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Jeanne Lamon
photo: Cylla von Tiedemann.

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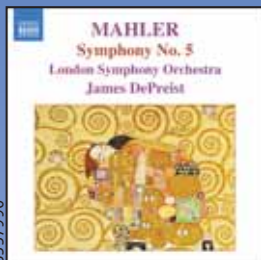


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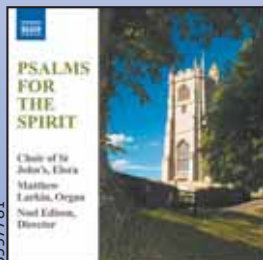
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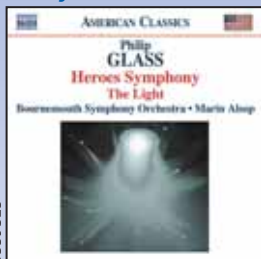


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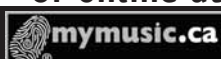
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EDITORIAL



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Earlier this year, The Music Scene/La Scène musicale, the non-profit charity that publishes this magazine turned ten years old. With so many fledgling magazines to be found across the country this anniversary is considered a milestone in the publishing industry. In ten years, TMS/LSM has published a total of 112 issues (representing 5800 pages) of *La Scena Musicale* and *The Music Scene* and has been read by over 7.5 million readers. Against all odds the “little organization that could and can” continues to fulfill its mission of making classical music publicly accessible, an achievement that is, in itself, a cause for celebration. Last October, in resounding support of our organization's mission, a number of leading Canadian musicians from Montreal generously offered their time and talent to our fundraising concert. An evening of musical delights was enjoyed by all!

Jeanne Lamon (feature article, pages 18-20), can certainly take pride in her own accomplishments as Tafelmusik's artistic director these past 25 years. Under her strong and innovative leadership the baroque ensemble has established itself as a notable force in the classical music world. Prolific young composer, John Estacio, is on his way towards establishing his own mark in the opera world. In our interview with him (page 6), he reveals his eclectic musical influences and his personal views as a composer. Speaking of influences, this issue also brings you our Higher Education guide to music programs (pages 25-29). You'll find profiles of fifteen Canadian colleges and universities offering post-secondary music education.

December is the time for holiday festivities with family and friends. So much to do, so little time! Check out our recording reviews (pages 11-16) and gift section (page 17) for inspiration on what to get that music student and music lover in your life. You might also consider giving the gift that keeps giving all year round by treating a loved one with a subscription of one or both of our magazines (*The Music Scene*; *La Scena Musicale*) and/or a limited edition La Scena Musicale 10th Anniversary Coffee Cup (page 34). When it's time to take a break from your busy holiday schedule, pamper yourself to some live music by consulting this issue's concert picks and our online concert listings (www.scena.org).

On behalf of my dedicated team of staff and volunteers at The Music Scene/La Scène musicale, I wish you and yours much peace and joy during the holidays. Have a fantabulous 2007 filled with music, music and more music!

WAH KEUNG CHAN
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

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THE ECLECTIC ESTACIO

KAT HAMMER

Premiering two full staged operas in four years is no mean feat for a composer, especially for a Canadian; on January 27, 2007, composer John Estacio will make this accomplishment when Calgary Opera produces his new opera *Frobisher*. Estacio's first opera, *Filumena*, surpassed all expectations with five different stagings and two telecasts on CBC TV. For years, Estacio has been a favourite of Western Canada audiences through successive terms as composer-in-residence in Edmonton and Calgary. Since 2003, he is one of Canada's most frequently commissioned and performed composers.

Estacio earned a master's degree in music (composition) from the University of British Columbia, where he studied with Stephen Chatman. His career took off when his orchestral piece, *Visões da Noite*, won second prize in the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra's Canadian Composers Competition in 1992, resulting in the commission of *Saudades*, which the orchestra premiered at their New Music Festival the following year. For the next eight years Estacio was Composer-in-Residence with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, where Estacio composed several major works for the orchestra, many of which appear on the Juno-nominated CD, *Frenergy*.

In 2000 Estacio became the Composer-in-Residence for both the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and Calgary Opera. It was during this appointment that Estacio composed the opera *Filumena*, which tells the captivating story of the only woman ever hanged in Alberta. It was premiered by the Calgary Opera in 2003 and was performed at the Banff Centre in the summer of the same year. In 2005 there were performances at Ottawa's National Arts Centre, at the Banff Centre and in Edmonton where the performance by the Edmonton Opera was later telecast on CBC TV.

For *Frobisher*, Estacio is joined again by librettist John Murrell and again took inspiration from Canadian history. The opera is named in honour of Martin Frobisher, the English explorer who led three expeditions to northern Canada during the late 16th century. Unlike *Filumena*, however, much of *Frobisher* is set in the present. The opera's main characters, Anna and Michael, are filmmakers working on a film about Frobisher and his expeditions. Michael disappears in the Arctic, and the opera follows Anna as she struggles to complete his dream while being haunted by both Frobisher and Michael. A series of workshops were held at the Banff Centre in the summer of 2006 to further develop this opera.

What did you think of the workshops in Banff for *Frobisher*? Did you have any major re-writes as a result of that process, or was it mostly fine-tuning details?

Estacio: The workshops in Banff are invaluable. In the musical theatre world, they have "tryouts" where they mount the show

in a city far from the lights of Broadway. They'll work and rework the show, while they run it for audiences. We do not have this luxury with opera, so the workshop process is vital. It is the opportunity to try out all of our material before we commit to it. In the case of *Frobisher*, a predominant number of workshops were spent on the libretto. It was important to establish the structure of the opera, refine the characters that populate our tale, and ensure that the story unfolded naturally and in an interesting manner. All of this needed to be worked and reworked before I could get to the music. It is much easier to eliminate characters and pages of libretto than it is to compose entire scenes, only to have to cut them or rewrite them when the libretto is changed. We learned that lesson the hard way during the workshops for *Filumena*. Once the libretto workshops were over, we had another four workshops on the music for *Frobisher*. There was some rewriting of the music, but nothing that I would call "major." I wrote three or four different arias for some characters until we found the right one. Some extended passages were cut, while other passages that weren't long enough were extended. But I wouldn't call that major rewriting. All the major rewrites happened during the libretto workshops.

You and John Murrell will be creating an opera for Vancouver after this, again on a historical subject. Were you always interested in Canadian history?

Estacio: It has only been the last few years that I've really been interested in history of any sort. I stayed away from history in high school because, well, it didn't intrigue me at the time. But we go through different phases in our lives and gravitate towards different hobbies and disciplines with time. I wish I had more time now to read history books—it's something I like to do when I have a break.

I think a lot of people will be surprised when they discover that *Frobisher* is not entirely about the Elizabethan explorer. About half the opera is about him, but the rest of the story takes place in modern day. The two other major characters of our opera are a filmmaking duo, a husband and wife. After the husband suddenly dies on a scouting mission to the north to prepare for the filming of *Frobisher*, she is left alone in life. Now, in order to move on and honour her husband, she tries to make a film of *Frobisher*. The opera goes back and forth between her life and Martin Frobisher's world and parallels their missions to get to their north.

Most young composers finish university and end up taking full-time jobs that are not in music at all. The ones we generally think of as 'successful composers' often teach full time and compose during sabbaticals and summers. How did you avoid this and actually become a professional composer?



Estacio: Luck and timing are always key players in establishing a career. The Edmonton Symphony was looking for someone who was early in their career. I applied, auditioned, and got the job. I got the chance to write a lot of orchestral works during my tenure with the ESO and develop my craft while on the job, so to speak. I spent months and years with my nose and pencil to the manuscript—then one day I looked up and suddenly realized that I was in the middle of what some refer to as a "career." Working with the ESO, and then with the Calgary Philharmonic and the Calgary Opera, was a remarkable opportunity that has lead to many more opportunities. We'll wait and see when those opportunities run out. In the meantime, I keep my pencils sharpened and a fresh stack of manuscript at the ready. I love what I do!

Your music has proven to be unquestionably accessible. Is this something that you consciously try to do?

Estacio: I have to be honest with you, the whole "accessible" label / debate is starting to bore me. I write what I want to hear. If people want to hear what I write, that's great. If others don't want to hear it, I'm okay with that too. I believe there is an audience for every composer—all music is accessible to those who seek it out. It's up to the musician to find an audience who "gets" their style and vice versa.

And finally, what do you listen to?

Estacio: I listen to just about anything, provided it's good. Opera, classical, contemporary, jazz, rock, and pretty much everything in-between. I recently spent allot of time listening to Jean Sibelius—I was writing orchestrations of some of his songs for Ben Heppner and the Toronto Symphony. I also recently caught Saariaho's opera, *L'Amour de loin*; last month I went to an Elton John concert; last week I saw *Don Giovanni*. So my tastes are eclectic. I grew up in a household with an older sister who loved The Beatles, Elvis Presley and The Rolling Stones, and with parents who listened to Portuguese fado and Lawrence Welk. When the family stereo wasn't being hogged by either of the above, I would put on Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Billy Joel. I used to listen a lot more when I was younger. These days, I spend up to 18 hours a day in my studio orchestrating *Frobisher*, so there isn't a lot of time to listen to music, or do much of anything else for that matter. But I usually make up for this deficiency during those precious moments when I'm in-between compositions.

Estacio will not have much free time for listening in the near future. The Vancouver Opera has commissioned him to compose a new work based on Lillian Alling's trek across Canada during the 1920s, to premier in 2010. He is also busy composing a symphony commissioned by the Victoria Symphony Orchestra. Estacio continues to be one of the most performed composers living in Canada today, and he shows no sign of slowing down any time soon. ■

1. *Frobisher* composer John Estacio at the final creative workshop for the opera, August 2005 at The Banff Centre.
 2. Singers Susan Lexa, David Bedard, and Helene Couture workshop *Frobisher* at The Banff Centre in December 2005.
 3. *Frobisher* Creators John Murrell and John Estacio at The Banff Centre.
- Photos: Tara Nicholson

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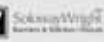
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REMEMBERING ANNA RUSSELL (1911-2006)

Joseph So

To classical music lovers of a certain age, the passing of the beloved Anna Russell marked the end of an era. For over four decades, until her official retirement in 1986, she entertained us like no other with her devastating wit and folksy charm. Born Ann Claudia Russell-Brown in 1911 in London, England, of an English father and a Canadian mother, Russell studied composition and piano at the Royal College of Music with Arthur Benjamin and Ralph Vaughan Williams and worked briefly at the BBC Educational Music Department – “a crashing bore”, according to Russell herself. Her real ambition was to be a singer, but every time she opened her mouth, people laughed. Several years ago she said to me, “I had a perfectly normal voice until one day I was hit in the face by a hockey puck – it ruined my acoustics!”



Anna at the COC *Die Walküre* rehearsal in March, 2004. Pictured are cast members Adrienne Pieczonka, Frances Ginzer, Laura Tucker, Elizabeth Stannard, and Buffy Baggott. Photo : Joseph So.

In 1939, she moved to Canada with her mother and made her radio debut in 1940, singing old music-hall songs on a CFRB program called *Round the Marble Arch*. She also appeared on CBC's *Jolly Miller Time*, where she wrote and performed comic songs, and was co-host with Syd Brown on the variety show *Syd and Anna*. She also played the piano and sang for the Rosselino Opera in Toronto. Working with

the instrument nature had given her – “my voice has been variously described as sounding like shattering glass or a cracked temple bell” – she developed a satirical routine on classical music, which she unveiled at the old Eaton Auditorium in Toronto in 1942. It proved so popular that she attracted the attention of Sir Ernest MacMillan, conductor of the Toronto Symphony at the time. Back in those days, the classical music world was understandably stuffy, so it was to Sir Ernest's credit that Anna was invited to appear in the annual Christmas Box concerts throughout the 40s.

Anna Russell's fame reached Stateside in no time and she made her debut at Carnegie recital hall in 1947. Anna once told me that the venerable diva Jennie Tourel, thinking that Anna was spoofing her with the routine “For Singers with Great Artistry but No Voice: Je n'ai pas la plume de ma tante”, tried to ban the comedienne from appearing at Carnegie, but to no avail. Anna was at the height of her popularity from the 50s to the 70s. Her *Anna Russell Sings?* was the top-selling classical LP for an incredible 48 weeks, topping the likes of Sir Thomas Beecham and the Philharmonia Orchestra, two recording powerhouses at the time. Her analysis of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* – “the only grand opera that comes in giant economy-sized package” – is an all-time favourite. When the moment came for Anna to hang up her helmet and breastplate, she did it in grand style, with a hugely popular Anna Russell First Farewell Tour that played to a sold-out Carnegie Hall.

In 1986, when she finally retired for good, she moved to Unionville, Ontario, to live in a complex for seniors located a short distance from her ancestors' family farm. Anna had her own cosy garden apartment, on Anna Russell Way, a street named in her honour. Retirement certainly didn't mean inactivity for Anna, who made various cameo appearances, such as the one with the Amadeus Choir and Mary Lou Fallis as late as 1998. She played the Anvil in the Anvil Chorus from *Il Trovatore*. Anna said, “I struck the anvil so hard, it short-circuited my hearing aid!” In June 2004, her adopted daughter, Deirdre Prussak, decided to move Anna to live with her in a seaside hamlet 200 miles north of Sydney, Australia. She settled into her new surroundings well – she particularly enjoyed the warm climate, the lovely garden and the menagerie of animals in the household. We would speak on the phone at Christmastime, and her good spirits and inimitable voice remain undiminished. To end her long life – she would have been 95 this coming December 27th – in the idyllic Australian seaside, surrounded by nature, flowers, and the knowledge that she was loved and admired by those who had had the privilege of being touched by her magic marked the completion of a charmed life.

