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If you’ve ever seen the St. Lawrence String Quartet perform, you’ve witnessed firsthand the magic that can emerge when four distinct but complementary musical personalities collide. In contrast to some ensembles that manage to convey musical ideas while remaining stony-faced and motionless, the members of the SLSQ are so unabashedly passionate, so physically reactive, that watching them play is like watching an intimate and energized conversation. As violinist Scott St. John, the newest member of the quartet, observes, “Chris [Costanza] is an engaging, warm and grounded personality and his playing reflects these same traits. Geoff [Nuttall] can be wild, yet extremely committed and loyal. Lesley [Robertson] is strong, fiercely independent, and still charming. The connections between personality and musical interpretation are not always direct, but I think they are apparent in every performer.”
Now celebrating its twentieth year, the quartet has come a long way from the basement of Toronto’s Royal Conservatory of Music, where the members first rehearsed together. In 1992 it won both the Banff International String Quartet Competition and Young Concert Artists International Auditions, spurring an impressive performing and recording career that has included countless awards and critical recognition. Since 1998 it has held the position of Ensemble-in-Residence at Stanford University, as well as appearing regularly as visiting artists at the University of Toronto. This year it inaugurates a visiting chamber music residency at Arizona State University. It has performed everywhere from the great halls of Europe to the smallest elementary school classrooms across North America. At the same time, twenty years has dampered neither the youthful energy the musicians infuse in each performance, nor the down-to-earth attitude with which they approach their roles as performers and educators.

At Stanford University, the SLSQ has joyfully tackled the role of educating young quartets with impressive perseverance, introducing new initiatives almost every year. Rather than confining themselves to what can be the closed world of the music faculty, the members of the quartet are committed to involving the outside community in many of their projects. One such venture is their summer chamber music seminar, which takes place annually at the university. This ten-day intensive seminar includes coaching, rehearsal time, master classes, lectures and sight-reading. The SLSQ works tirelessly during the ten days, coaching with abounding energy and enthusiasm alongside invited guest musicians (Toronto’s Gryphon Trio joins the seminar this summer).

One important aspect of this seminar is the varied makeup of its participants. Young talented music students study side by side with older amateur musicians from the greater community of Stanford as well as students from other faculties, such as law or science. This mixed demographic reinforces the idea of playing music for pure enjoyment. Serious music students find themselves in sight-reading sessions with passionate amateurs where the impetus to play music does not come from the desire to pursue a career but rather from a deep and energizing love for playing. This exemplifies one of the defining traits of the St. Lawrence String Quartet: the conviction that classical music is fluid and ever changing, that new life can appear in every performance, and that both audiences and performers can be found in every corner of a community, beyond the narrow fences of music schools.

Its approach to teaching is nurturing and encouraging. Violinist Nuttall explains, “The most important thing is to try to share a passion for discovering the possibilities in the music that the students are playing.” In Tristan Cook’s documentary of the SLSQ chamber music seminar, one sees the quartet members convey their passionate ideas with methods that are constantly evolving and always unique. Nuttall urges one string player to sound like an elephant running at full force; Robertson mimics the act of dragging someone through the dirt in order to convey the weight of the music. As Alex Ross of the New Yorker observes, “The four musicians of the St. Lawrence are remarkable not simply for the quality of their music-making, exalted by the standards of their colleagues, but for the joy they take in the act of connection” (May 21, 2001).

The quartet is just as active in performance as in education. At home in California, Toronto has been a constant beacon for the group since its inception. Nuttall remarks, “Toronto has been a constant beacon for the group since its inception. Nuttall can remember a time when he would be riddled with nerves playing on Toronto stages. Now, twenty years later, ‘it feels like playing at home.’” This anniversary marks the continued evolution and success of a quartet that thrives on passion and enthusiasm while maintaining at its core an unchanging purpose. As St. John
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puts it, “Fundamentally, the mission of the SLSQ is to bring every piece of music to
the audience in vivid colour, with pronounced communication and teamwork,
and great respect to the composer.” It sounds simple, but it is exactly what is
needed to keep the music alive. . .

St. Lawrence String Quartet performs concerts across Southern Ontario at the end of March and into early April:

March 29, presented by Port Hope Friends of Music, Port Hope, ON. www.porthopefriendsofmusic.ca

April 1, presented by the Sarnia Concert Association, Sarnia, ON. www.sarnia.com/groups/sca/

April 2, presented by Music Toronto, Toronto, ON. www.music-toronto.com

n these tough economic times, music and the arts are not immune, especially when this sector relies so much on sponsorships and donations. The recent federal budget has been disappointing for the arts, although the $100 million over two years for major festivals to increase tourism is welcome. This money should be spent wisely. In Canada, to motivate Canadians to spend their tourism dollars at home, here, our annual national festivals issues (May and June) will be doing their part (see ad on page 2). Furthermore, we will follow the impact of the economic woes through our website SCENA.org.

