those wishing to pursue a career in that genre. But what about those budding musical interpreters following classical music training? While jazz majors are given tools to improvise, little if anything has been offered those learning their trade in the "serious music" field.

Nevertheless, things are changing. Indeed, a younger generation of musicians exposed to styles ranging from pop to folk, electronica and jazz, are seemingly more willing to test the improvisational waters than ever before. In Montreal for instance, two of the universities now have workshops in free improvisation offered as credited courses, as does the Conservatoire de musique.

At McGill University, Lori Freedman, a classically trained clarinetist and devoted improviser for many years, first started her workshop in the Fall of 2003. Though initially open to both jazz and classical majors, she decided this year to have only the latter in her class; the 'jazzers', she found, had too narrowly defined preconceptions of what improvisation should be. What counts for her is "to encourage playing what is not known and to use each moment as it could be the only one left. Above all, I am constantly reminding these musicians to be listening: that there is as much music to be made by listening as there is by playing."

Yet one question comes to mind: can one actually teach improvisation, something that defies set

rules and playing practices? For Freedman, the answer is negative, "at least not in the way one can teach basic instrumental technique and style of interpreting Western classical music."

When asked the same question, guitarist René Lussier, one of the figures who spearheaded the québécois "musique actuelle" scene, believes that it can indeed be taught. Nevertheless, he concurs with Freedman in saying one cannot stick to the conventional wisdom of more formal educational practices. When watching him work with his class at Montréal's Conservatoire de musique, one notices that he is not up there in front of the class, but is rather involved in playing along with the other students. In his congenial manner, he proposes various improvisation strategies. One of these is to set up his class in a circle and have three students play. When one of them drops out, another takes over; the playing moves around gradually until it comes back full circle. For Lussier, the virtues of improvisation go beyond just playing – they are invaluable lessons for everyday life. "There are not that many jobs around, like a chair in a symphony orchestra, so one has to learn to deal with that reality. That's where improvisation helps in being able to cope with everyday life situations."

Interestingly enough, this growing interest in improvisation has been sparked by the students themselves. Yet this practice is accepted only begrudgingly by many musical faculty administrations. From a theoretical point of view, Professor Eric Lewis of McGill's philosophy department bemoans the ghettoization of improvisation in academe, which is viewed as acceptable for jazzers (although always within certain limits), but basically off limits for the rest. Three years ago, he introduced his own Philosophy of Improvisation course, offered at both the undergraduate and graduate level. For him, it is important to expose not only musicians, but a wider audience to the presence of improvisation in other art forms (theatre, dance, spoken word),

and to understand it not merely in terms of aesthetics, but in terms of social practices as well. Professor Lewis notes that when students witness an all-improvised music concert, the experience is not the same as hearing the music from a record; their whole perspective changes, proof that being provided with the whole context is key in appreciating improvised music.

Beyond his immediate academic concerns, Professor Lewis, who, incidentally, plays trumpet and flugelhorn, has instituted a research facility at the university devoted to an across-the-board study of improvisation in the arts. Simply called "Project on Improvisation," it provides a website with information on activities in the field, including local initiatives, and organizes an annual academic conference addressing relevant issues.

For more information: www.improv/mcgill.ca

Also of note is a newly launched scholarly web-based journal called "Critical Studies in Improvisation," based at the University of Guelph. See website at www.criticalimprov.com

Improvisation: The Vancouver Experience

Since musical improvisation involves creation, and principles of creation can be learned, musical improvisation need not be a mystery. This is what I found out from attending workshops in Vancouver offered by the NOW Orchestra at the Western Front, and from workshops presented in the context of *Time Flies*, an improvised music festival that takes place every February, organized by The Coastal Jazz and Blues Society. What was refreshing about these sessions, in contrast to the more traditional jazz-improv combos I had participated in back East, was the eclecticism of the methods and the idea that creating music is more about imagination and collaboration than about chops and one-upmanship, often the focus in traditional blowing sessions. Instead, the workshops dealt with the fundamental elements of music (e.g. timbre, textures, dynamics, pitch, rhythm, etc.), and what can be done with them. Regardless of technical ability and stylistic proclivities, the goal is to work collaboratively with others in order to come up with something real using whatever materials are at one's disposal. This is the very essence of improvisation. From facilitators such as Vancouver saxophonist/composer Coat Cooke, and Welsh harpist Rhodri Davies, I learned that meaningful in-the-moment composition is not restricted to a privileged few, but can be experienced by anyone willing to listen and discover. From this experience, I also learned that there is always more to know, but that the ability to delight in the creative act is not synonymous with copious woodshedding (although experience and effort do count for something); it is always made available if one can be open to the simple, but humbling, experience of listening and saying something in the spirit of concentrated intention.