10th Anniversary Celebrations at the Morningside Music Bridge

The Morningside Music Bridge, an international summer music school held one month annually by the Mount Royal College of Calgary, celebrated its 10th anniversary from July 5th to August 4th, by exceptionally hosting its 2006 activities in Shanghai, China. The Morningside Music Bridge, which has been providing intensive musical training each summer to some of the most talented young artists on the Canadian and international scene (violin, viola, cello and piano, ages 12-18), allows students to develop their musical skills through private lessons and coaching, masterclasses, public recitals and a concerto competition. This year, a cultural aspect was added to the educational value of this experience, as students were given the extraordinary opportunity of receiving musical instruction at the Music Middle School affiliated with the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Furthermore, special anniversary concerts featured Morningside Music Bridge faculty and alumni, as well as internationally acclaimed performers such as cellist Lynn Harrell, pianists Gary Graffman and John Perry and the Shanghai Quartet. For more information, visit: <http://www.mtrocal.ca/conservatory/musicbridge>

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NEW TALENT AT JEUNES AMBASSADEURS LYRIQUES GALA

The 13th Gala of the Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques held on November 13 in Montreal was an impressive showing of over 20 talented young Canadian and foreign singers. It gave a glimpse of the future of singing and that future is China. The Chinese contingent of sopranos Xiadua Chen of Beijing and Lian Liu of Shanghai demonstrated a coloratura and legato technique far beyond anything heard from Canadians, and reminiscent of old style belcanto. Liu's natural comedic play also signals that Asians can act, and it won her a spot in Quebec Opera's 2006 Gala and Avignon Opera's Concert Tremplin in 2007. The big winner of the night was Ottawa native soprano Yannick-Muriel Noah, a 2nd year member of the Canadian Opera Company



Yannick-Muriel Noah (Top), Xiadua Chen and Lian Liu, photo: WK&L

Ensemble, whose voice stood out above the rest. Her dramatic rendition of Chimène's aria from Massenet's *La Cid* carried her to the Public's Prize (Canadian), the Prix de la Chambre des Directeurs d'Opera (1000 Euros) and an engagement with Halle Opera for a 2008 production of *Norma*. Watch for her in the future. Soprano Tracy Smith-Bessette won the \$1000 PSM Bourse with a strong Zerbinetta's aria. Twenty-two-year-old American tenor Michael Fabiano was rewarded with the Public's Prize (Foreign) and a part in the Halle *Norma*. Other winners of auditions and stages include Michèle Bogdanovicz, Megan Latham, Anna Sovrnigo, Marianne Lambert and Mireille Lebel. The jury consisted of Rudolf Berger (Vienna Volksoper), Klaus Froboese (Halle Opera), Grégoire Legendre (Quebec Opera), Alain Nonat (Théâtre Lyrique 20) and Gabriella Ravazzi (Spazio Musica-Theatre). **WKC**

BATHROOM DIVAS SEASON 2

Canadians from all walks of life go from singing in the shower to performing opera on stage in *Bathroom Divas: So You Want To Be An Opera Star?* an exciting six-part, one-hour documentary series produced by Kaleidoscope Entertainment for Bravo!

Following a successful first season, another call was put out to find the next greatest opera star. Hundreds of candidates across the country sent in their CD submissions for review by a group of esteemed judges. Returning judges and coaches Mary Lou Fallis and Tom Diamond reviewed the applications. New to the Bathroom Divas coaching team and judging panel are Liz Upchurch and Daniel Lichti. After the auditionees were selected, the panel of four toured across Canada with stops in Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver, Halifax and Montreal to audition these opera wannabes live and in person. This year was the first year that the Divas auditions hit the East Coast. The judges then had the arduous task of narrowing down their selection to six opera hopefuls to partake in the opera boot camp. At opera boot camp, the six candidates trained and lived together in a beautiful mansion. Their coaching and vocal sessions would normally cost upwards of \$20,000. Ultimately, one of the six Divas will win the competition and will be chosen to perform live in front of an audience of thousands. This season brings lots of new and exciting challenges, trials and tribulations.

The second season of Bathroom Divas will air Saturday, February 10th at 9PM ET on Bravo!. The series will air Saturdays at 9PM ET and Tuesdays at 8PM ET. For more information about the show as well as updates, visit www.bathroomdivas.com.



Daniel Lichti, Mary Lou Fallis, Liz Upchurch and Tom Diamond

ANNE-SOPHIE MUTTER RETIRING AT 45

Norman Lebrecht

Anne Sophie Mutter's announcement of her imminent retirement has provoked few expressions of surprise or regret - a silence the more remarkable since she is the first concert star to quit in years for reasons other than physical or mental debility.

'It is my plan to stop when I reach my 45th birthday,' said the German violinist, which leaves her just 20 months to play. Spotted at 13 by the Berlin conductor Herbert von Karajan and groomed as a kind of musical Steffi Graf, Mutter won world ranking with a Deutsche Grammophon record deal and 120 gigs a year.

Icily accurate, she avoided eye contact with audiences and hated giving encores but in an art short of star quality she managed to fit the bill. Orchestras paid her the highest going rate for a soloist - 50,000 Euros for a 20-minute concerto.

In 1989 she married a wealthy Karajan lawyer, only to be widowed at the age of 32. A short second marriage to Andre Previn, his fifth, ended discreetly this summer. She lives in Munich with two teenaged children.

Why she has to go, as the Beatles would have put it, I dunno - she wouldn't say. Nothing to do with Previn, she insists: they remain good friends. Nor is there anything else in the offing by way of media or business ambitions. Mutter has made enough money out of music to live in comfort for the rest of her days and maybe that is all she has ever wanted.

Music is either driven by passion, an emotion she has seldom evinced, or by hunger, which she never knew. My suspicion is that the super-perfect player simply found it all too easy and got bored - bored of playing concerts that were booked four years in advance, bored of fish-faced audiences and egregious sponsors, bored of superlatives hurled at her by acolytes who know nothing of the effort that goes into perfection, bored finally of the sounds she herself was making. 'I will try to remain faithful to my artistic ideals,' she declared in valediction. Let silence be her epitaph.

REVIEWS

REVIEW POLICY: While we review all the best CDs we get, we don't always receive every new release available. Therefore, if a new recording is not covered in the print version of LSM, it does not necessarily imply that it is inferior. Many more CD reviews can be viewed on our Web site at www.scena.org.

★★★★★ A must!
 ★★★★★☆ Excellent
 ★★★★☆ Very good
 ★★★☆☆ Good
 ★★☆☆☆ So-So
 ★☆☆☆☆ Mediocre

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REVIEWERS

WSH W.S. Habington
 JKS Joseph K. So
 LR Lucie Renaud

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

Beethoven: Ninth Symphony

Twyla Robinson, Karen Cargill, John Mac Master, Gerald Finley

London Symphony Orchestra,
 Bernard Haitink, conductor

LSO Live SACD LSO0592 (68m 10s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$



There have been so many superlative recordings of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* over the years that one wonders if it is still possible for *any* conductor or orchestra to equal or surpass previous legacies. To my ears, this new release from the London Symphony "house label" under the great Bernard Haitink may just be the one contemporary recording that can measure up to the great ones that came before it, a few minor caveats notwithstanding. Haitink is considered by many to be the current conductor of choice in the central German repertoire, and this disc builds a strong case to support that view. Recorded on April 29 and 30, 2005, at the Barbican Centre, this is part of Haitink's Beethoven cycle with the LSO. Rarely does a conductor succeed as Haitink in balancing power, passion, intensity and urgency with precision, nuance, and a spiritual profundity that is so rarely encountered. Yet it is that extra something that makes a performance great. The juxtaposition of ecstasy and poetry is quite breathtaking.

The quartet of soloists is very fine, their voices blending beautifully, not often the case in some recordings of the *Ninth*. Canadian baritone Gerald Finley is outstanding. As a bass baritone, he doesn't possess the booming low notes, but his all-important opening phrases are sung with unfailing musicality and beauty of tone. The other Canadian, tenor John Mac Master, offers heroic if not always sweet tone. Of the two women, American Twyla Robinson has the more showy soprano part and she resists the temptation to force her lyric voice to achieve a bigger sound—the rise to the high B near the end is lovely. British mezzo Karen Cargill makes the most of the inner melodies of the alto's music. The chorus sings stirringly but never coarsely. The recording benefits from superb sonic technology—this is a hybrid multichannel disc playable on all SACD and regular CD players. The booklet has two short essays on the work, text to "Ode an die Freude" in German and English, plus artist bios. This represents an important addition to the discography of Beethoven's *Ninth* and is a strong contender for best symphonic recording of 2006.

Joseph K. So

Brahms

Piano Works

Piano Concerto No 2, Four Piano Pieces Op 119,
 Marc-André Hamelin (piano), Dallas Symphony
 Orchestra/Litton

Hyperion SACDA67550 (61 min 41 s - Hybrid SACD)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$



It is still a relatively rare thing for Hyperion to record mainstream repertoire. Perhaps it simply became inevitable that Marc-André Hamelin would take up Brahms after the success of his Schumann instrumental disc of last year (Hyperion CDA67120). The concerto was recorded live in Dallas in January 2006 and the coupling was set down in studio sessions in England the following month. Both performances benefit from superb engineering and Direct Stream Digital processing.

The solo part of the concerto demands pianistic technique of awesome dimensions while limiting the opportunities for virtuoso embellishment. In the place of a cadenza, the soloist takes a leading role in the urgently motivated coda. Hamelin is more than equal to the challenge and gives us one of the most exciting accounts of the concluding *Allegretto grazioso* ever to be recorded. The orchestral accompaniment under Andrew Litton is also highly accomplished.

Hamelin's Brahmsian laurels are further enhanced in the solo piano pieces. The appearance of the D minor concerto by these forces is eagerly awaited. **W.S. Habington**

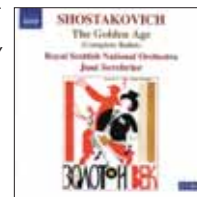
Shostakovich

The Golden Age

Royal Scottish National Orchestra/José Serebrier

Naxos 8570217-18 (143 min 42 s - 2 CDs)

★★★★☆ \$



Writing in *The New Shostakovich* (London 1990), the late Ian MacDonald related that in 1929, "...a commission came through ...from the Directorate of Theatres: a ballet to a scenario of outstanding idiocy entitled *The Golden Age*. Gaining in wisdom by the week, Shostakovich accepted it without hesitation." Although the track listing of the discs follows the plot and Richard Whitehouse provides a synopsis in the booklet note, these can safely be disregarded. What's important here is the music and much of it is of high quality. This is Shostakovich at his mischievous best. José Serebrier has been blazing a trail of glory for Naxos and he succeeds in leading the RSNO to a new benchmark recording for the complete ballet. The account is confidently and idiomatically performed, which could not be said for Gennady Rozhdestvensky with the Stockholm Philharmonic for Chandos. The Shostakovich anniversary has generated a number of fine new recordings. This set and *The Execution of Stepan Razin* (Naxos 8557812) by the Seattle Symphony under Gerard Schwarz remain the two essential acquisitions for collectors with an interest in Soviet music and culture. **WSH**

Tchaikovsky

Violin Works

Violin Concerto, Sérénade mélancolique, Valse-Scherzo, Souvenir d'un lieu cher - Julia Fischer (violin), Russian National Orchestra / Kreizberg

PentaTone PTC 5186 095

(68 min 25 s - Hybrid SACD)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$



This generous and pleasing Tchaikovsky programme is the logical follow-up to Julia Fischer's distinguished debut disc of Russian concertos (by Khachaturian, Prokofiev and Glazunov) for PentaTone. She is again teamed with Yakov Kreizberg and the Russian National Orchestra

and the performances here are marvelous. In the concerto the balance between soloist and orchestra is perfect. There is brilliance aplenty in Fischer's traversal and yet it all sounds natural, unforced and unpretentious. This is an account to rank with the best and the first version to become available in the Hybrid SACD multi-format. The other pieces for violin and orchestra get equally sympathetic treatment. Kreizberg demonstrates sensitivity as a pianist to partner Fischer in a deeply moving interpretation of *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*. If this stimulates a desire to hear the gifted young violinist in chamber works, don't miss her in outstanding recordings of the Mendelssohn piano trios. She is joined by Jonathan Gilad on piano and cellist Daniel Müller-Schott (PentaTone PTC 5186 085).

Julia Fischer will be touring in the US in 2007. Included in the performance schedule are the violin concertos of Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Brahms. This provides an idea of what to look forward to from PentaTone. **WSH**

Vocal Music

Homage: The Art of the Diva

Arias from Adriana Lecouvreur, Dalibor, Oprichnik, Tosca, Das Wunder der Heliane, Die Liebe der

Danae, Servilia, Il Trovatore, Cleopatre, Jenufa, and Die Kathrin

Renée Fleming, soprano

Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre,

Valery Gergiev, conductor

Decca 475 8069 (67m 27s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

As the reigning American diva of our time, it is fitting that soprano Renée Fleming pays homage to divas of the past. The twelve arias chosen for the album were premiered by such great singers as Mary Garden, Rosa Ponselle, Maria Jeritza, Lotte Lehmann, Emmy Destinn, Magda Olivero, and Geraldine Farrar. The selections range from the extremely familiar (*Vissi d'arte* from *Tosca* and *Tacea la notte* from *Il Trovatore*) to the rarely heard arias from Korngold's *Die Kathrin* and *Das Wunder der Heliane*. The most obscure piece is an aria from Rimsky-Korsakov's *Servilia*, from a newly discovered score that was gathering dust for many decades at the Mariinsky Theatre.

Fleming is in terrific voice, singing with her customary rich, opulent tone. Her technical command is really quite amazing—you won't hear better trills than hers in "Di tale amor".



More problematic for me is her tendency to be excessively melodramatic in some of the arias, distorting the vocal line and coming across as mannered. The handsomely produced booklet is chockfull of lovely photos of the great singers, plus of course many of Fleming herself in her best diva poses. She also contributes an interesting and well written—though far-too-brief—essay on the genesis of this recording. Her frequent collaborator, Valery Gergiev, conducts this material lovingly. For me this is one of Fleming's better recordings in recent years. **JKS**

Others

Juno Baby

The Original Music, volume 1

junobaby.com

A joint venture of husband (Adam Adelman) and wife (composer Belinda Takahashi, Ph.D. from the Eastman School of Music) started when the two were expecting their first-born (named Juno) in 2003. The Juno Baby company produces music, videos, books and plush. Instead of relying on synthetic sounds, Takahashi wrote for "real" instruments, performed by orchestra musicians.

BATHROOM DIVAS

SO YOU WANT TO BE AN OPERA STAR?

"Bathroom Divas is one of the best Canadian reality series ever"
 - John Doyle, *The Globe and Mail*

Watch the second season of this exciting six-part documentary series.

Six opera hopefuls from all walks of life compete for the ultimate title of "Bathroom Diva" and the chance to perform on stage for an audience of thousands.