As a family of non-profit charitable magazines relying largely on advertising, The Music Scene Ontario and its sister publications, La Scena Musicale and La SCENA and our website SCENA.org will also be affected by the uncertain advertising market. We are committed to our mission to make music and the arts accessible, breaking down economic and social barriers through the power of the written word. With current trends in mainstream media cutting arts and music coverage, we, through our magazines and website, are proud to have been vocal defenders of music and the arts.

SUBSCRIPTION DRIVE – READ IT, HEAR IT

In February, we launched our 2009 subscription drive with the new Discovery CD Collection. In partnership with XXI Records, each issue of La Scena Musicale includes the new “Discovery CD Découverte,” a full-length CD of great Canadian musicians of the past and future, introduced by a full-page article on the artist or the recording. In all, 10 free CDs will be available per year ONLY to paying subscribers and newstand copies. Thus far, we have featured Canadian organizer Bernard Lagacé playing Buxtehude and the duo of baritone Marc Boucher and pianist Olivier Godin performing an award-winning disc of Dubois songs. As a bonus, this subscription will also include our two annual issues of The Music Scene Ontario. Another subscription privilege is access to the online Naxos Music Library with over 400,000 music tracks and 30,000 recordings (see article on p. 9). Since February 1, over 150 readers have already responded. We hope you will too (see subscription form on page 6). Finally, I am pleased to announced that the Canadian classical music recording industry is also lending their support with prizes for a Super Subscription Contest. So far, XXI Records, SRI Distribution and Analekta will be contributing large CD Collections. XXI Records and SRI will contribute respectively 300 and 200 individual recordings as prizes. What better way to start or complete your CD collection. This contest is open to current and new subscribers as of July 31, 2009.

This issue of The Music Scene Ontario features our annual Guide to Summer Music Camps, as well as our Guide to International Classical Music Festivals, both essential tools to organizing the summer. On the cover, The St. Lawrence String Quartet celebrates their 20th anniversary and looks back at their incredible career. Joseph So looks into the history behind Monteverdi’s L’incoronazione di Poppea and its period production by Opera Atelier, and Jeanne Lamon talks about Tafelmusik’s approach to Haydn with their upcoming performance of his Creation. Also, watch SCENA.org for Joseph So’s regular column This Week in Toronto.

In closing, on behalf of our team of dedicated staff and volunteers, I would like to wish you a Spring time full of music.

WAH KELING CHAN
FOUNDING EDITOR
The Music Scene Ontario / La Scena Musicale / La SCENA

CANADA COUNCIL DROPS SUPPORT FOR CONTROLLED-CIRCULATION MAGAZINES, THE MUSIC SCENE AND LA SCENA MUSICALE AFFECTED

The Canada Council of the Arts has dropped support for controlled-circulation print magazines in the Support for Arts and Literary Magazines component of its application process due on March 1, 2009. In an email, program officer Peter Schneider explained how the decision was reached. "Following this six-year period (actually 7 years – Ed), Council acted in 2008 to restore the previous guidelines, based upon its experience and the advice of peer assessment committees over the time period." Schneider has yet to explain the reasons for restoring the previous guidelines, or say who was responsible for making the decision.

At issue is the "Lola" clause (after the now-defunct Toronto visual arts magazine) in the application guidelines, which stated that an eligible magazine must "maintain at least a 25 percent ratio of revenues earned from paid circulation or advertising." In 2002, when the program was modified, the reason given by the then-program officer Joanne Laroque-Poirier was that the existing 25% autonomous revenues rule was adopted to ensure that the publication had readership. She said that the existent 50% paid circulation rule was instituted to ensure that a publication was read. The reason advertising revenues were added to eligibility was the understanding that advertisers would not support a magazine if it did not have an established readership. This reason is as valid today as it was then.

Furthermore, as the restoration to previous guidelines is a step backwards, it seems to be behind the times in magazine publishing. For instance, the Woolf Institute study of the magazine industry, last summer, the Ontario Arts Council revised its eligibility criteria for arts magazines rendering controlled-circulation magazines ineligible. Moreover, it established groundbreaking criteria (no more than 40% advertising, and a cap at 30,000 copies per issue). Recently, the new Canada Periodical Fund, announced on February 17, 2009, has suggested that the eligibility criteria of a minimum annual paid/requested circulation be instituted. Although the suggested 3000-copy limit is too high for most arts magazine, a variation should be considered to bring eligibility in line with other Canadian Heritage departments.

Magazines directly affected by this decision include The Music Scene Ontario, and its sister publication, the 13-year-old bilingual non-profit classical music publication La Scena Musicale (LSM), one of Canada’s most respected arts periodicals, which discovered the change from the Council’s website only as it was preparing this year’s application. Previously a recipient of Canada Council funding for 5 years as an electronic magazine, LSM has recently been trying to be funded by the print component. Vancouver-based FRONT Magazine, perhaps the only publication besides Lola to have received funding under this clause, was unaware of the rule’s change when we first contacted them on February 23. However, according to FRONT editor Andreas Kahre, Schneider assured the publication it would continue to be eligible under a grandfather clause absent from the published 2010 guidelines.