Paul Serralheiro

Max Roach, Anthony Braxton**One in Two, Two in One**

hatLOGY 601

★★★★☆

If one can judge a book, or a record, by its title, this one just says it all. Two musicians playing as one, one music played by two people, and remarkable ones at that – on the one hand, we have the absolute champion be-bop drummer, still among us despite his poor health, while, on the other, we have the most daring reedman, composer and musical thinker to have ever emerged from the African-American music tradition. Recorded no less than 25 years ago in the mountaintop town of Willisau, Switzerland, this timeless encounter pits two artists at the “peak” of their respective musical forms. What’s more, they go at it for 75 minutes non-stop, with pauses just long enough for one to switch horns and the other, percussion accessories. In so doing, the music always segues into different areas, allowing it to morph effortlessly from one mood to the next, all of which cover a wide scope of dynamics and velocities. The concert loses nothing of its musical sweep in this release, the second reissuing of an original LP set; this is due in part to the sheer abandon and – why not? – to the telepathic rapport between these performers. For variety’s sake, Braxton had a full set of reeds the day of the recording, which made for a total of three saxes, two clarinets (the lumbering contrabass model) and a flute, Roach adding gongs and tuned cymbals to his standard kit. Whether the stars in the heavens were well aligned that night is hard to say, but the truth of the matter is that the stars were aligned to make some heavenly music. **MC**

**Michael Musillami Octet****Spirits**

PSRJ020104

Playscape

★★★★☆

This is a generous helping of composed music whose overriding character is that of an easy saunter, but with the vitality, imagination and chops to make it rise above the possible derogatory implications of that description. Moreover, the octet sound makes for interesting, varied textures, and the whole is unified by the voice of the composer, Thomas Chapin, a reed player once active in New York City who died of leukemia in 1998. The hallmark



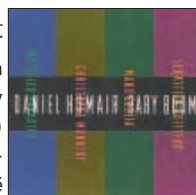
tune is “Spirits rebellious,” which opens in a free fashion, develops to a cohesive *tutti*, a soaring saxophone solo over a driving bass-guitar-drum trio, a trombone solo over a bass-piano-drum trio, an interlude of distorted guitar over sound effects and a return to the groove via deconstructive piano, drums and bass solos. The opus finally closes with a head restatement and an open-ended coda. Formal complexity aside, the best thing about *Spirits* is the timbral mix, with Michael Musillami on guitar and altered guitar, Peter Madsen on piano, Cameron Brown on bass, Tom Christenson on reeds (including English horn) and flute, Art Baron on trombone, bass recorder and didgeridoo, Tom Becham on vibes and marimba, Satoshi Takeishi on sundry percussion and Michael Sarin – a long-time associate of Chapin – on drums. Although the grooves are rather similar at times, contrasts of tempo and style, along with subtle, sophisticated harmonic evolutions keep the tunes happening and allow for a wide range of expression, from the playful rumba of “Squid Fantasy,” to the introspective, impressionistic “Star,” the silky “Namibian Sunset,” and the multi-textured “The Walking Wounded.” **PS**

Daniel Humair**Baby Boom**

SKE 333034

★★★★☆

Daniel Humair is a drummer who can provide us with many moments of beauty (as in his recording *Ear Mix*) and great chunks of boisterous energy (as in *Liberté surveillée* – both recordings are issued on the thriving French label Sketch Records). It can happen then that one in the lot of these recordings gets overlooked. Caught somewhere between the disc *Work* (a trio rounded off by the late Steve Lacy and bassist Anthony Cox) and the aforementioned *Ear Mix* (a quartet enhanced by trumpeter Marvin Stamm), this present release, *Baby Boom*, is not the most memorable of Humair’s work on record, nor is it the most original. Yet, the basic elements of any good Humair record are still there: a beautiful variety of timbral colours, subtle and energizing rhythmic dialogues among the band members and a very solid and fluid use of dynamics. But in spite of the magnificent production values and some moments of pure magic, there just seems to be something missing to make the music lift. The twin reedmen, Matthieu Donarier and Christophe Monniot, guitarist Manu Codjia and bassist Sébastien Boisseau all understand the conception underlin-



ing the choice of material very well, but even if there are some very promising moments along the way, the band just doesn’t seem capable of freeing itself from the influence of Paul Motian’s 80s quintet with Joe Lovano, Jim Pepper, Bill Frisell and Ed Schuller. And therein lies the main problem with this release: it lacks individuality. Still, this album is more than worth your while if you are looking for a good jazz recording, though it doesn’t attain the level wished by those aspiring to hear some quintessential Daniel Humair. **CH**

Joel Miller**Mandala**

Effendi Records

FND046

★★★★☆

The title tune of this recording is a pentatonic wonder that weaves around the different stress points in its motivic cell, a central artistic principle at work throughout the disc’s 14 tunes. This holds true even though this really is a disc with a double identity – five pieces feature the contributions of guest guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel along with Fraser Hollins on acoustic bass and Thom Gossage on drums, while the rest of the pieces are performed without the guitarist, replaced instead by Bill Mahar on trumpet and Bruno Lamarche on tenor, clarinet and flute. Despite the stark contrast between the two kinds of tracks, *Mandala* is kept consistent by the linking thread of folk-like melodies, smooth key segues from tune to tune, and the leader’s warm, robust tenor and soprano sound. We get a Lou Reed meets Cajun feel in “Swing la bas caisse,” a Nino Rota-esque, rueful “Fell to Pieces,” a couple of classical-leaning compositions in “War con U.S.A.” and the equally military “After the Fight,” which sounds an elegiac bugle-call before breaking into a baroque hymn. Contemporary urban rhythms appear in a number of tunes, such as “Cabeza de Vaca,” a drums-and-bass inspired piece where Bruno Lamarche’s flute comes in for the right effect, and “Rasher,” a tune made up of techno rhythms with a retro tag and the band blowing over a funky rumble. The soloing from Miller and associates is first rate, with highlights, for me, being some of Bill Mahar’s playing. Also noteworthy is Miller’s ballad playing in “Now that I own a TV” and “Shopping,” whose titles, however, I just don’t get when listening to the music. **PS**