Bathroom Divas premieres Saturday, February 10th at 9pm ET on Bravo!

Watch *Bathroom Divas* every Saturday at 9pm ET, with encore presentations Tuesdays at 8pm ET

www.bathroomdivas.com

The songs are well written (much attention is given to polyphony, counterpoint and varying rhythmic accompaniment) and rather catchy (*The Echo* and *Cool Cat* were my favourites). If my musical ear was a tad annoyed by the babyish voice performing the songs, the sing-along versions, well orchestrated and convincingly performed, were a treat.



Lucie Renaud

Masterworks

Canadian Historical Recordings in the fields of pop, jazz, traditional and classical music

Selections by Burr, Pelletier (Steber), Jobin, Gould Forrester, Stratas, Verreau, Bolduc, Vigneault, Kenney, Koffman, Peterson, Charlebois, Ferland, Plamondon

Gala Records GAL 107 (CD1: 37m 30 s; CD2: 39m 11s)
www.galarecords.com

★★★★☆ \$\$\$

The goal of the Canadian Audio-Visual Trust is to preserve the sounds and images of Canadian artists. To celebrate its tenth anniversary and in collaboration with Canadian Heritage and the Library and Archives Canada, AV Trust has issued a two-disc set capturing the greatest moments of Canadian music-making, in the classics as well as pop and jazz. What a trip down memory lane! Classical selections range from the lilting tones of Henry Burr singing "When You and I Were Young, Maggie" (in decent sound considering it was recorded in 1923—the oldest cut in the collection), to Québec tenor Raoul Jobin singing the Flower Song from *Carmen*, to the magnificent Maureen Forrester in a sublime moment in Mahler, "Urlicht" from his *Second Symphony* conducted by the legendary Bruno Walter. The most recent selection is that of Teresa Stratas, singing "Lied der Lulu," in the 1979 Paris production of *Lulu* that included for the first time the newly discovered Act 3. And of course no collection would be complete without the great Glenn Gould, here playing the Bach *Goldberg Variations*. Another beautiful moment is Richard Verreau singing M'appari from Flotow's *Martha*, accompanied by Wilfrid Pelletier.



There is also much to enjoy in the pop and jazz disc. Moe Koffman's marvelous "Swinging Shepherd's Blue" is included, as is the exquisite playing of "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning" by Oscar Peterson. There are omissions—no Jon Vickers, Louis Quilico, Leopold Simoneau, or Lois Marshall on the classical disc, and other pop giants such as Anne Murray are

missing. At less for forty minutes of music per disc, surely more could have been added. The selections have a strong Québec focus—this is an observation, not a criticism, since English Canada often fails to recognize the contributions of French Canadian artists, like Mary Bolduc. This release should be of interest to anyone wishing to find out more about the rich legacy of Canadian music-making.

JKS

DVD

Beethoven: Symphony No 9 "Choral"

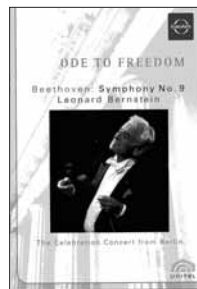
June Anderson, Sarah Walker, Klaus König, Jan-Hendrik Rootering

Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks and members of the Rundfunkchor Berlin and Kinderchor der Philharmonie Dresden; Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, and members of the Sächsische Staatskapelle Dresden, Orchestras of the Kirov Theatre, London Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and Orchestre de Paris; Leonard Bernstein, conductor

EuroArts DVD 2072038 (94 m)

★★★★★ \$\$\$

This performance, telecast live on 1989 Christmas Day from East Berlin and now available on DVD, captured one of the most memorable musical events in late 20th century, a concert celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall. The venue, Schauspielhaus Berlin, was just a few hundred meters from the Wall. The Bavarian Radio Orchestra was joined by members of the Dresden, Kirov, London, New York, and Paris Orchestras, under the baton of the great, late Leonard Bernstein. Citing the 'heat of the moment', Bernstein took the inspired stroke of changing one word, "Freude" in "An die Freude" (Ode to Joy) to "Freiheit", or freedom. The concert was broadcast to the square outside and subsequently telecast to twenty countries worldwide. Considering the disparate forces gathered on short notice for this concert, the performance itself went beautifully, with the musicians playing amazingly as one. The quartet of soloists, representing Germany, England and the United States, was rather uneven. Tenor Klaus König was not exactly sweet to the ears, while Sarah Walker's mezzo didn't project sufficiently. Anderson and Rootering fared better, but overall the four voices didn't blend well. Given the significance of the occasion, such quibbles are rendered superfluous. Already suffering from poor health and showing signs of exhaustion, Bernstein conducted like



a man possessed, pouring his heart and soul into the music—his facial expressions at various moments are extremely moving. Thankfully the prolonged ovations at the end was preserved uncut on video. The videography was handled by the experienced veteran Humphrey Burton. The picture quality, though not high definition, is good. The engineers have done a superb job of cleaning up the less than perfect broadcast sound, though they didn't attempt to remove the foot thumping of the maestro! This DVD should be in every music lover's library.

JKS

Giordano

Fedora

Mirella Freni, Plácido Domingo, Adelina Scarabelli, Alessandro Corbelli

Chorus and orchestra of Teatro alla Scala, Gianandrea Gavazzeni, conductor

TDK DVWW-OPFED (113 m)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$

Umberto Giordano composed *Fedora* shortly after his successful *Andrea Chenier*, but it never approached the popularity of his earlier work. For one thing, *Fedora* lacks the melodic inspiration of *Chenier*, the 90-second long "Amor ti vieta" notwithstanding. Even by the standards of Italian *verismo*, the libretto of *Fedora* is clumsily constructed. Still, the dramatically showy title character of Princess Fedora Romazoff, written in an agreeable *tessitura*, can be an effective vehicle for prima donnas of a certain age. Famous singers in late career, from Tebaldi, Olivero, Marton, Soviero and now Freni, have had success with it. This La Scala performance from 1993 caught both Freni and Domingo in excellent voice, singing strongly and acting with dramatic involvement. Freni was every inch the *grande dame* and Plácido Domingo (Loris) the ardent lover. Their performance here is preferable to the one at the the Met a few years later, also available on DVD. The sets and costumes are lavish in typical La Scala fashion, although the backdrops are projected rather than actually built sets. The supporting cast of mostly house singers sang competently. Octogenarian Gavazzeni conducted with a sure sense of *verismo* style. And it is good to see that the long-banished solo curtain calls are once again shown on a La Scala video. Domingo received the lion's share of bouquets, which he snatched in mid-air! This release is recommended for *verismo* buffs and the fans of these two artists.

JKS



Schreker

Die Gezeichneten

Robert Brubaker, Anne Schwanewilms,
Michael Volle, Robert Hale, Wolfgang Schöne

Deutsches Symphonieorchester Berlin,
Kent Nagano, conductor

Recorded live at the Felsenreitschule, Salzburg,
26 July, 2005

EuroArts DVD 2055298 (145 m)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

On the cover of this DVD is the sticker “Rediscovery of the Year”—for once a marketing gimmick that is accurate. While not exactly a household name even for aficionados, Schreker has written nine operas, several of which, particularly *Irrelohe*, *Der ferne Klang* and *Die Gezeichneten*, are undergoing a revival, sparked by the excellent Entartete Musik series from Decca. *Die Gezeichneten* received a high profile—not to mention steamy—production at the Salzburg Festival in 2005.

Schreker himself penned the libretto, set in 16th century Genoa—although you’d never guess it from the costumes! The ugly and deformed nobleman Alviano Salvago, rejected by women, sublimates his sexual desire by building an Elysium as a repository of all things beautiful. Along comes Carlotta the painter, who loves Salvago “for his soul”, and persuades him to be painted. Salvago falls in love with her, but their relationship is unconsummated because Carlotta has a weak heart and cannot experience physical intimacy. In the meantime, unbeknownst to Salvago, his friends, including the lecherous Count Vitellozzo Tamare, have been abducting women to the secret grotto in the Elysium for orgies. Carlotta becomes one of the victims of Tamare. But once Carlotta has experienced sexual pleasure with the handsome Count, she recoils from the ugly Salvago and rejects him before dying. He goes mad, but not before killing his rival. Well, what do you do with a story line like that! Nikolaus Lehnhoff’s solution is to make it even more lurid and outrageous than usual. Salvago is not a hunchback but a cross-dresser in this production, and Lehnhoff takes a page from Stanley Kubrick’s *Eyes Wide Shut* for the Act 3-orgy scene, complete with underage children for shock value.

The Freudian psychosexual undertones are fully exposed in this production. There are genuinely creative touches mixed in with directorial excesses bordering on, dare I say, “Eurotrash”. However, what is not in doubt is the extremely high musical value of the score. The lush and intoxicating orchestral writing is

quite wonderful—Schreker has this knack of shrouding ugliness with the most sublime music! Kent Nagano and the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin are magnificent. It was brave for tenor Robert Brubaker to subject himself to the directorial whims of Lehnhoff, and his heroic tenor rings out impressively, only tiring a little in Act 3. Anne Schwanewilms (Carlotta) looks like she has strayed from a 21st-century cocktail party, but she sings with beautifully clear, unforced tone. Michael Volle (Tamare) is an impressive villain. This DVD is highly recommended for fans of Schreker and the post-romantic-cum-expressionist genre in general, not to mention the adventurous. JKS

Montserrat Caballé and José Carreras

Live from the Bolshoi Theatre

Montserrat Caballé, soprano; José Carreras, tenor;

Miguel Zannetti, piano

Recorded live September 5, 1989

ArtHaus Musik DVD 101 413 (110 m)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

This live performance from Moscow features two legendary Spanish singers in recital. In their respective primes, Caballé and Carreras were phenomenally gifted and charismatic artists with fiercely loyal followings. Their fans were certainly out in force on this Russian love-in—the Bolshoi Theatre was packed to the rafters, and occasionally the camera would pan the audience showing everyone in rapt attention. Just about every song was received with vociferous applause. This audience probably had few opportunities to hear these two—to my knowledge, neither had sung in staged operas in Moscow, and their recital appearances there must have been rare.

It would be less than truthful to say that by 1989, Caballé and Carreras were still in their respective primes. But throughout the concert, the two made up for it with liberal doses of star power. Caballé in particular appeared to be having fun, her jovial persona very much in evidence. Other than a slight diminution of technical ease—particularly a problematic chest register—the voice has retained much of its customary sheen. Her justly famous high pianissimos—up to a high A-flat on this occasion—were still there. Carreras fared less well, showing the damaging effects of his courageous battle with leukemia that had almost taken his life two years earlier. Much of his singing was hard and forced, delivered in a constant *mezza forte*. When he risked an occasional bit of soft singing such as the ending in “Del cabello más sutil”, it was crooned. He looked tense, only breaking

into a rare smile a couple of times. The program consisted mostly of Italian and Spanish songs, nothing that would seriously tax their diminished resources. The occasional aria showed the artists well below their best, especially “Brindisi” from *La Traviata*, awkwardly presented without a chorus. For fans who want every note recorded by these two, this will be a worthwhile purchase. Otherwise, these artists have huge discographies where they can be heard to better advantage. JKS

Mozart

Don Giovanni

Álvarez, Bayo, Ganassi, Bros, Regazzo, López,
Moreno, Reiter; Madrid Symphony Orchestra &
Chorus/Pérez

Stage Director: Lluís Pasqual

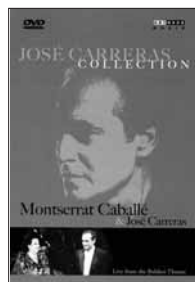
Opus Arte 0958 D (208 min - 2 DVDs)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

Various productions of *Don Giovanni* have involved some radical, relevance-enhancing time travel with rather mixed results. Here’s one that works. Director Lluís Pasqual advances the action to the 1940s in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War. If war corrupts, internecine conflict corrupts absolutely. Don Giovanni first appears on the stage in the uniform of the winning side. After dispatching the Commendatore (with a knife rather than rapier), he proceeds to demobilize himself in the street and sets off to exploit the atmosphere of general sordidness for his own perverse gratification. The entire cast grasps Pasqual’s concept with gusto and Carlos Álvarez in the title role exemplifies their enthusiasm. This performance surpasses by a significant margin his previous portrayal (from Vienna on TDK under Muti) for DVD. The interactive chemistry with Leporello (Lorenz Regazzo) is quickly and menacingly established.

The sets by Ezio Frigerio and vintage motor cars add a dimension of authenticity to the director’s unique scheme. With monumental audacity, he proceeds to turn the whole thing on its head by converting the Don’s party into fancy dress with the revelers costumed in exquisite 18th-century finery.