For La Scena Musicale, the issue is a matter of principle and transparency. Although controlled-circulation arts magazines represent a minority, they have been innovators in outreach for the arts and should be eligible for funding. For instance, La Scena Musicale publishes 40 issues per year averaging 35,000 copies per issue reaching 500,000 Canadian readers per year, plus a world-wide audience on the internet. In 2007-08, the Canada Council funded 106 arts & literary magazines for a total of $2,661,900.

La Scena Musicale has begun a campaign to reverse this policy change, including an online petition and a Facebook group. Visit scena.org for more info. Contact: info@scena.org.
After two critically acclaimed productions of the classical period, Mozart's *Idomeneo* and *Abduction from the Seraglio*, Opera Atelier is returning to its Baroque roots this spring with a revival of *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. A composer very much ahead of his time, Monteverdi wrote this, his last opera, at the grand old age of 75, at the peak of his creativity. Premiered at Venice’s Teatro Santi Giovanni e Paolo in 1642, it is one of the earliest operas to have entered the standard repertoire. Given its age, it is remarkable that the central themes of love, lust, ambition, power, collusion, and their primacy over morality and fidelity have so much contemporary resonance. Ellen Rosand in the Grove Dictionary of Opera puts this work in its proper historical context. The libretto by Busenello, Rosand points out, represents a libertine intellectual movement of that time centering on the struggle between religion and sensuality. In the hands of Monteverdi, the abstract intellectual discourse takes on strong emotional dimensions when framed against actual Roman history and with real people.

Indeed the most remarkable thing about *Coronation of Poppea* is how human the characters are. Instead of stock figures, we have finely drawn personalities made of flesh and blood, complete with virtues and foibles. When it comes to this opera, Marshall Pynkoski, OA’s co-artistic director, waxes poetic, “The moment we hear the opening music, we are transported into another world emotionally. You feel the earth move under you. The psychological depth of the characters, and the way Monteverdi probes their emotions are fascinating. They are all compromised in some way, yet you care about them.” Unusually text-driven, Monteverdi treats this work almost as spoken theatre in a surprisingly modern way. More than any opera in the baroque period, *Coronation of Poppea* gives the singers a great opportunity to explore the power of their storytelling.

With this revival, Pynkoski has assembled a superb cast of singing actors led by male soprano Michael Maniaci as Nerone, reprising the role he sang for OA seven years ago.

“Michael was only in his mid 20s when he sang it for us,” explains Pynkoski. “He has grown as an artist and a person which I’m sure he’ll bring to the role.” Maniaci was originally unavailable due to other commitments, but has since extricated himself.
from a contract in the UK to come back to Toronto, where he is an audience favourite. When reached by phone in New York recently, Maniaci said he was looking forward to returning to OA and to Nerone, “Together with Xerxes and Idomantea, Nerone is one of my favourite roles. I have done it with OA in Toronto and elsewhere. It is a wonderful challenge to come back to a piece so you can go deeper.”

Another highlight of this revival is the long awaited company debut of Canadian mezzo Kimberly Barber, an estimable artist with a distinguished career and now also a professor of voice at Wilfred Laurier University. Equally at home in Baroque and 21st century repertoires, Barber looks forward to tackling the dramatically challenging Ottavia. “She is such an interesting and complicated character!” Barber comments when reached by phone at the university. “Ottavia lived at a time in Roman history when women were powerless and beholden to their men. At the beginning of the opera her power is already diminished. Robbed of everything, she lashes out to preserve herself and her honour. I love parts that demand a lot of me as an actor.” Although Barber has sung plenty of Handel, Monteverdi is new to her repertoire. “It’s a very different vocal approach, not lyrical like Handel, Mozart and the later composers. The drama in Monteverdi is front and centre – you get to focus on who these people are. The orchestration is very spare. You can take the time to linger over a word. It’s essential to get the flavour of the music,” she says. Ottavia’s best moment is undoubtedly her great scene at the end of the opera, as she sings her poignant farewell to Rome. When considering whether to take on this challenge, Barber consulted with her friend and mentor, the great Frederica von Stade, who encouraged the mezzo to take it on. Von Stade herself had just sung her first Ottavía with LA Opera. “When I heard that, I thought ‘Oh well – (Ottavía) is the right thing!’” Barber exclaims.

The dominant aesthetic of staging baroque operas today is decidedly revisionist – modern dress, mixed gender, outlandish mise-en-scène, and colloquial English translations bordering on the pedestrian. But you won’t find this with Opera Atelier, a company that has remained true to its mission of staging works as they would have appeared in the composer’s time. Rather than being slavishly accurate, OA aims to be “historically informed.” Instead of using slangy English translations like other companies, the opera will be sung in Italian. It is often a matter of taste when it comes to which style is better, but there is something to be said for a well sung traditional production that is pleasing to the eye. The Toronto audience certainly thinks so, as OA attendance figures are climbing, with shows like last year’s Idomenea virtually sold out.