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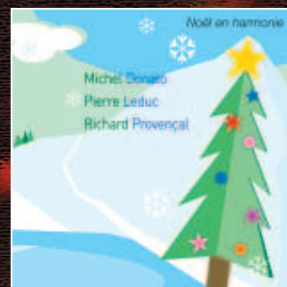
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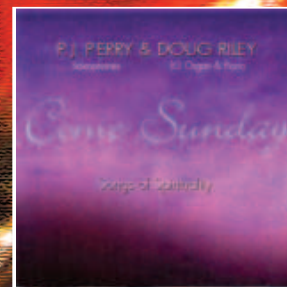
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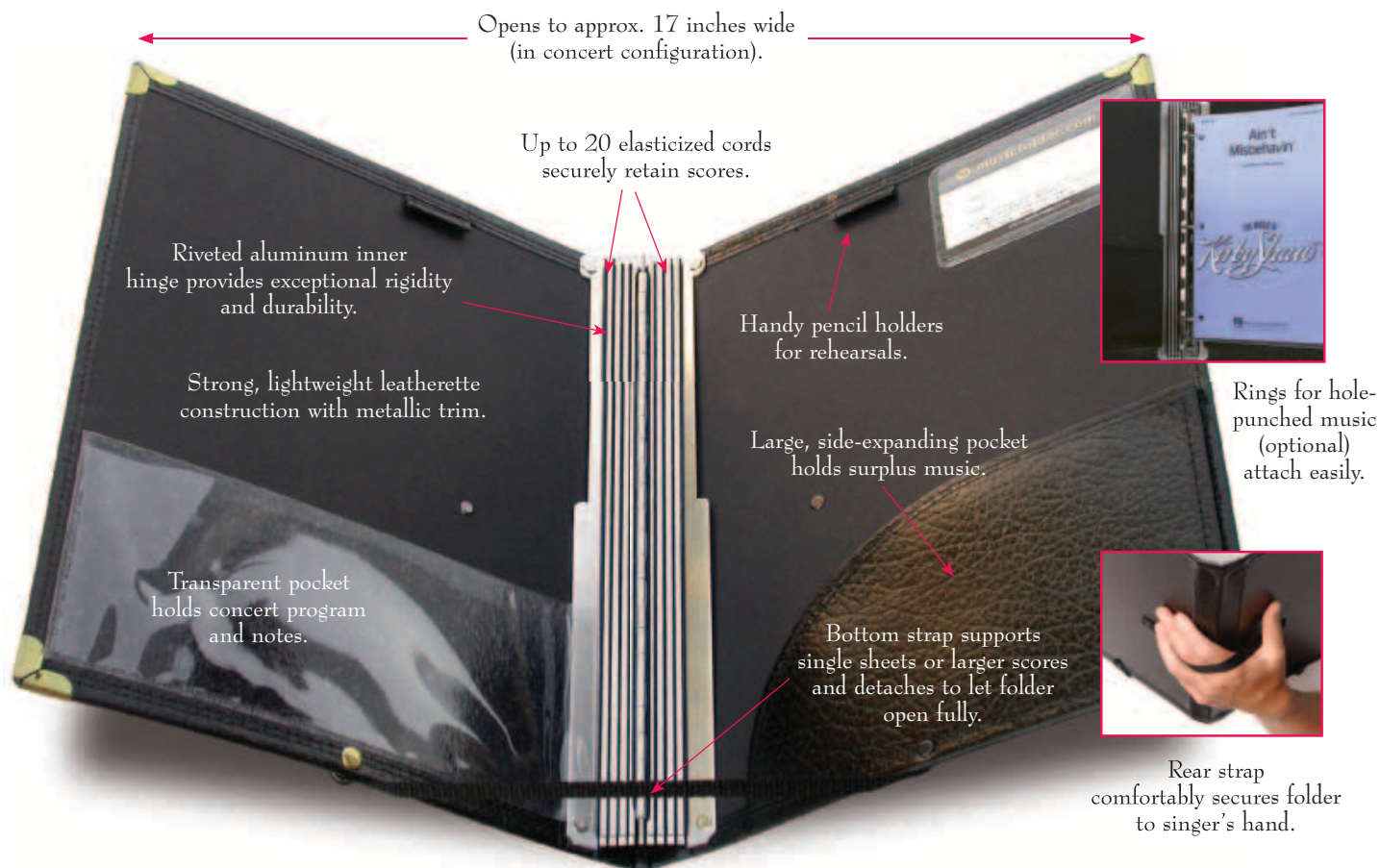
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