Musically, this is a fine performance but not quite a great one. Conductor Victor Pablo Pérez demonstrates sensitive control of the score. The Donna Anna (Maria Bayo) and Donna Elvira (Sonia Ganassi) sound light-toned in places while Don Ottavio (José Bros) is steadfast. Certain vocal lines are coarsened to imitate the class distinctions of idiomatic Spanish. Regardless, the collective effort produces a successful recreation of Mozart’s *Dramma giocosso*,



which can be unreservedly recommended for discriminating admirers of the work. **WSH**

R Strauss

Elektra

Johansson, Lipovšek Diener, Schasching, Muff; Zürich Opera Chorus & Orchestra/von Dohnányi
Stage Director: Martin Kušej

TDK DVVW-OPELEK (102 min)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

WARNING: This production includes nudity, sexuality, violence, madness and brutal language. Viewer discretion is advised. It was a century ago that Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss embarked on the collaboration that would bring *Elektra* to the stage in 1909. The libretto was an adaption of Hofmannsthal's play derived from Sophocles. After watching this 2005 Zürich Opera production one is left wondering if they



had any idea what they had created. Martin Kušej has brought the setting up to the present and confined the action to a single, claustrophobic passage space with an intentionally uneven floor. Elektra (Eva Johansson) and her sister Chrysothemis (Melanie Deiner) are virtually the only characters who are not grotesque in appearance. The performance is an exhibition of the banality of evil, the addictiveness of hate and the self-destruction of vengeance. At the point Elektra undertakes to act alone in the destruction of her mother and the mother's homicidal lover, she has reached the vacuum-sealed resignation of a suicide bomber. Disregard Ancient Greece and any Freudian notions—this performance is a parable for the Gaza Strip or Baghdad or any place where despair crushes the will to live and rage demands a blood tax. At the end, Elektra springs to her feet in defiance, which perhaps implies that the struggle continues. Powerful stuff with convincing vocal performance and a full-force account of the score conducted by Christoph von Dohnányi. An *Elektra* for our time. **WSH**

Wagner

Lohengrin & Tannhäuser

Lohengrin

Hofmann, Roar, Armstrong, Connell, Vogel, Weikl; Beyreuth Festival Chorus & Orchestra / Nelsson

Stage Director: Friedrich

EuroArts 2072028

(200 min - 2DVDs)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

Hofmann, Roar, Marton, Rysanek, Macurdy, Raffell; Metropolitan Opera Chorus & Orchestra / Levine

Stage Director: August

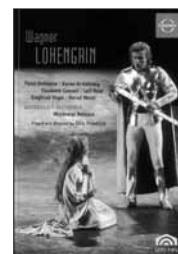
Everding

DG 00440 073 4176 (223 min - 2 DVDs)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

Tannhäuser

Versalle, Studer, Engert-Ely, Sotin, Brendel; Beyreuth



Wagner

Der Ring des Nibelungen

James Morris, Hildegard Behrens, Siegfried Jerusalem, Jessye Norman, Gary Lakes, Reiner Goldberg, Bernd Weikl, Matti Salminen, Kurt Moll, Hanna Schwarz, and others ; Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Chorus / James Levine

Deutsche Grammophon 4709803 (14 CDs; 15 h 21m 50 s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

This Special Edition of the Met Ring, issued to commemorate the first-ever Canadian Ring Cycle by the COC, is a terrific buy at \$39.95 for 14 CDs. At this bargain price, all the discs are packed in paper sleeves



inside a single box instead of individual jewel cases, and the thin booklet does not include texts and translations. Recorded in the late 80's in the studio, it features some—but not all—of the same singers as the video recorded a couple of years later and now available on DVD. The main asset of the studio CD recording is the Wotan of James Morris, caught at his absolute peak. He sings Wotan's *Abschied* in Act 3 of *Die Walküre* with lieder-like intensity and a mellifluous beauty of tone that is breathtaking. Hildegard Behrens may lack the power and laser-like precision of a Birgit Nilsson, but her Brunnhilde is nevertheless a touching portrayal. One is hard-pressed to find a Sieglinde of such vocal opulence as Jessye Norman—she easily outsings her Siegmund (Gary Lakes).

Matti Salminen is certainly the very best Hagen of our generation. It's a pity that Siegfried is taken not by Siegfried Jerusalem—who sings Loge here, but by the thin-voiced though reliable Reiner Goldberg. It is good to have Christa Ludwig, then near the end of her illustrious career, as Fricka. The norms and valkyries are all different from the video—here the singers are generally older, full-figured gals who are less photogenic but often sound better. For example, as Helmwig, Linda Kelm's top C's are incredible. James Levine always brings out the best from the Met Orchestra, and their playing here is exemplary. He conducts at a leisurely tempo, but with sufficient intensity to hold everything together. This is *the* Christmas stocking stuffer of choice for 2006! **JKS**

WIN TICKETS TO THE WORLDS GREATEST NEW YEAR'S CONCERT!

The Music Scene magazine and Attila Glatz Concert Productions give you a chance to win a pair of tickets to *Salute to Vienna*, a live recreation of Vienna's famous New Year's concert.

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December 30, 2006: Victoria

January 1, 2007: Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, Kitchener, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg.

Answer the following question before December 25 and you could be one of the lucky winners!

Q?: How many Canadian cities will host the event

Send in your answer to 5409 Waverly St., Montreal (Quebec) H2T 2X8 or email: kali@scena.org.



Festival Chorus &
Orchestra / Sinopoli
Stage Director: Wolfgang
Wagner

EuroArts 2072008 (188 min -
2 DVDs)

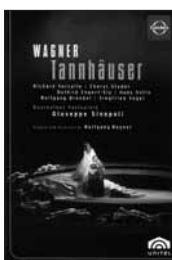
★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$

Cassilly, Marton, Weikl,
Troyanos, Macurdy; Metropolitan Opera Chorus &
Orchestra / Levine

Stage Director: Otto Schenk

DG B0006580-09 (189 min - 2 DVDs)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$



Herewith, a tale of two Wagner epics, twice-told. The past year and a bit yielded an avalanche of high-quality productions on DVD of the composer's works. Perhaps it was inevitable that these would start to arrive in pairs. EuroArts offers the mystique of Bayreuth while lavish Met spectaculars are re-issued by DG. These *Lohengrins* and *Tannhäusers* are fine and distinctive accounts which will reward repeated viewing. Also by coincidence, all were directed for television by Brian Large, a byword for technical excellence.

For some time, *Lohengrin* has been represented in the DVD catalogue by an often hard-to-get Vienna State Opera production distrib-

uted by Image Entertainment. Despite the efforts of Domingo, Studer, Lloyd and Abbado, the performance never seems to rise above the level of pageantry. Making a choice (if a choice is absolutely necessary) between the new rivals is made even tougher because the title role and principal adversary are taken by the same singers (Peter Hofmann and Leif Roar). Both are in somewhat better voice in Bayreuth (1982) than New York (1986). Eva Marton's portrayal of Elsa von Brabant for the Met is admirable but Götz Friedrich gives Karan Armstrong more to do dramatically and her interpretation of the character conveys greater vulnerability. The role of Otrud (Elizabeth Connell in Bayreuth and Leone Rysanek for the Met) is evenly matched but again, Friedrich scores over August Everding in stage direction.


The brisk, but never rushed, conducting of Woldemar Nelsson in Bayreuth secures a recommendation by a narrow margin over Levine's massive forces at the Met.

As in the case of *Lohengrin*, the stage settings and costumes for *Tannhäuser* in Bayreuth (1989) are somewhat abstract compared to the ultra-realism of the Met (1982). Günther Schneider-Siemssen, Herbert von Karajan's designer of choice for decades, provided really sumptuous scenery in New York, which added to the production's stature as a 'traditional' presentation. Here, the conducting of James Levine and the marvelous playing of the Met orchestra are clearly superior to Sinopoli (a Bayreuth novice at the time).

The main virtue of the Bayreuth *Tannhäuser* is that it provides an example of the stage direction of Wolfgang Wagner as the presiding *doyen* of the family firm. The ultimate crux of the comparison falls upon the singers in the title role. Richard Versalle, a last-minute replacement for René Kollo in Bayreuth, gives a dedicated performance but never really recovers from a stiff opening duo with Venus. His best moments come in the hero's Act II-disgrace at the 'Wartburg Idol' song contest. Richard Cassilly in New York makes a strong impression throughout and even enjoys the advantage of a more provocatively sensual Venus (Tatiana Troyanos). His standing as an artist of integrity and his awareness that the role was a career pinnacle shine through. Cassilly is magnificent in the ordeal of redemption in Act III.

Eva Marton (Elizabeth) and Bernd Weikl (Wolfram) certainly outclass their Bayreuth rivals (Cheryl Studer and Wolfgang Brendel).

So it's Bayreuth by a nose in *Lohengrin* and the Met by a mile for *Tannhäuser*. And there is more on the way. Opus Arte is bringing out a new and modernized *Lohengrin* from the same folks who made their *Parsifal* set while DG will reissue another *Tannhäuser* (from Bayreuth this time in a Götz Friedrich production). Aren't we devoted (perhaps obsessive?) Wagnerians lucky? **WSH**



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GIFT Suggestions



Richard Cook & Brian Morton: The Penguin Guide to Jazz Recordings, Eighth Edition
Penguin Books, 2006, 1534 p.

Since 1992, the Penguin Guide has been the Jazz fan's recording reference—revised and updated every two years by Brits Richard Cook and Brian Morton, the guide has now reached its 8th edition with thousands of CD reviews. Most helpful are the writer's choices, and the *Core Collection* section, which represent the essential starting point of almost 200 titles for the beginning collector. All of the serious

reviews are injected with a British flair.

Félix-Antoine Hamel

Steve Reich: Phases – A Nonesuch Retrospective

Nonesuch 79962-2 (5 disques – 370 min 35 s)

Here is a great way to mark the 70th birthday of Steve Reich. Most of his masterpieces are contained in this box set. Although we miss the absence of *Four Organs*, we have *Music For Mallet Instruments, Voices, and Organ*; missing also is *It's Gonna Rain*, the opus 1, but the opus 2, *Come Out*, is there as well as *Drumming*, *Music for 18 Musicians*, *Different Trains*, *Tehillim*, *The Desert Music*, *Electric Counterpoint*, etc. And all of these are original recordings.



Réjean Beaucage



Playing in Silence

The student brass player can now practice in his apartment late at night thanks to Yamaha's Silent Brass. Models available for trumpet, trombone, French horn, baritone horn and the tuba.

Isabelle Picard

And on Solid

Portable music stands are practical for ease of travel, but nothing beats having a solid music stand at home to support heavy exercise books and music scores.

IP

Lighten your Load

Transporting an instrument would be made easier with a lighter case. There are many choices of material, souple or rigid, and even some which can be strapped to your back to free your hands.

IP



The Foot

A foot is a handy accessory to rest the instrument during a pause or to easily change instruments during a concert. There's a different foot for most instruments.

IP



Bose QuietComfort® 3 Acoustic Noise Cancelling® headphones

The new, improved design fits close to the ear, making these less bulky than the QC 2. Bose's legendary audio and full-spectrum noise reduction let you hear every note as if for the first time. Great for air travel. Lose the earbuds, already!

Natasha Gauthier

Swinging Too!

Gail Issenman

Green Door Music GDMI 102 (42 min)

Swinging the ABC's

Gail Issenman

Green Door Music RECD-333 (33 min)



Two interesting CDs injected with catchy music, a warm voice, sun that radiates, birds and colours of a rainbow. *Swinging the ABC* is more than a jazz recording for kids, it's a journey into the imagination. The two CD set is generous in content that will delight and inspire children to sing and dance. Visit www.greendoormusic.com

Mario Felton-Coletti



Olivia forms a Band

By Ian Falconer

After trying her hand at the opera and the circus, Olivia, everybody's favourite precocious swinelette, decides to form a one-pig band. Ian Falconer's charming musical tale and elegant charcoal illustrations will appeal to all ages.

NG

Metropolitan Opera Radio and Video

Sirius Radio Channel 85

The Metropolitan Opera in the Theatre, Cineplex

Get the Metropolitan Opera twenty-four hours a day, thanks to the new contract between the Metropolitan Opera under its new leader, Peter Gelb, and Sirius Radio. Many performances and all new productions are broadcast live—including two I saw in early December 2006 in New York, an amazing *La Bohème* with Rolando Villazón and Anna Netrebko, and an incredible *Don Carlo* with Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Olga Borodina, Rene Pape, Patricia Racette, Johan Botha and Sam Ramey. The rest of the Met schedule is filled up with great, previously unavailable performances from the Met's vast archives. At this time, the service is not yet available from Sirius Canada, although it is being considered the next updates in early 2007. Alternately, you can try to subscribe to the Internet version at www.sirius.com.

See live Met performances at selected theatres in high definition video. The first one is the Julie Taymor *Magic Flute*, albeit at 90 minutes slightly truncated, on December 30th. It stars the newest Canadian diva soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian. www.cineplex.com

Joseph So



NATASHA GAUTHIER

The year was 1981. It was the beginning of the decade of excess: big hair, big shoulder pads, and big Zeffirelli productions at the Met. But that year, a violinist named Jeanne Lamon became music director of a fledgling Toronto orchestral ensemble specializing in Baroque music. The group was small in size, but it had big ideas, big heart and, above all, a huge passion for what it was doing.

Jeanne Lamon

CELEBRATES 25 YEARS WITH TAFELMUSIK

Today, Tafelmusik is Canada's premiere baroque orchestra, renowned the world over for the gossamer refinement of its interpretation and the energy of its playing. Through its 70-odd recordings and countless live performances, the group has acquired a devoted following not just at home in Toronto, but across Canada and abroad.

This year, Tafelmusik is celebrating Lamon's 25 years at the helm. It's also the 25th anniversary of the Tafelmusik Chamber Choir. For Lamon, the double-silver celebration drives home the point that time really does fly when you're having fun.

"It seems like forever," says Lamon over the phone from her Toronto home. "At the same time you feel like 'where have all those years gone?'"

Tafelmusik was only two years old when Lamon took over. The little orchestra established in 1979 by Kenneth Solway and Susan Graves was still very much outside the mainstream of Toronto's cultural scene, as were many groups and musicians specializing in early music at the time.

"When we started, what we were doing was seen as the radical fringe," Lamon recalls. "It was sort of this beatniky thing."

Alison Mackay has played bass and violone with Tafelmusik since those first days in 1979. "At the beginning, it was all still very experimental," she says. "Technically, we were still finding our way. I think if you heard old tapes of those early concerts, you'd be horrified."

Now, period performance in Canada has come into its own, thanks to the pioneering spirit of Tafelmusik and other veterans. Our soloists and ensembles are invited to perform all over the world. In some cases, Baroque music enjoys better ticket and CD sales and more loyal subscribers than traditional symphonic music or opera.

For Lamon, this evolution has been "wonderfully exciting" to watch. But, she warns, there's also a down side. "It's harder to do radical things, or take as many risks," she says. "With popularity come expectations."

That doesn't stop Lamon from trying. Some recent innovative concert programs featured music by the Chevalier Saint-George, a black 18th-century French composer, and works by the 17th-century Venetian Jew Salamone Rossi. Tafelmusik's CD of Saint-George's music became the soundtrack of a 2004 film about the composer, produced by Media Headquarters for CBC, PBS, BBC, and TV5. *Le Mozart Noir* won a Banff Rocky Award, five Gemini nominations and a Swiss Rose D'Or nomination. Last year, Tafelmusik worked with Media Headquarters on *The Four Seasons Mosaic*, a CBC documentary about a collaboration between Tafelmusik, composer Mychael Danna, Inuit throat singers, and musicians performing on the Indian veena and the Chinese pipa.

Many of these ideas come from the orchestra musicians, who are encouraged to explore, conduct research and propose new programs and projects. "Jeanne has been able to combine demanding standards with collegiality," says Mackay. "We all feel like we have a voice. She's very supportive of our ideas."

Violist Elly Winer agrees. "Jeanne is extremely generous," says Winer, another "lifer" with 22 years of Tafelmusik experience under his belt (one of the group's strengths is its low turnover.) "Of course, she is still the leader, but she's very happy to give people the ball."