An ensemble company, OA’s roster has been increasingly augmented by guest artists like the likes of Measha Brueggergosman and Michael Maniaci, high-profile stars that are sure to attract more media attention. It is safe to say their participation has taken OA to a new level. Great strides have also been made in fund raising. Since taking on the position of general manager, Jane Hargraft has managed to raise a million dollars in just seven months. In these troubled economic times, a solid financial footing is imperative in order to move forward. OA recently announced its 2009-10 season, which includes a new production of Marriage of Figaro and a revival of Iphigénie en Tauride. With its 25th anniversary season not far off, Pynkoski can be counted on to celebrate this milestone with a big splash. When pressed, he couldn’t resist letting it slip that the company will mark the occasion with a revival of Dido and Aeneas/Acteon plus OA’s first La Clemenza di Tito. Negotiations are also under way to bring back the wildly popular Measha Brueggergosman, as well as a major tour to Asia. Stay tuned!

Opera Atelier presents Monteverdi’s The Coronation of Poppea, April 25-May 2, 2009 at the Elgin Theatre, Toronto, ON. 416-827-5555, www.operaatelier.com

Laura Bates

Definitely not a stranger to the chamber music scene, Quartetto Gelato is back on tour with their recent release of its newest disc, Musica Latina on March 21. Reputed for their musical virtuosity and charismatic performances, the ensemble that melds the sounds of tenor, violin, cello, clarinet and accordion – among others – continues their tradition of delighting audiences with their uniquely theatrical take on music. The tragic passing of co-founder Cynthia Steljes in December 2006 left the group with an emotional void, however QG has since reformed as an ensemble alive. With seven albums now under their belt, Gelato’s mission is “to celebrate the cultures that make up our world. Our music and voice to create our own individual genre.”

TMS: How has your individual training facilitated such a collaborative career path?

PD: I think all of us in QG would agree that the most time and effort we have dedicated to any single musical discipline would have been classical. We all regularly perform as soloists, chamber musicians, and in orchestras. That said, our musical past also includes some very quirky side roads. My father is a strolling musician, which means he plays violin around tables and takes musical requests. His repertoire is definitely eclectic and includes classical, folk, opera, European, Eastern European, gypsy and even some Broadway and pop. Personally put myself through school strolling with my father so it is only natural that QG’s theme is Euro eclectic. Alex Sevastian (4 x world accordion champion) also comes from a strong strolling background and has also toured with the Russian folk orchestra so he brings a East Euro Folk influence to the mix. The intimacy involved in playing in such close quarters really shows up your chamber music skills while holding one’s ability to tug at the emotional strings. I am also a tenor and have studied opera so it was essential that QG perform the great arias and art songs that bring audiences to tears. Our musical intention is to combine chamber music with world music and voice to create our own individual genre.

TMS: You have a variety of programs that feature the group in various situations from recital, to orchestra, and even educational programs. Each formation requires a different kind of interaction with the audience. How do you explore and achieve a connection with your audiences?

PD: We memorize our music like a pop group so there are no music stands onstage and we stand throughout the performance and interact with the audience and ourselves freely. We have to be larger than life, but at the same time I still try to look at individuals in the audience and play to them the same way as I did when I was a young man serenading patrons while strolling between tables. A remark that we often hear is “I felt that you were playing for me personally.” I also feel that speaking and joking with the audience breaks down barriers and allows your audience to get to know you. In these tough times, our job is to provide fantasy, and escape. We do this with personality, romance and virtuosity. Our reward comes in seeing the thousands of smiling faces.

Catch Quartetto Gelato in action:

April 19 in Alliston, ON at the Gibson Centre, www.gibsoncentre.com

July 11 in Collingwood, ON at the Collingwood Summer Music Festival, www.collingwoodmusicfestival.com

Quartetto Gelato:
STROLLING INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

Photo: Robert M. DiVito

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TMS: You have a variety of programs that feature the

TAFELMUSIK TELLS US HOW IT ALL BEGAN

HAYDN'S CREATION

Graham Lord

Exhilarating the virtues of an upcoming Tafelmusik concert to Toronto music lovers is somewhat like preaching to the choir. Nevertheless, it will be the ensemble’s choir and orchestra preaching to the audience in their coming performances of Haydn’s masterwork, Creation. Principal guest conductor Bruno Weil will lead the group, and they will be joined by three soloists: Canadian soprano Nancy Argenta, German tenor Jan Kobow, and Korean baritone Locky Chung. The piece, considered by many to be Haydn’s masterpiece, concludes Tafelmusik’s 2008-09 season, which has already been rife with other large-scale works, most notably Handel’s Messiah and Water Music, as well as Bach’s St. Matthew’s Passion and Brandenburg Concerti (NB: The two Bach programs are upcoming in April and May – see Tafelmusik’s website for details).

The performance on the 31st coincides exactly with the 250th anniversary of the composer’s death. As such, it is presented as part of the World Creation Project, an initiative taken up by numerous ensembles from around the globe that will also perform the work on this historic date. “Haydn had a huge output throughout his life, but it’s one of the very best pieces he ever wrote,” remarks Jeanne Lamon, the ensemble’s illustrious music director since 1981. “This is why it was chosen for this particular event and for the anniversary of his death.”

Though premiered in 1798, the impetus for The Creation came a few years earlier, when Haydn made two separate trips to England. Two main factors likely inspired him to write such a work: it is said that he saw performances of Handel’s grand oratorios, such as Messiah and Israel in Egypt, and this surely must have contributed to his desire to write in a similar vein. The Creation was his first oratorio, and The Seasons would prove to be his second and final effort. Secondly, Haydn was presented with an anonymous libretto by impresario Johann Peter Salomon, the composer’s promoter for his English concerts. The libretto, The Creation of the World, was supposedly destined for Handel’s pen, but the Baroque master never got the chance to follow through on the project. These visits to England were also fruitful in terms of Haydn’s instrumental output: Salomon’s concert series also saw the premieres of the London symphonies (Nos. 93-104), which stand as the composer’s last and arguably greatest compositions for orchestra.

When Haydn returned to Vienna, libretto in hand, the composition was seen as being potentially successful in both languages, so von Swieten set out to rework an English version that would line up with his original setting in German. Indeed, neither von Swieten nor Haydn had a particularly strong command of the English language, and some awkward passages have been criticized for their cumbersome character. The work is regularly performed in both languages, but Tafelmusik will be performing the work with its original German text. “I’d love to do it in English,” Lamon comments. “People would obviously understand it a little better, but it feels somewhat stilted. I’m not against performing it English, the way some conductors are, but it’s such a beautiful setting of the German language. Of course, the audience will be able to follow along with the English, which will be printed in the program.”

The work was a huge success, prompting dozens of repeat performances during Haydn’s lifetime, which was no small feat, and it had reached most of the other major Europe centres before the composer’s death in 1809. Passages such as the striking dissonance of the opening instrumental number (the representation of Chaos prior to God’s creation) or even the jarring, yet jubilant cadence in C major, which depicts the creation of Light, have been quite spectacular to behold for an audience living in a world still blissfully unaware of Beethoven’s symphonies. According to one of Haydn’s friends, this latter example (the setting of the word “Licht”, or “Light”) created quite a stir at the premiere. He writes, “The enchantment of the electrified Viennese was so general that the orchestra could not proceed for some minutes.”

The sensation that the piece created over two centuries ago still resonates today, particularly for ensembles such as Tafelmusik that specialize in performing music from this era. “We’ve done this piece perhaps more than anything else...except, perhaps, The Messiah,” says Lamon. She notes that the Kläng und Raum festival, a summer event in Germany (about an hour outside of Munich), which the orchestra visits on a regular basis, has seen them perform it 7 or 8 times in its history. In addition, Tafelmusik has certainly presented The Creation in Toronto a number of times. “It’s something we know really well. We’ve made 77 or 78 recordings in our history, and our

The Messiah

Handel's Creation of the World

A massive success, The Creation of the World was the culmination of Haydn's career as a composer. The work was premiered in London in 1798, and it has since become one of Haydn's most popular and enduring works. The creation of the piece was inspired by Handel's Messiah and Israel in Egypt, which were performed in London in 1789 and 1791, respectively. Haydn was presented with an anonymous libretto by impresario Johann Peter Salomon, the composer's promoter for his English concerts. The libretto, The Creation of the World, was supposedly destined for Handel's pen, but the Baroque master never got the chance to follow through on the project.

When Haydn returned to Vienna, libretto in hand, he turned it over to Baron Gottfried von Swieten, a diplomat and music patron, who worked on translating it into German. Naturally, given Haydn's connections in Britain, as well as the nation's appetite for the genre, the composition was seen as being potentially successful in both languages, so von Swieten set out to rework an English version that would line up with his original setting in German. Indeed, neither von Swieten nor Haydn had a particularly strong command of the English language, and some awkward passages have been criticized for their cumbersome character. The work is regularly performed in both languages, but Tafelmusik will be performing the work with its original German text. “I’d love to do it in English,” Lamon comments. “People would obviously understand it a little better, but it feels somewhat stilted. I’m not against performing it English, the way some conductors are, but it’s such a beautiful setting of the German language. Of course, the audience will be able to follow along with the English, which will be printed in the program.”

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Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra presents:

Bach’s St. Matthew Passion, April 2-8, 2009 at Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre (April 7 at George Weston Recital Hall).

Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos, May 9-15, 2009 at Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre (May 12 at George Weston Recital Hall).

Haydn’s The Creation, May 29&31, 2009, at Massey Hall.