Lamon and Tafelmusik have also broken new ground in the area of music education, which is taking up an increasingly prominent role in the orchestra's roster of activities. The group is involved in initiatives ranging from performances for elementary schoolchildren and their parents, to more advanced, multi-disciplinary creative projects with local high school kids, to the online Baroque Learning Centre aimed at the general public, through to the highly sought-after professional training at the Tafelmusik Baroque Summer Institute and the advanced Baroque Performance program at the University of Toronto. (Lamon proudly notes that three out of the group's current core component of 17 musicians are summer institute graduates.)

"The educational aspect is extraordinarily important," says Lamon. "Not just for the students. It's important for us as musicians to be able to teach. We have an expertise and a specialization, and it's important to pass that on to the next generation of performers."

Mackay has been involved in many of the ensemble's educational activities in Toronto schools. "Baroque music is a wonderful way to introduce young people to music for a number of reasons," she says. "First of all, the pieces are short. Baroque music is based on dance music, so it's very rhythmic. It's very accessible for kids. And of course, it's beautiful, but I'm biased."

Mackay recalls a recent project where high school students were asked to create a play based on Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. "Because they spent quite a long time rehearsing, through sheer repetition that music is going to be hard-wired into their brains. When they are older and they hear *Autumn* or *Winter* from the *Four Seasons* again, hopefully it will mean something emotional to them, because they've gone through this experience."

Although Tafelmusik's school programs tend to be aimed at older students, Lamon is passionate about making music education available to all, from as early an age as possible.

"There isn't enough music in the schools," she states. "It's been cut from budgets as though it's a frill, when it is absolutely not a frill. It's extremely unenlightened of governments, when so many studies have shown how beneficial music is to children. God knows it's not just about wanting them to become musicians. Music helps their brains develop in unique ways, so they can become better scientists, or better politicians."

It's this philosophy that led the ensemble to partner with Analekta, one of its main recording labels, and the advocacy group Coalition for Music Education in Canada (CMEC), to launch TafelKIDSTM, a new series of entertaining and educational CDs aimed at younger children. The first recording in the series, *Baroque Adventure: The Quest for Arundo Donax*, was released in November 2005 and went on to win the 2006 Juno for Children's Album of the Year. Analekta is donating \$1 from the sale of each handsome boxed set, which includes three CDs, a 20-page picture-booklet and other goodies, to the CMEC.



CMEC executive director Ingrid Whyte is ecstatic about the TafelKIDSTM project. "It's not simply about listening to music but about *engaging* kids in music and all that it offers," Whyte writes in a statement posted on the coalition's website. "Music creates context for history and cultural awareness. Music stimulates the imagination and paints vivid pictures in the mind that words can often not convey. *The Quest for Arundo Donax* does all this beautifully—with humour, with excitement, with mystery, with suspense—and, of course, with superb musical selections and performances."

Junos, Geminis, world tours, glowing reviews, awards, accolades and an Order of Canada: Lamon could be smugly congratulating herself on a quarter-century of success. Except she's too busy planning for the Next Thing.

"It isn't so much about maintaining momentum as keeping up with the momentum we already have," she says. "We always have so many projects on the go; there's always something happening, something to look forward to."

Still, when pressed to reveal her fondest memories of the past 25 years, she begins raving about some of the halls Tafelmusik has performed in.

"I remember the first time we played in the Mozarteum in Salzburg, or the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, or the Musikverein in Vienna," she says. "Just saying those names now, I can remember clearly how each one sounded. To play in those great halls, it gives you goosebumps."

Similarly, Mackay was thrilled to play in the opulent Baroque halls at Augsburg and Eisenstadt. However, both have equally warm recollections of playing in more modest venues as part of Tafelmusik's many Canadian tours.

"Thanks to the CBC, who play our recordings and broadcast our concerts, people know us," says Lamon. "It's wonderful to go to a place you've never been to and be so warmly welcomed. People already feel like they have a relationship with you. I love it."

The ensemble's members, too, can reflect with pride on their past while eagerly anticipating the future.

"After 25 years, you acquire an institutional memory," notes Elly Winer. "We can build on interpretations when we return to pieces we've played before. For example, [Bach's] *B-minor Mass*, which comes back every three or four years, just gets better and better."

Winer is happy with the expanding scope of Tafelmusik's repertoire. "We now play some of the classical repertoire, although for the most part we call it a day at Beethoven," he says. "It's nice to stretch ourselves artistically. I love the relationship we're building with Opera Atelier," he adds, referring to their collaborations with the Toronto-based Baroque opera company, the most recent of which was this season's production of *The Magic Flute*.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the excellence of the players, which appears to be at an all-time high.

"The quality of the orchestra has gone up and up," says Winer. "Right now, any one of the players can be a soloist."

"We really do have an international reputation that's nice to see," says Mackay. "Now when we have a position available, we have people who fly in from Japan and Europe to audition."

Even Lamon, with her high standards, practicality and restless commitment to constant improvement, can allow herself the small luxury of a boast.

"I haven't said this to anybody before, but this is the best the orchestra has been in 25 years. Without a shadow of a doubt." ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON TAFELMUSIK, ITS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND OTHER PROJECTS:

■ www.tafelmusik.org

■ www.analekta.com/Tafelkids

■ www.lemozartnoir.com

■ www.weallneedmusic.com

(website of the Canadian Coalition for Music Education)

UPCOMING TAFELMUSIK CONCERTS IN TORONTO:

■ Jan 18-21, 2007: *Bach and the Muses*:

■ Feb. 14-18: *Chariots of Fire*: music for orchestra and choir by Lully, Telemann, Bach and Buxtehude

■ March 8-14: *Handel's Water Music*

■ April 12-15: *House of the Devil*: Music from the Italian baroque

■ May 10-13: *Handel's Solomon*

Free Tafelmusik Baroque Summer Institute concerts scheduled for June 2, 8, 11 and 14, 2007. Programs TBA. Visit www.tafelmusik.org for more details.



PREVIEWS



Jennifer Larmore



Brett Polegato



Phillip Addis

SOUTHERN ONTARIO VOCAL PREVIEW

Joseph So

Now that the Ring festivities are over, vocal fans are enjoying a welcome change of pace, especially if they are a Mozart buff. This being his centenary year, local audiences so far have seen, in quick succession, *Così fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni*, and *The Magic Flute* in October and November, put on by the Canadian Opera, Opera Ontario, and Opera Atelier respectively. If you still crave more Mozart, there is *Zaïde* by Opera in Concert on Jan. 28th at the St. Lawrence Centre. For tickets, call (416) 366-7723, or 1-800-708-6754, or check online at www.operainconcert.com. The annual Toronto Symphony *Messiah*, modestly billed as "Toronto's Best", features Handel's score as arranged by Mozart. Nicholas McGegan leads Meredith Hall, Jill Grove, John Tessier, and Hugh Russell, with the ubiquitous Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (Dec. 17, 18, 20, 21). You can buy tickets online at www.roythomson.com or at the RTH box office, or by calling (416) 872-4255. If you prefer a more intimate experience, try the Tafelmusik version of *Messiah*. Ivar Taurins leads a quartet of soloists (Leslie Fagan, Margaret Bragle, Rufus Muller, and Daniel Lichti) in four performances at the atmospheric Trinity St. Paul's Centre (Dec. 13-16). If audience participation is your thing, you'll enjoy the popular Tafelmusik *Sing Along Messiah* (Dec. 17, Massey Hall). Tickets to Trinity concerts can be bought by calling (416) 964-6337, fax (416) 964-2782, or at 427 Bloor St. West during business hours. For *Sing Along Messiah*, call the Massey Hall line at (416) 872-4255, or order online at www.tafelmusik.org.

Ring in 2007 with Toronto Operetta Theatre's annual event. TOT Artistic Director Guillermo Silva-Marin is presenting *Candide*, a show he

previously directed at McGill (Dec. 27, 29, 30, 31, Jan. 3, 5, 6, 7 at the Jane Mallett Theatre). On Dec. 31, there is a New Year's Eve Gala which sells out fast. In addition to the show, it includes a pre-theatre dinner at the Hot House Café. Call for details at (416) 366-7723, or 1-800-708-6754. More Mozart beckons in the New Year. On January 27, the Toronto Symphony commemorates Mozart's death with his *Requiem*. Mezzo Jennifer Larmore makes a rare Toronto appearance, together with soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, tenor Michael Colvin, bass Nathan Berg, and the University of Toronto MacMillan Singers, under the direction of Peter Oundjian. And on Feb. 25, Off Centre Music Salon presents *Mozart Forever*, starring Krisztina Szabo, Shannon Mercer, Russell Braun and Peter McGillivray, at the Glenn Gould Studio.

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If you are looking for something a little off the beaten path, try Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. Banned by Stalin for its gritty subject matter and avant-garde orchestration, it was quite a shocker for its time. Shostakovich's sanitized version, *Katerina Ismailova*, is now less popular. Last seen on the COC stage in the mid 1980s starring American soprano Mary Jane Johnson, this time around it features a largely unfamiliar cast, save for Vadim Zaplechny (Zinoviy). Katerina is Nicola Beller Carbone, and Oleg Balashov is Sergei. Richard Bradshaw conducts the COC Orchestra (Jan. 31, Feb. 3, 7, 10, 15, 18, 20, 23). If you prefer something more traditional – although the COC production will likely be a reinterpretation of this classic – there is Gounod's *Faust* (Feb. 1, 2, 6, 9, 11, 14, 17, 21, 24). Of particular interest is the return of former COC Ensemble member, tenor David Pomeroy, in the title role. Also returning is Spanish soprano Ana Ibarra as Marguerite, and a rare opera appearance by Toronto baritone Brett Polegato as Valentin. Latvian bass Egils Silins debuts as Mefistofele. Québec *wunderkind* Yannick Nézet-Séguin makes

his COC conducting debut. Buy tickets by calling (416) 363-8231 or 1-800-250-4653, or ordering online at www.coc.ca. Opera Ontario will put on Saint-Saens' *Samson et Dalila* in concert, starring Richard Margison and mezzo Allyson McHardy (Jan. 25 & 27 in Hamilton and Jan. 31 in Kitchener). Call (905) 526-6556 or 1-800-575-1381 for tickets to the Hamilton dates, and (519) 578-1570 or 1-800-265-8977 for the performance in Kitchener. You can also order online at www.operaontario.com.

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There is an embarrassment of riches on the recital front. Renowned Canadian baritone Gerald Finley headlines the Roy Thomson Vocal Series, with Julius Drake on the piano (Mar. 9); quickly followed by the phenomenal Polish contralto Ewa Podles (Mar. 18). Tickets to both concerts can be purchased online at the Roy Thomson Hall website, or by calling (416) 872-4255. I for one am looking forward to the recital by baritone Peter Barrett, whose smooth baritone and elegant delivery are always a pleasure. He is featured in the Music Toronto Discovery series (Feb. 1). On the program is *Dichterliebe*, plus songs by Brahms, Finzi, and Mercure, accompanied by Peter Tiefenbach. You can buy tickets at (416) 366-7723, or at 1-800-708-6754, or online at www.stlc.com. Also of interest is the rare local appearance of the excellent young baritone Phillip Addis singing *Schwanengesang*, in the Glenn Gould Studio New Generation Series, on Thursday noon, Dec. 7, and it is free! Latvian bass Egils Silins will give a recital sponsored by the TLCA, also at the Glenn Gould Studio (Feb. 25). For more information, e-mail music.lv@sympatico.ca or call (416) 481-8616.

TORONTO AREA INSTRUMENTAL PREVIEW

Claire Blaustein

Curling up by the fire with a good book may be



Valery Gergiev



Erin Wall



Marie-Nicole Lemieux

your activity of choice for these cold winter months, but there are several programs which bring together the love of books and the love of music. On Jan. 13 I Furiosi Ensemble (www.ifuriosi.com) presents “A Plague on Both Your Houses”, a showdown between Toronto’s own I Furiosi gang and the Masques gang of Montreal, playing dueling music of the Medici and d’Este families.

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Also, Tafelmusik (416.964.6337—www.tafelmusik.org) will present a program called “Bach and the Muses: *Music, Poetry and Art*”, with performances of Bach’s music by three members of Tafelmusik, presentations of poetry by Lorna Crozier, Anne Michaels, and Jan Zwicky, and visual artists from the Workman Theatre Project, all inspired by the music. (Jan. 18-20)

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If the public wants to hear Mozart, there are more than enough people happy to please them. Off Centre Music (416.466.1870—www.offcentremusic.com) presents “Mozart: 250, 251.....Forever”, with vocal music by the man we have come to know quite intimately over the last year (Feb. 25). The TSO gives us a slightly more specific time-frame, following up Mozart @ 250 with more in the Mozart @ 251 series with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (416.593.4828—www.tso.on.ca). Notable is a performance of “Mozart: The Violin”, with soloist Isabelle van Keulen playing the often-ignored second concerto, and the effervescent third (Jan. 18, 19).

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If you feel you’ve heard too much Mozart in this anniversary year, you can thank goodness for a wide variety of other offerings from the TSO. In particular, two renowned conductors will grace the stage—Thomas Dausgaard will conduct Brahms’ *Fourth Symphony*, as well as Bartók’s Violin Concerto No. 2 (Jan. 30, Feb. 1, 3). And in a not-to-be missed event, **Valery Gergiev** will arrive from his post with the Marinsky Theater Orchestra to conduct a Debussy and Stravinsky program—*Afternoon of a Faun*, and *La Mer*, contrasted with two of Stravinsky’s works for piano and ensemble (Feb. 14, 15).

::

If your life dream has been to get up close and personal with composer Alejandro Viñao—you are in

luck! He holds the title of Roger D. Moore Distinguished Visitor in Composition at the University of Toronto Faculty of Music (416.978.3744—www.music.toronto.ca) and will be giving concerts and lectures throughout the winter months. It kicks off with the New Music Festival and the Fifth Anniversary Celebration of the Karen Kieser Prize in Canadian Music (Jan. 31) and continues with lectures and concerts from Feb. 1-4.

::

To celebrate past generations of electronically forward-thinking composers, the New Music Concerts (416.961.9594—www.newmusicconcerts.com) presents *Rien à voir II* (Jan. 13), a celebration of pioneers in the field of electro-acoustic music and tape compositions. Works by György Ligeti, Ann Southam, John Oliver and others, plus an introductory lecture prior to the concert.