All locations in Toronto, ON. 416-964-6337

www.tafelmusik.org
W

ith the long and arduous 2009 winter nearly consigned to history, the spring vocal season beckons with many tempting offers. We have a choice of six staged opera productions plus one in concert, several recitals and concerts by major singers, and a number of oratorios associated with the Easter season. Heading the list are the three productions from the Canadian Opera Company. It opens with Verdi’s Simon Boccanegra, last staged by the company 30 years ago. It stars the superb Italian baritone Paolo Gavanelli in the title role and American soprano Tamara Wilson as Amelia in their COC debut. Tenor Mikhail Agafonov, who was a terrific Zeluzov in the COC War and Peace last fall, returns as Gabriele, and Canadian bass Phillip Ens is Fiesco. Making his company debut is Marco Guidarini, music director of Opera de Nice (eight performances Apr. 11-May 7). Also on offer is the perennial favourite La bohème, with a nearly all-Canadian cast of tenor David Pomeroy (Rodolfo), soprano Frédérique Vézina (Mimi), baritone Peter Barrett (Marcello) and bass Robert Gleadow (Colline). The lone guest is North Zealand soprano Anna Leese (Musetta), making her North American debut. I seem to recall that when the 2008-2009 season was announced last year, this Bohème was to be a new production, but alas we are getting yet another revival of the ancient Skalici production with three intermissions. Julian Kovatchev returns to conduct (12 performances Apr. 17-May 24). The third mainstage production is Britten’s whimsical A Midsummer Night’s Dream. It stars countertenor Lawrence Zazzo in a belated debut as Oberon. (I say belated because I believe he was originally announced to debut a couple of seasons ago in Rodelinda). Also of interest is the appearance of German baritone Wolfgang Holzmair as Demetrius. Holzmair made an unscheduled appearance three seasons ago in Così fan tutte as Alfonzo, replacing an ailing Paolo Hunka. It is good to have Holzmair back. Also returning to the COC are sopranos Laura Claycomb and Giselle Allen. This rarely staged Britten opera is not to be missed (eight performances May 5-23). All shows are at the Four Seasons Centre. The final COC offering this season is Così fan tutte featuring the COC Ensemble Studio artists, to take place at the Imperial Oil Opera Theatre (four performances June 15-23). Unfortunately all shows are currently sold out, but there might be returns. Go to the COC website for updates, or subscribe to their e-Opera newsletter. www.coc.ca

OPERA ATELIER, Canada’s première baroque opera company, presents Monteverdi’s Coronation of Poppea (six performances Apr. 25-May 2, Elgin Theatre). This is a revival of the very successful 2002 production that took the company to Houston and Cleveland, besides playing in Toronto. Returning to OA is male soprano sensation Michael Maniaci, who wowed audience as Idamante in last season’s Idomeneo. Canadian mezzo Kimberly Barber makes her long awaited OA debut as Ottavia. David Fallis leads the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra forces. www.operatelier.com

Meanwhile, forty-five minutes down the QE,W, the newly resurrected Opera Hamilton stages the Puccini favourite Madama Butterfly, with Chinese soprano Ai-Lan Zhu in the title role (two performances Apr. 2 and 3 at 8 pm Hamilton Place). Pinkerton is tenor Gordon Gietz and baritone Gaetan Laperriere is Sharpless. Former COC Ensemble Studio member, mezzo Lauren Segal, sings Suzuki. Requiring the singers to perform two nights in a row is difficult for the singers, especially for the soprano as Butterfly is a very heavy sing. Let’s hope the cast will hold up to such a rigorous schedule. Long-time Opera Hamilton stalwart Daniel Lipton conducts. www.operahamilton.ca/905-527-7637 x221 or x236

The final opera offering of the spring season, by Opera in Concert is a rarity. Canadian composer Charles Wilson’s Kamouraska. Composed in 1974-75, it received a first reading in Toronto several years later. In 2006, Wilson rewrote the piece, and it received an Opera in Concert workshop production in May 2008. Now it will receive a fully staged world premiere. The principals are former COC Ensemble Studio soprano Miriam Khalil, tenor James McLennan, and baritone Alexander Dobson. Alex Pauk conducts the Esprit Orchestra. Two performances: March 28 at 8 pm and 29 at 2:30 pm, at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts. 416-366-7723/1-800-708-6754

There are a number of delectable choices on the concert/recital stage. American superstar soprano Renée Fleming returns to Toronto in a recital on April 17, 8 pm, as part of the Roy Thomson Hall Vocal Series. On the program are Handel, Dutilleux, Messiah, John Kander, and Strauss. Any Fleming appearance is an event not to be missed. www.roythomson.com. Canadian soprano Measha Brueggergosman brings her unique mix of striking vocalism and high voltage personality to town in Richard Strauss’s Four Last Songs, with Peter Oundjian conducting the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (June 10, 11, 13, Roy Thomson Hall – the last concert is a “casual” evening, with a truncated program and lobby entertainment). Also on the program are Bartók’s Divertimento for Strings and his Concerto for Orchestra. If you prefer a more intimate concert-going experience, I can recommend Aldeburgh Connection’s Annual Greta Kraus Schubertiad, featuring baritone Brett Polegato in the great song cycle Winterreise (March 25, 8 pm, Glenn Gould Studio). At the piano is Stephen Ralls. www.roythomson.com. The hall seats only a little over 360 people, perfect for a lieder recital.