::

The Esprit Orchestra (416.366.7723—www.espritorchestra.com) fashions an introduction to British composer Philip Cashian, as well as his compatriot George Benjamin, and a revisiting of Joseph Schwanter, from the long bygone days of the ensemble—all in a program called *La Joie* (Feb. 11)

::

Classical music exists in different forms everywhere, and many of our concert series are bringing performers from East Asia. The Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society (886.1673—www.k-wcms.com) presents the Orchid Ensemble on Feb. 28—a mix of Chinese and western music, with performers on instruments of both traditions. The New Music Concerts also brings a celebration of the Lunar New Year with Chinese pipa player Wei-Wei Lan joining the ensemble for works by Chinese composers (Feb. 16).

::

And for something completely different, CBC’s *OnStage* will be putting together a concert “No Strings Attached—A limitless look at music for harps.” At the Glenn Gould Studios (416.205.5555—glenn Gouldstudio.cbc.ca) the program includes contemporary works, as well as Celtic and South American harp traditions. Sounds like a potential cobweb, but lots of musical strands intertwining can also be melodious (Feb. 13).

::

Not to forget all those times when the music is

heard but perhaps not seen—the National Ballet of Canada (416.345.9595—www.national.ballet.ca) presents Domenico Scarlatti’s *Taming of the Shrew*, with choreography by the acclaimed John Cranko.

And of course, nothing could stop the stream of formidable soloists from trickling through. Music Toronto (416.366.7723—www.music-toronto.com) hosts recitals by pianist Stephen Hough (Feb. 20) with a host of short works by Mendelssohn, Weber, and Liszt. A little earlier in the month, they’ll have pianist Roberto Prosseda’s Toronto debut, along with the performance of some unpublished works of Mendelssohn that Prosseda discovered. Should be a real treat. (Jan. 23)

OTTAWA WINTER PREVIEW

Natasha Gauthier

DECEMBER

Dec. 13, Lisette Canton conducts the Ottawa Bach Choir and harpist Caroline Leonardelli in Britten’s *Ceremony of Carols* and other seasonal music.

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Attention-grabbing Montreal violinist Karen Gomyo and her 1714 Stradivarius appear with the NACO Dec. 14-15. Gomyo plays Lalo’s *Symphonie espagnole*; Andrew Litton also conducts Stravinsky’s *Firebird Suite* and *Spanish Airs* by José Evangelista. Canadian-American lyric soprano **Erin Wall** is the special guest of Cathedral Arts on Dec. 16.

::

You know your Christmas shopping days are numbered when Handel’s *Messiah* is on at the NACO. This year’s performances take place Dec. 18-19 and feature soprano Janice Chandler-Etème, mezzo Anita Krause, tenor Frédéric Antoun, bass Gary Relyea, the Cantata Singers of Ottawa and the Opera Lyra Chorus. David Lockington conducts.

::

The Ottawa Chamber Music Society holds its annual musical Christmas bash Dec. 18. Local musicians perform works by Wagner (the chamber transcription of the *Siegfried Idyll*), Glazunov, Berlioz, Bach, Handel, Tchaikovsky and more.



Garrick Ohlsson



Pinchas Zukerman



Anton Kuerti

December ends with the NACO's annual family carol sing-along led by Frank McNamara on Dec. 22.

JANUARY

Ottawans can ring in the New Year Austrian-style with "A Salute to Vienna." Billed as "An official recreation of Vienna's famous New Year's concert," the performance features something called the "Strauss Symphony of Canada™" conducted by Bernhard Schneider, with soprano Helena Holl, tenor Wolfgang Gratschmaier and the National Ballet of Hungary. Jan. 1 at Southam Hall.

The NACO's first concerts of 2007 take place Jan. 10 and 11. Simon Trpceski performs the Saint-Saëns *Piano Concerto no. 2*; Thomas Dausgaard also conducts Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* and Dvorak's *Sixth Symphony*.

Jan. 12, Thirteen Strings presents a concert inspired by the film "The Red Violin." Canadian violinist Susanne Yi-Jia Hou, winner of the 1997 Pablo Sarasate International Violin Competition, will perform on her loaned 1729 Guarnerius del Gesù violin. Simon Streatfeild conducts. That same evening, Uzbeki violinist Daniel Khalikov performs as part of the NAC's Aber Diamond Debut Series.

The marvellous Quebec mezzo **Marie-Nicole Lemieux** performs Mahler's *Rückert Lieder* with the NACO on Jan. 18-19. Also on the program are Haydn's *Symphony no. 52* and Tchaikovsky's *First Symphony* ("Winter Dreams"). Eri Klas is on the podium.

Jan. 21 at 2 p.m., NACO musicians perform chamber music by Dvorak, Kodaly and Oskar Morawetz at the National Gallery. The following evening, **Garrick Ohlsson** presents a muscular recital program: Beethoven's "*Pathétique*" *Sonata*, Brahms' *Variation and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*, Prokofiev's *Sonata no. 7*, and nocturnes by Chopin and Lowell Libermann.

Next year marks the 90th anniversary of the battle of Vimy Ridge. In honour of the sombre occasion, Seventeen Voyces presents Andrew

Ager's piece *Unknown Soldier* on Jan. 28. Director Kevin Reeves conducts.

Jan. 29, the Ottawa Symphony performs Pierre Mercure's *Kaleidoscope* and Steven Gellman's *Viola Concerto*. NACO principal viola Jethro Marks is the soloist; David Currie conducts.

Gustavo Dudamel is a 24-year-old Venezuelan conductor who is creating a lot of buzz. He makes his Canadian debut Jan. 31 with the NACO, conducting Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, Bartok's *Viola Concerto* and Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*. **Pinchas Zukerman** himself will be the soloist for the Bartok. The concert is repeated Feb. 1.

FEBRUARY

The ever-popular King's Singers pop by Ottawa Feb. 5 as part of the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival's winter concert series.

Zukerman returns to the NACO podium Feb. 8-9 for Fauré's *Pavane* and *Requiem*, and Shostakovich's *Cello Concerto* with wife Amanda Forsythe. Soprano Karina Gauvin and bass-baritone Gaëtan Laperrière are the soloists for the *Requiem*.

Feb. 11, **Anton Kuerti** gives an afternoon recital at the National Gallery. For Valentine's Day, Zukerman leads the NACO and pianist Jon Kimura Parker in Rachmaninov's lushly romantic *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*. Berlioz' *Symphonie fantastique* is also on the menu, which is offered again Feb. 15.

Better send the tux to the cleaners: *le tout Ottawa* will turn out dressed to the nines on Feb. 17 for the 10th edition of the Black and White Opera Soiree.

Feb. 19-20, the Chamber Music Festival presents "New Music in New Places", a program of works by Ottawa composers performed at Maxwell's Bistro and Club, a popular downtown nightspot.

Nostalgia will be the order of the day when the Von Trapp Children—great grandkids of Maria and the Captain—bring their voices to the NAC, Feb. 22-24.

The Ottawa Choral Society performs Duruflé's *Requiem* and Morten Lauridsen's *Lux Aeterna* Feb. 25. Matthew Larkin conducts the choir and the OCS Chamber Symphony, with mezzo Wendy Hatala and baritone Alexandre Sylvestre.

Last year's joint performance with the NACO and Hubbard Street Dance Chicago was a huge hit with audiences. The high-energy dance troupe returns Feb. 28, with the orchestra performing a selection of works by Mozart. Zukerman conducts; clarinetist Kimball Sykes and pianist Shai Wosner are the featured soloists. Repeated on March 1.

MARCH

The Ottawa chapter of the Royal Canadian College of Organists presents South Carolina's Brennan Szafron on March 2. Szafron performs works by Daquin, Bach, Bonnet, Sowerby, Duruflé and Bédard. That same evening, Thirteen Strings presents a concert entitled "Burlesque", with works by Telemann, Krebs, Hindemith, Malcolm Forsythe and Wayne Balow. Oboist Charles Hamann is a featured soloist; organist and harpsichordist Thomas Annand takes a turn as conductor.

March 5, the Ottawa Symphony plays excerpts from three ballet suites: Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* and Stravinsky's *Firebird*.

For more info:

NACO, National Gallery series and all National Arts Centre events: www.nac-cna.ca; 613-947-7000

Ottawa Symphony: www.ottawasymphony.com

Thirteen Strings: www.thirteenstrings.ca; 613-738-7888

Black and White Opera Soiree: www.operalyra.ca

Ottawa Chamber Music Society: www.chamberfest.com

Ottawa Bach Choir: www.ottawabachchoir.ca

Seventeen Voyces: www.seventenvoyces.ca

Ottawa Choral Society: www.ottawachoralsociety.com

STING SWITCHES STRINGS

Norman Lebrecht



When word seeped out this summer that the rock star Sting was recording a set of 17th century lute songs for the classical label Deutsche Grammophon, there was a universal curling of lips on both sides of the musical mouthpiece.

Classical purists on the stiff upper jaw hooted at the idea that a Tyneside microphone basher could achieve accuracy, quietude or period style in the delicate laments of John Dowland, the contrapuntal English melancholic. Baring their lower molars, loyalists of the rock sector mocked the ex-Police man as a sell-out for aping McCartney, Costello and other Hall of Fame bygones in attempting a classical facelift. Even merchants of tacky crossover muttered that this might be a bridge too far.

Setting aside all preconceptions I donned a white coat of critical neutrality and listened to the record under surgical lights, surprised to find it both coherent and credible, for the most part. Dowland (1563-1626) is a difficult composer to like. Unappreciated at the spirited Elizabethan Court, he plucked his way morbidly across Italy before landing a well-paid job at the court of Denmark, complaining all the while in his ayres and letters home that nobody loved him. *Semper Dowland, semper dolens* was his Latin motto: always Dowland, always miserable. A summons to London from austere King James I in 1612 eased his latter years but not his dour mood. Dowland was never happier than when setting words like 'in darkness let me dwell, the ground shall sorrow be'. He is the patron saint of musical miserablism.

Sting (born 1951) is renowned for such cheerful tracks as *So Lonely*, *King of Pain* and *Bring on the Night*. His biggest hit, *Every Breath You Take*, is an anguished essay on sexual jealousy. After the Police break-up in 1986, he delved seriously into Shakespeare with *Nothing Like the Sun* and, exploring the music of the period, conceived so fierce an affinity with Dowland that he learned to play the 13-stringed archlute. A Geordie by birth and accent, Sting's portraits and pronouncements – 'I do my best work when I am in pain and turmoil' – suggest a common disposition with Dowland, a brotherhood in gloom.

Sting was encouraged to attempt the songs by a close friend, the French classical pianist Katia Labeque and is accompanied on the album by the Sarajevo lutenist Edin Karamazov, an interpreter of virtuosic authenticity. Anticipating objections from academic guardians of idiomatic correctness, Sting has argued in the programme notes and press releases that he is more concerned with placing the music in the popular context for which it was written, for untutored audiences to hear and enjoy, drawing a symbiotic inference between a modern rock legend and an early English singer-songwriter. 'I'm not a trained singer for this repertoire,' admits Sting,

'but I'm hoping that I can bring some freshness to these songs that perhaps a more experienced singer wouldn't give. For me they are pop songs written around 1600 and I relate to them in that way; beautiful melodies, fantastic lyrics, and great accompaniments.' There is much to admire in his approach – a keen feel for language, an acute musical intelligence and an absence of the plummy Foreign Office accent and reedy pitch that turns most formal Dowland recitals into diplomatic ordeals. Most of all, the sympathy between singer and song is vivid and pronounced. Sting claims to find passion and happiness in the oeuvre, but he knows best whereof he sings when he hits the line 'there let me live forlorn'. Music, like life, is not a bowl of cherries and those who make their living trailing it around the world have much to lament about.

This is heartfelt stuff, rendered with more than enough art and discretion to avoid mawkishness and the charge of self-advertisement. I particularly like his gravelly attack on the songs, like a road-roller before the age of Macadam, and the urgent, almost desperate, quest for melancholic solace in lonely misanthropy. The occasional rock effect of echo chamber and over-dubbing is not overly intrusive and even the slurring of sharp consonants, fudging some of Dowland's sourest lines, is acceptable in the context of a reconfigured presentation.

On the night of the album's release, Sting and Karamazov performed Dowland live and unadorned at LSO St Luke's in a recital aired on Radio 3. With the inexorable outward ripples of celebrity culture, it is safe to assume that Dowland earned at least 15 minutes of fame and that, in civilisation terms, is no bad thing. He may even catch on, as Gregorian chant did a decade ago, as a wind-down disco hit.

The only disabling aspect of the enterprise, and it is a crippling one, lies in the delivery of the songs. Sting gets the notes approximately right and conveys the colour with genuine feeling but a background in rock has ruined his breathing and he is unable to master the line of a work, let alone allow it to arch across a long phrase. Low on oxygen, he delivers short, blunt phrases without concern for architecture, like a house where no two rooms sit on the same floor.

I have never heard a disc that tires the ear so quickly, not by incompetence or unmusicality but by lack of structural integrity. I prefer Sting's voice to the mock-castrates who usually tweet this music, but his inability to give it breath makes an hour in his company seem longer than infinity. Sting sings Dowland was a good idea on paper, and it contains some memorable moments, but this should never have been an album. A single would have done just fine. ■

HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION

Higher Music Education Guide 2006

To help students find information on music education, the edition of this season's *The Music Scene* offers a guide to the major educational institutions in Canada. An information coupon is available on page 34. Happy searching!



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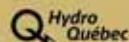
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Grant Hall (800 seats/tracker organ), Dunning Auditorium (428/Steinway Concert Grand), Music Library, 23 Teaching Offices, 16 Practice Rooms, 9 Practice Modules, Electroacoustic Music Studios, Computer Laboratory for Applications in Music, Early Music Room, Percussion Room, Keyboard Lab.

NUMBER OF FULL-TIME STUDENTS

158 (B.Mus. and B.Mus./B.Ed.)