On May 3, Off Centre Music Salon presents the German-Spanish Salon. The wonderfull Canadian baritone Russell Braun, who had such a triumph as Prince Andrei in the COC War and Peace, is joined by sopranos Monica Whicher and Lucia Cesaroni for an afternoon of songs from Granados to Brahms, with Inna and Boris Zarankin at the piano. 416-205-3555.

Joseph K. So

Laura Claycomb as Tytania and the Houston Grand Opera Children’s Chorus in the Canadian Opera Company’s production. Britten’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Ai-Lan Zhu

Russell Braun
Its most breathtaking concept to date is surely the companies feared the internet, Naxos has embraced it. While other companies made and sold, and in the process it has now all they need to do is hook up to the internet. People find they are hopelessly addicted to music, whatever LP I was listening to. Today when young phones on my head, hunched over the score of at a turntable in the Toronto Music Library, ear-vise.

Lewis and Clark discovering the West. I not only played by Steinberg and the Pittsburgh Symphony I music. After hearing Bruckner’s Fourth Symphony I aming Sor’s Den T. Variations on a Theme of Mozart Russian program, the orchestra will also perform Liadov’s The Enchanted Lake, Tchaikovsky’s Romeo and Juliet, and four pieces from Prokofiev’s Romeo and Juliet Suite. It should be fascinating to hear a uniquely Russian interpretation from an orchestra of such magnitude and caliber.

The quickest way to discover music in those days was through recordings. I would sit for hours at a turntable in the Toronto Music Library, earphones on my head, hunched over the score of whatever LP I was listening to. Today when young people find they are hopelessly addicted to music, all they need to do is hook up to the internet.

Naxos has revolutionized the way recordings are made and sold, and in the process it has become the giant of the industry. While other companies feared the internet, Naxos has embraced it. Its most breathtaking concept to date is surely the Naxos Music Library (NML), a vast musical resource.

As the name suggests, the Naxos Music Library is basically the entire Naxos catalogue. But it is much more. Hundreds (112) of other record companies have joined with Naxos to make the library even bigger. Although Universal (DG, Decca and Philips) has not yet joined, the constantly growing collection (30,432 discs and 432,719 tracks as we go to press) is impressive.

NML consists primarily of classical music but there is a lot of jazz from Scandinavian labels and from Naxos’ own series, Naxos Jazz Legends. You’ll find dozens of albums by Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Django Reinhardt, Thelonious Monk and all the other jazz greats. Naxos also has a wonderful Nostalgia series with albums by Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire, Noel Coward and many others. One of my personal favorites is Spike Jones’ Spiking the Classics; his version of Flight of the Bumble-Bee is a must.

The Finnish label Ondine is part of the NML, meaning that all the current Philadelphia Orchestra/Christoph Eschenbach CDs are available. You’ll also find many of Karajan’s Philharmonia albums originally released by EMI and lots of Furtwängler. Some of Sir Colin Davis’ finest recordings with the Dresden Staatskapelle are here too, including a sublime Elgar Symphony No. 1 and a blazing Sibelius Symphony No. 2.

And this is only the music. NML also provides most of the liner notes for these recordings, as well as opera libretti, a glossary of musical terms and a pronunciation guide. The NML is a wonderful resource for beginners and connoisseurs.

NML has the latest new releases, usually even before they are in the stores. Best of all, if you simply want to discover new pieces I can’t think of a better place. I recently heard a live performance of Anton Arensky’s String Quartet No. 2 in A minor Op. 35, and it was struck by its beauty and structure. After I got home, I listened to it again at the NML and enjoyed it even more.

The Naxos Music Library is available on subscription for $189 per year. But it is free with a subscription to La Scena Musicale ($40/yr), and you also get ten issues of La Scena Musicale including the monthly Discovery CD of great Canadian musicians (in partnership with XXI Records, 10 CDs per year), plus two issues of The Music Scene. www.scena.org/LaSCENACard
With a difficult winter mostly behind us, music lovers can look forward to a spring and summer of great music. With the huge numbers of music festivals worldwide, one can literally go from festival to festival between now and October. How’s this for an itinerary: Dresden Festtage (March), Salzburg Easter Festival (April), Prague Spring Festival (May), Holland Festival (June), Munich Festival (July), Salzburg Festival (Aug.), BBC Proms (Sept.) and Wexford Festival (Oct.)? A music lover’s idea of heaven, to be sure – if only I had the time, stamina, and deep pockets! For a more modest agenda, my 2009 summer festivals of choice are Prague (May 12-June 3), Munich (June 27-July 31), and Santa Fe (July 3-Aug. 29).

Prague Spring Festival: In May, Prague comes alive with the sound of music, and when you have musicians the caliber of Anne-Sophie Mutter, Juan Diego Flórez, Thomas Hampson, Christoph von Dohnányi, and Jiří Bělohlávek, it is definitely the place to be! Highlights include the opening concert which features Smetana’s Má Vlast with Neeme Järvi conducting the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra (May 12), Juan Diego Flórez sings opera arias with the Prague Philharmonia (May 15), and mezzo soprano Susan Graham in recital with pianist Malcolm Martineau (May 30). Operas include Eugene Onegin (May 14), Rinaldo (May 15), La bohème (May 17), Bartered Bride (May 19), Don Giovanni (May 23) and Orfeo ed Euridice (May 28).