TUITION

Canadian/landed immigrants: \$4579;
non-Canadians/Visa students: \$15,086

DESCRIPTION

In the B.Mus. program, students can tailor their courses to meet specific needs and aspirations. Students interested in composition, theory, music history, ethnomusicology, popular music, music and technology, and instrument performance are able to take courses in one or a combination of these areas as they proceed through the flexible program. Many

B.Mus. graduates continue their studies at the graduate level in Canada and abroad or enroll in a Bachelor of Education program. Also, Queen's is one of the few universities in Canada to offer a Concurrent Education degree in which students enroll in both the B.Mus. and B.Ed. programs in their first year. Virtually all music courses at Queen's are open to non-B.Mus. students as electives including our ensembles and applied instrument or voice lessons. Many students in other departments decide to come to Queen's because it is possible to continue their music studies within their non-music degree.

NUMBER OF TEACHERS

13 full-time, 37 part-time



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Programs offered

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Facilities

Takes place at the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto. Several classrooms, performance spaces, and practice rooms available.

Teachers

2 full-time
24 part-time

Students

70-90

Tuition fees

Appx. \$1000 - \$1150 - full institute
Appx. \$595-\$650 - conductors
Financial assistance available

Description

Led by some of the world's leading period performance specialists, the Institute includes master classes, orchestra & choir rehearsals, chamber ensembles, private lessons, classes in baroque opera, dance, and continuo; lectures and reading sessions; and faculty and participant concerts.



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Until summer 07 90 Croatia St.
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Toronto, Ontario M5S 1W2
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Fax: (416) 408-3096
glenn Gould School@rcmusic.ca
www.rcmusic.ca

Programs offered

Performance Diploma Program and B.Mus. in Performance*
Artist Diploma Program

*In association with Thomson Rivers University

Students: 130

Tuition fees & Scholarships

Canadian: \$5,000-\$8,000
Intl.: \$10,000-\$15,000
All students receive scholarship
A limited number of full scholarships are available
Work-study opportunities

Installations

In 2007, The Glenn Gould School will move from its temporary location at 90 Croatia Street into the spectacular TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning
70 practice and teaching studios
15 classrooms
Library
Technology Lab
Orchestral rehearsal space
Multiple performance venues of varying size

Description

Since its inception in 1997 The Glenn Gould School has assembled an exceptional teaching faculty led by many of the greatest musicians in the world; created a groundbreaking curriculum that is the first of its kind; established a support base for the student body which allows for individual attention within a nurturing environment; and trained students at the highest level of excellence leading many to international performing careers and leadership positions in orchestras, ensembles and schools of music.



Department of Music University of Ottawa

50 University Street
Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Phone: 613-562-5733
Fax: 613-562-5140
music@uottawa.ca
www.music.uottawa.ca

Programs offered

Undergraduate programs include the Baccalaureate of Music, the Baccalaureate of Arts Honours with a Specialization in Music, and the Major in Music, which can each be combined with a Minor in Arts Administration. The programs include options in performance, music education, piano pedagogy, composition, theory and musicology. Graduate programs include the Master of Music, Master of Arts and two Graduate Certificates in Orchestral Studies and Piano Pedagogy Research.

Performance venues

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Library

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Nb of faculty (full-time): 20

Nb of faculty (part-time): 50

Nb of full-time students: 270

Nb of part-time students: 25

Tuition fees

(1 academic year, full-time):
\$4,803.47 (undergraduate);
\$4,308.30 (graduate)

Description

Our faculty is constituted of active performers on the national and international

scene and scholars at the top of their fields. Small classes, in English and French, create an intimate atmosphere, and our facilities are the envy of many institutions. Performance opportunities for students abound, both within the department (orchestra, concert wind ensemble, opera, choirs and many other ensembles) and in the greater community, thanks to close ties with arts organizations such as the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra and Opera Lyra Ottawa. With a campus located in the heart of the national capital, our students find it easy to enjoy the bilingual and multicultural milieu of the region and the rich cultural life of Ottawa, home of the world's largest Chamber Music Festival.



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Graduate - (416) 978-5772
Fax: (416) 946-3353
undergrad.music@utoronto.ca
grad.music@utoronto.ca
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Programs Offered

Composition: Bachelor of Music, Master of Music, Doctor of Music
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Performance
Bachelor of Music (Jazz & Classical)
Master of Music (Jazz & Classical)
Artist Diploma
Diploma in Operatic Performance
Advanced Certificate in Performance

Facilities

Walter Hall (seats 496), MacMillan Theatre (seats 819), Electroacoustic and Recording studios, most extensive Music library in Canada

Nb of full-time faculty: 45

Nb of part-time faculty: 150

Nb of students: 575

Tuition Fees

Undergraduate Fees –
1 Academic Year (full-time)
\$ 5,436.22 – Domestic
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Description

The Faculty of Music has a great tradition and reputation as one of the finest institutions in North-America for music studies. We serve as a bridge between the University and the city's arts activities and communities. Throughout the academic year, we are home to master-classes by renowned artists, lectures by leading scholars, recitals and concerts by our own distinguished artists and ensembles, as well as by touring performers. The diversity in our course offerings is hard to match; jazz, cham-

ber music, opera, Balinese Gamelan, contemporary music, and early music to name a few. We are committed to preparing our students for the real world of music careers in a swiftly changing musical environment. Our scholars, performers, and educators boast internationally active careers through which we disseminate our knowledge, skills, and passion for music with the community and the world. Our students participate in colloquia, conferences, large-scale concerts and performances, recordings, and in internships such as teaching in primary and secondary schools that provide them with practical experience. Our motto, Where Great Minds Meet Great Music, captures the sense of discovery, innovation, creativity and lively interaction that we believe characterizes our approach to music and the arts.



DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

3-82 Fine Arts Building
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2C9
Phone: (780) 492-3263
Fax: (780) 492-9246
music@ualberta.ca • www.ualberta.ca/music

Programs offered

B. Mus. in Composition and Theory, Performance, School Music, Music History, World Music
B.A. Major, Minor and Honours in Music
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

Description

Situated within the Faculty of Arts in one of Canada's largest universities, with extensive research and learning resources, we offer traditional and also unique approaches to music study, combining performance, creative and analytical studies within a broad musical education. A busy concert season with contributions from distinguished visiting artists.

Remembering Charles Reiner (1924- 2006)

Ludwig Sémerjian

This summer saw the passing of Professor Charles Reiner. A fixture of Montreal's musical scene for over fifty years, Charles Reiner embodied all that was noble and joyous in music and in life. But his story had not always been a happy one. Persecuted by the Nazis (he spent time in concentration camps) then by the Communists, Reiner left his native Hungary, settling in Montreal, where his pianistic talents and sensitive musicianship quickly garnered him a prominent place in the fertile artistic milieu of the city. He was best known as one of the finest accompanists of his time. Names of artists with whom he worked would be too long to list though his happiest partnership was perhaps with the great Polish-born violinist Henryk Szeryng, with whom he formed a long and fruitful musical relationship that ended only with the violinist's death in 1988.

Despite his success on the concert stage, Charles Reiner's greatest legacy will be as a peerless teacher. His almost forty years as professor of piano at McGill University's Faculty of Music helped shape the futures of three generations of aspiring musicians. My own personal acquaintance with him goes back to when I was just ten years old. My parents, having heard of Reiner's reputation as a pedagogue, took me to see the great man at his Greene Avenue apartment. After I had played part of a Mozart piano sonata for him, Reiner turned to my mother and,

with the straightest of faces said, "I regret to inform you, Madame, that your son will grow up to be a musician." It was this combination of grace and humour that I so fondly remember from my time under his tutelage at McGill. There, he provided his pupils with an invaluable link to the great mid-century European tradition of piano playing, stressing above all quality of tone and singing lines. It was a great source of pride to be a student of Charles Reiner's, for his having studied under Dohnányi and

Bartók enabled us to boast that our musical genealogy could be traced back to Franz Liszt and thus to Czerny, Beethoven and ultimately to Mozart himself!

Charles Reiner's students almost constituted a club (we would jokingly refer to ourselves as Charlie's Angels), for Reiner was, despite the trials of his early years, a true *bon vivant* enjoying wine, women and song, usually in that order. He would remind us that good music making didn't just require hard work, but also fun and fantasy. One of my fondest memories is an evening spent improvising with another one of his students on the two grand pianos in Professor Reiner's studio, which he had so graciously given us

access to after school hours. We taped our improvisations on the vintage reel-to-reel recorder that was on his desk and the results were surprising and wonderful. It was this sense of experimentation and curiosity that he passed on to all of us who were lucky enough to enter his sphere of influence. For this we owe him our eternal gratitude.

I can still see him now, the amiable silver-haired gentleman with the flashing eyes and trademark turtleneck sweater briskly walking down the halls of the music building with a jaunty spring in his step that seemed to personify the joy with which he approached all aspects of life.

He will be missed. ■



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Burnaby, British Columbia V5A 1S6

Phone: (604) 291-3363

Fax: (604) 291-5907

ca@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

see website

Description

The Music program at the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon

Fraser University is renowned for its innovative and experimental approach to music study through its focus on composition.

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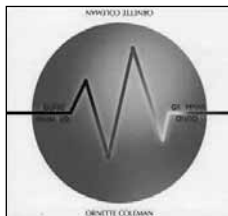
Marc Chénard, Félix-Antoine Hamel, Paul Serralheiro

Ornette Coleman: Sound Grammar

Sound Grammar SG 11593

★★★★☆

A new Ornette Coleman album is always an event, even more so given that his previous offering is almost a decade old. This 2005 concert in Germany is the first recorded evidence of his current working quartet, which has the same configuration as his 1968 two-bass group: this time around he is accompanied by his son Denardo on drums, and the two twin bass fiddlers are Greg Cohen, who plays pizzicato, and Tony Falanga, who uses his bow throughout. From the opening notes of "Jordan", Coleman is dominant: age has in no way diminished his dynamic playing and his formidable improvising skills. Falanga plays an original role in the ensemble, at times in conversation with the leader, elsewhere joining the rhythm section alongside Cohen, who acts as the band's anchor of sorts. Coleman, the son, was never a very subtle player, but here he proves to be remarkably efficient, a quality he has developed in the forty-some-odd years of playing his father's music. Eight typical Coleman themes reveal all of the essential yet varied influences in his music, namely, a certain sense of lyricism ("Sleep Talking", "Once Only"), the blues (the classic "Turnaround"), latin shades ("Matador", need we say) and some snaky, bop-derived lines (the aforementioned "Jordan" and "Call To Duty"). As usual, Coleman picks up the trumpet and violin in spots, and sounds as original on them as he does when he plays his main axe, the alto sax. The album closes over an hour later with a rousing rendition of "Song X", which seems to proclaim "That's right, Ornette is back!" And all the better for us! **FH**



Bunky Greene: Another Place

Label Bleu LBL 6676

★★★★☆

Sixteen years is a long haul between releases, but such is the case of this lesser-known alto man. Apart from those in academia, who might know him as a past president of the IAJE, Vernice "Bunky" Green may pass as a cipher for your average jazz man but with this new issue, it would surely be nice to see this 70-something jazz vet earn a little more recognition. With some help from the prominent Steve Coleman, a recording artist on this French label, Green is teamed up with a youthful rhythm section, Jason Moran (piano), Lonnie Plaxico (bass) and Nasheet Waits (drums). Playing through only seven pieces in this concise 43-minute side (five originals by the saxman sandwiched between two jazz standards, the opener, "It Could Happen to You", and the closer, Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes"), the altoist plays with plenty of raw nerve, recalling the edginess of an Art Pepper in his twilight years. Though a consummate technician, he does not come off slick with it, and his solos are full of surprising turns, with sudden flights of fury that then turn pensive, the group stretching the form almost to the breaking point, yet never shredding the envelope. Clearly an unexpected entry on this year's jazz roster, this recording brings you to "another place" indeed. What's more, it's proof-positive that one can work within a more traditional jazz context and still give it a personal touch, even a resolutely contemporary spin. Albums of this ilk are rare nowadays, and we are all the more grateful for them. Four stars and a tad more... **MC**



Art Pepper: The Art of Pepper, Omega Sessions

Fresh Sound Records FSR-CD 378

★★★★☆

Alto saxophonist Art Pepper rose from the ranks of the Benny Carter and Stan Kenton bands to become a prominent voice of the 1950s West-Coast school. This CD, the complete master takes of the Omega Sessions, is a re-issue of material recorded in 1957, on what was then state-of-the-art (no pun intended) reel-to-reel tapes. Though some of the cuts were previously repackaged in LP and CD issues on other labels, they are made available here for the first time in their entirety, along with two previously unissued tracks. While Paul Desmond's sound was once described as a "dry martini," Pepper's alto tone is more like a well-aged single malt, as it goes down very, very smoothly. Recorded right after the saxophonist's release from one of several stints in jail on drug charges, it captures a fresh and fit Pepper, who swings buoyantly—and is there really any other "cool" school altoist who can rival his soul and sway like he does?... As a case in point, listen to the inimitable bouncy bop of "Webb City" and "Long Ago and Far Away", or the lyrical paraphrasing of "Begin the Beguine". Carl Perkins on piano reminds one of Russ Freeman's way with chords and phrasing, while the rhythm team of Ben Tucker and Chuck Flores on bass and drums respectively, slap the rhythm silly when needed and lay down a sensitive carpet on the ballads. If you want to hear the clarity and imagination of this legendary saxophonist, this quartet date is a great spare setting that displays the gems Pepper could deliver. **PS**



Christine Jensen: Look Left

Effendi FND062

★★★★☆

The music on this third outing as a leader for this B.C. native and longtime Montrealer and alto saxophonist/composer resulted from her time spent in Paris on a grant from the Québec Studio at the Cité Internationale des Arts (which explains the title and a picture of the left bank of the Seine on the back of the CD). Her growing reputation as a skilled writer and instrumentalist is confirmed here with the support of a loquacious Kenny Bibace on guitar, the solid time keeping of Fraser Hollins on bass, a percussive and effusive Dave Restivo on piano and empathic punctuations from drummer Greg Ritchie. In the nine Jensen-penned pieces there are many clever turns of musical phrase, performed in a convincing, in-the-pocket mainstream manner. Fetching stylistic features include unison statements of alto and guitar on "Cedar", "Promenade" and "Mark Adam Drum". Jensen's alto sound is rich but has a little of dryness to it as well, with a hint of keening that recalls early Ornette Coleman, although Lee Konitz and Paul Desmond also come to mind in spots. No less assured is her soprano playing which obviously draws from Coltrane and Wayne Shorter. Overall, this record has some very competent writing, and the players seem to dig into the nooks and crannies of the leader's tunes, and swagger through them with equal amounts of fluidity and melodic inventiveness. **PS**





JAZZ IN FULL VIEW

Trumpeting Tradition: THEN AND NOW

Paul Serralheiro

1 Louis Armstrong: Live in '59

Jazz Icons DVWW-JILA

★★★★★

2 Wynton Marsalis: In this House on This Morning

Geneon 12842

★★★★☆☆

1 While this pair of recently issued DVDs have obvious similarities, there is a striking contrast in these visual documents. Captured in the second-wind phase of Armstrong's career (his status as stellar jazzman firmly entrenched by the time of this 1959 performance) this hitherto unissued Belgian TV broadcast shows a vibrant pre-"Hello Dolly" Satchmo, when his jazz chops could still compete with the best. As part of the recently marketed Jazz Icon Series (nine titles in all), this one comes highly recommended and more so for fans of the authentic traditional jazz style. Such playing is the kind of thing that Wynton Marsalis has attempted to emulate but could not duplicate, phenomenal chops and all. As he is quoted in the preface to the liner notes: "Louis Armstrong's sound transcends time and style. This DVD captures that intangible power and allows us to gaze upon it in wonder." Throughout the program, Mr. Armstrong states themes and improvises riveting melodic variations with authority. The sincerity and intensity of his playing and singing are dramatically juxtaposed with the eye-rolling and paling around, hokum-style, with trombonist Trummy Young between numbers, mostly signa-

ture tunes, like "When It's Sleepy Time Down South," and "When the Saints Go Marching In." The other musicians on the date are lesser known journeymen of the day: Peanuts Hucko on clarinet, a rhythm section made up of Billy Kyle (piano), Mort Herbert (bass) and Danny Barcelona (drums). Robust singer Velma Middleton shares the vocal spotlight in exchanges with Pops on a couple of tunes.

2 Fast forward now to this recent Marsalis release. While a century away from Vaudeville and Minstrelsy—the roots of Armstrong's art—this side shares superficial aspects of Satchmo's style, mainly in the aesthetic of its sound. The young master's playing is, however, of another time—its self-consciousness as art marks it as quite different from the entertainment-first ethos of Armstrong's delivery and conception. Essentially a suite for jazz septet (trumpet, trombone, alto/sopranino, tenor/soprano saxes, piano, bass and drums) the music is thematically centered on the church service, with all the moods that it involves. And like a church service, it is long and interminable, and just when you think it might be over, it keeps on going. It reminds me of something Marsalis once said about classical music: you feel uncomfortable having to sit through it, but it's good for you. The music, captured in a July 1992 live date at Munich Philharmonic Hall, is intricately conceived and impeccably performed. On the whole, however, it comes across as a stylistic exercise. First and foremost, Marsalis and his cohorts Wess Anderson, Wycliffe Gordon, Reginald Veal, Herlin Riley, Todd Williams, and Eric Reed, deliver a solid piece of art, whereas Armstrong delivers entertainment that is also sublime art. Each arrives at more or less the same goal but come at it from different directions which lead to equally different though arguably complementary results.

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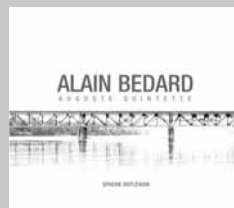
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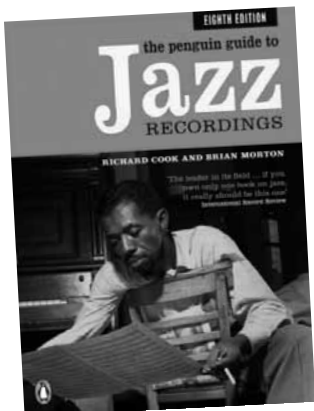
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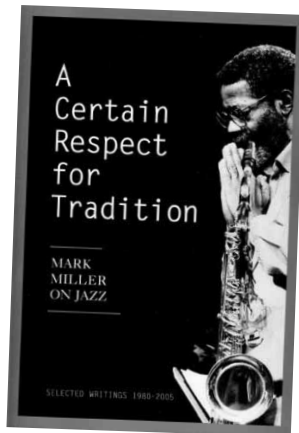
Richard Cook & Brian Morton

The Penguin Guide to Jazz Recordings, Eighth Edition

Penguin Books, 2006, 1534 pages. ISBN: 0-141-02327-9



Since 1992, the Penguin Guide has become THE reference tool for jazz fans all over the world. Revised (and augmented) every two years by fellow Englishmen Cook and Morton, this "bible" just saw the release of its eighth edition this past October. Thousands of discs are reviewed in its pages, from the indisputable classics to the more recent releases, from neglected masterpieces to best-forgotten albums, but with a welcome emphasis on European musicians, most notably the authors' fellow countrymen. Carried over from the previous edition are the "core collection" selections, a choice of about 200 essential recordings, as well as the famous "crowned" albums, the authors' personal favorites. Serious criticism is found alongside wit and humor in this one-of-a-kind guide, in which the reader can bury himself for hours! A perfect gift for the jazz addict. **FH**



A Certain Respect for Tradition – Mark Miller on Jazz
(Selected Writings 1980-2005)

Mercury Press, 2005, 181pp. + index + 8 page picture gallery
by the author

ISBN 1-55128-125-2

It was just a year ago, that Canada's national jazz writer par excellence, Mark Miller, ended his 27-year tenure at the Toronto Globe and Mail. Far from leaving his lifelong commitment to music, he is now focusing solely on writing books about the subject, an activity which he has been pursuing for most of his journalistic career. For this, his first post-Globe tome, he has chosen to take a look back by combing through his 4000(!) and some articles, whittling them down to 80 stories and reviews (including four unpublished ones and a handful more that have been published elsewhere). With one exception, a chronological sequence is followed throughout, the musicians that are portrayed here literally run the stylistic gamut, from old-time traditionalists like Ruby Braff and Jay McShann to the free-music Euro outcasts like Derek Bailey and Peter Brötzmann. In spite of such diversity, the book's unifying factor is the author himself, and more pointedly, his writing style. Foregoing hyperbole or theoretical and musical concerns, these writings are less about the inner workings of the art form, and more about the people, the craftsmen, their inspirations and daily foibles. As a result, one gets a sense of the artist as a person, replete with Miller's trademark pithy descriptions. Article collection of this kind are often concocted as a lazy man's way to get a book published; yet, with six previous books of predominantly original materials, and research to his credit, Miller is surely entitled to take this route if only to allow both himself and his readers the chance to share yet another one of his musical and literary journeys. **MC**

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A subtext for deepening confusions: **STEVE REICH AT 70**

Norman Lebrecht

It has been 40 years since Steve Reich, finding his music derided for its apparent simplicity by conventional musicians, formed his own ensemble and pitched straight at the public ear. 'I knew what I was doing,' says Reich. 'All I needed was a few people who could hear what I had in my mind.'

At the time, composers who wanted to be taken seriously wrote serial atonalities in the manner of Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Luciano Berio. Reich, who had studied with Berio in California, dismissed these complexities as intrinsically Eurocentric – a solution to problems he did not recognize or share. He found the lush romanticism of Mahler and Strauss equally alien to the busy, make-it rhythms of American city life. Music, to Reich, began with the beat. His impulse to write it began at 14 when a friend played him records of Bach's fifth Brandenburg Concerto and Stravinsky's Rite of Spring. Soon after, he heard bebop – Charlie Parker on sax and Kenny Clarke on drums. 'Basically, I went into that room and never left it,' says Reich.

By the mid-sixties, he was at the cutting edge of a counter-culture – literally cutting up tapes he had made of speech phrases and stitching them into hypnotically rhythmic loops that played in and out of phase with one another. The patterning captivated the psychedelic types that hung around downtown art galleries. He tried it out in live performance on two concert pianos, in Piano Phrase. At 30, Steve Reich had invented a form of minimalism that would alter the course of music history.

'Serialism is dead!' he now exults, ahead of the 70th birthday accolades. John Adams and Michael Nyman have named Reich as their leading influence. Arvo Pärt is a soulmate. Even Berio got to like his music before he died. More than any living composer, Steve Reich transformed the image of contemporary classical music from painfully abstruse to potentially cool. Vinyl remixes of his early works can be heard at many dance clubs (there's a new set out next month from Warner).

'There was a historical break in what I did,' he reflects, without braggadory. 'What happened was a similar kind of house cleaning to what Johann Sebastian Bach did 300 years ago, going back to basics. I didn't envisage this when I was starting out. I just had my nose to the grindstone and plugged away.'

Playing mostly in galleries, he earned his keep early on driving a house-moving van in lower Manhattan with a young admirer called Philip Glass. After a few joint concerts, the pair fell out and have not spoken since. While Glass turned to opera, Reich worked on instrumental colours and rhythms, taking a research trip to Ghana and studying Balinese gamelan in Seattle. In the mid-70s, his Music for 18 Instruments sold 100,000 records and played on late-night rock stations between Dylan and the Stones.

It was around this time that Reich met his second wife, Beryl Korot, and experienced a spiritual awakening. 'I began to think I'm not African, nor Balinese. I'm a Jew.' He studied Torah with Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald at Lincoln Square synagogue and became a fully practicing orthodox Jew, eating vegetarian kosher food, avoiding Friday night performances, unplugging the phone at sundown on Friday. 'The effect was extremely positive in a personal sense,' he says. It was not without external risk, though, for while music has accommodated all manner of mystics, it had never before embraced a composer who placed his demanding faith ahead of career opportunities.

Reich went to Jerusalem to record Yemenite cantillations for singing the Torah and returned with the luminous Tehillim for chorus and ensemble, richly melodic and unmistakably individual. 'People said I was writing Jewish music,' he complains. 'I said I was writing Reich.'



He returned to Israel with Beryl Korot to create The Cave, a work for live musicians with six-screen video projection that explores the common ancestry and beliefs that are shared by Jews and Moslems. 'I'm not a person who deludes himself into thinking that artists can change the world,' says Reich with a touch of world-weariness. 'I don't think The Cave will solve the Mideast any more than Picasso stopped the Blitz with Guernica.' But he cannot shut his eyes to the ideas and outrages of our time. A further video trilogy reflects on Hiroshima, the Hindenburg airship disaster and the ethical implications of cloning Dolly the Sheep.

Some critics have acclaimed these collaborations as a template for the operatic future, ignoring the inimitability of Reich's method in combining recorded materials, philosophical teachings, original sound and political engagement. His is a self-made revolution achieved largely with his own hands, his own band—at one point actually barring other musicians from playing his works. Magnetic though it is, Reich's music lacks the peacock strut of star interpreters or the gymnastic virtuosity that wins cheap ovations. Quiet, intense, unfailingly well-made, it comes without added colourings and chemicals, the organic alternative to industrial art.

At its most self-involved, Reich's music can play on and on until you are no longer aware of hearing music at all and are listening instead to the drumming inside your head. At his most communicative, on the other hand, Reich compels attention on several levels at once. No-one else could have twinned the misery of a shuttled boyhood in a broken American home to the backdrop of European Holocaust, as Reich does in Different Trains, creating not just a masterpiece for string quartet (with amplified tape), but a way for Haydn's invention to find a relevance to modern lives.

Nothing in Reich is mono-linear. He thinks in historical parallels, is intrigued by paradoxes, appalled by present atrocities. 'Who would have guessed we'd face a medieval religious conflict in the 21st century?' he demands. And which other composer, I wonder, is working on a musical subtext for our deepening confusions? ■

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Faculty Fridays

7:00 p.m. - \$5

January 26 - Tanna Schulich Hall
Hank Knox, harpsichord
Transcriptions by Charles Babbell
of opera arias by Handel

February 9 - Tanna Schulich Hall
Ayun Huang, percussion

March 9, 10 & 11 - Tanna Schulich Hall
Haydn the Orator
Six programmes of keyboard music
Tom Beghin, fortepiano and other keyboards
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CBC/McGill Series

January 21 - Tanna Schulich Hall - 1:00 p.m. - \$5
Rising Stars Concert

La Fiorenza, winner of the CBC Radio Prize in
the 2006 Montreal Baroque Competition

March 16 - Pollack Hall - 7:00 p.m. - \$15/\$10
Ecstatic Surrender: The biblical Song
of Songs from Monteverdi to Willan
Les Voix baroques and instrumental ensemble

Opéra McGill

Julian Wachner, Guillermo Silva-Marin, co-directors
L'Enfant et les Sortilèges by Maurice Ravel
Gianni Schicchi by Giacomo Puccini
January 31, February 1, 2 & 3, 7:30 p.m.
Pollack Hall - 25\$ / 20\$

Montreal New Music Festival

Final schedule and ticket price to be announced

March 1 - Pollack Hall
McGill Contemporary Music Ensemble
Denys Boulaine, director
Martin Matalon: Metropolis -
Music for Fritz Lang's film "Metropolis"
(Canadian premiere with live film projection)

March 5 & 6 - Pollack Hall McGill Symphony Orchestra
Alexis Hauser, conductor Matt Haimovitz, cello
Works by Stockhausen, Harman, Lutoslawski

Staff and Guests Series

8:00 p.m. - \$5

January 16 - Tanna Schulich Hall
Winston Purdy, baritone
Michael McMahon, piano
Works by Beethoven, Schubert, Finzi, Britten

January 22 - Tanna Schulich Hall
Fabrice Marandola, percussion
Works by Sejourne, Geoffroy, Aperghis, Petit and others

February 5 - Redpath Hall
Former McGill students perform works by
Dominique Roy, composer and pianist
Cassandre Prévost, soprano
Michèle Losier, mezzo-soprano
Olivier Laquerre, baritone
Louis-Philippe Marsolais, french horn

February 8 - Tanna Schulich Hall
The Double Bass, every which way!
Brian Robinson and friends

February 12 - Pollack Hall
Zuk Piano Duo
Luba and Ireneus Zuk
Works by Hummel, Fiala, Ovcharenko,
Berio, Auric and Poulenc

February 14 - Pollack Hall
Laurence Kayaleh, violin
Elizabeth Dolin, cello
Paul Stewart, piano
Works by Pizzetti, Schumann, Ravel

March 17 - Pollack Hall
Jan Jarczyk, composer and jazz pianist
John Stetch, piano
Original works

March 22 - Pollack Hall
As part of the
Dorothy Morton Visiting Artists Series
Paul Berkowitz, piano
Works by Haydn, Janáček, Brahms, Schubert