Munich Opera Festival: The centrepiece this year is undoubtedly star tenor Jonas Kaufmann’s first Lohengrin (July 5), with Greek-German soprano Anja Harteros as Elsa and Kent Nagano leading the superb Bavarian State Orchestra – it doesn’t get better than this! I am hoping and praying that Rolando Villazón will be healthy and in good voice for Werther (July 4), with Vesselina Kasarova as Charlotte. Last year’s fabulous Robert Carsen Ariadne auf Naxos (July 13) will be repeated, with Adrianne Pieczonka (Ariadne) and Diana Damrau (Zerbinetta) reprising their roles. The show is to be taped for later DVD release. Pieczonka will also sing Desdemona to Johan Botha’s Otello in Otello (July 25). Other exciting news concerns the appearance of the great Edita Gruberova in Lucrezia Borgia (July 1) and Norma (July 13). The premiere of Lucrezia took place recently in Munich and the reception for Gruberova was nothing short of delirious. www.muenchner-opern-festspiele.de/989-bOtob~karten~ihre_bestellung~vorverkauf_festspiele.html

Santa Fe Opera: If you prefer your opera al fresco, consider Santa Fe. The magnificent setting of its theatre surrounded by the spectacular New Mexican desert landscape is hard to beat. The highlight this summer is definitely La traviata, with soprano Natalie Dessay assaying her first ever Violetta, opposite her husband Laurent Naouri as Germont. Young Albanian tenor Saimir Pirgu is Alfredo and Frederic Chaslin conducts (opens July 3). Another interesting offering is the great American soprano Christine Brewer taking on the title role of Gluck’s Alceste. Brewer has just been cast as Brunnhilde in two of the Met Ring cycles this April. The world premiere this year will be The Letter, composed by Pulitzer Prize winner Paul Moravec. It stars soprano Patricia Racette and Canadian tenor Roger Honeywell. Racette, the deeply moving Butterfly in the recent Met in HD transmission, belongs to the new generation of singing actors who combine voice with dramatic verisimilitude. www.santafeopera.org
FESTIVALS 2009

INTERATIONAL FESTIVALS 2009

Visit festivals.scena.org for our Canadian summer festivals guide

USA

ANCHORAGE FESTIVAL OF MUSIC
Anchorage, AK, from April 19 to April 19.
907-276-2445, anchoragefestivalmusic.com/ anchoragefestivalmusic.org

SITKA SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVAL
Sitka, AK, from June 5 to June 26.
907-727-4852, sitkamusicsfestival.org

SEDOA CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
Sedona, AZ, from May 3 to May 24.
928.204.2415, chambermusicseodana.org

MAINLY MOZART FESTIVAL
San Diego, CA, from June 6 to June 20.
619-239-0106, mainlymotzartart.org

MONTALVO’S CLASSICAL MUSIC SERIES
Saratoga, CA, from April 5 to June 7.
408-961-5559, napavalleymusic.org

MUSIC ACADEMY OF THE WEST FESTIVAL
Santa Barbara, CA, June 22 to August 15.
805-969-4726, musicacademy.org

NAPA VALLEY CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
Napa, CA, from April 4 to June 4.
707-963-4726, musicacademy.org

SUMMER MUSIC WEST
San Francisco, CA, from June 15 to July 31.
sfcm.edu/summer

SUMMERFEST LA JOLLA
San Diego, CA, from April 27 to August 26.
858-569-3728, lcms.org

ASPERN MUSIC FESTIVAL AND SCHOOL
Aspen, CO, from June 26 to August 23.
970-925-9542, aspenmusicfestival.com

BRAVO VAIL VALLEY MUSIC FESTIVAL
Vail, CO, from July 1 to August 4.
877-812-5700, valimusicfestival.com

CENTRAL CITY OPERA
Denver, CO, from June 27 to August 2.
303-202-6700, centralcityopera.org/

COLORADO MUSIC FESTIVAL
Boulder, CO, from August 1 to August 7.
303-449-1397, coloradomusicfest.org

CRESTED BUTTE MUSIC FESTIVAL
Creed Butte, CO, from July 16 to July 26.
970-349-0169, crestedbuttemusicfestival.com

ROCKY RIDE MUSIC CENTER
Estes Park, CO, from June 12 to August 30.
970-586-4031, rockymountainmusic.com

STRINGS IN THE MOUNTAINS
Steamboat Springs, CO, June 27 to July 18.
970-879-5056, stringsinthemountains.org

THE QUARTET PROGRAM AT U
Colorado Boulder, CO, from July 5 to August 2.
505-224-1990, cma-abq.org

COLORADO BOULDER
Boulder, CO, from May 7 to August 2.
588-236-1592, quarterprogram.com

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
Norfolk, VA, from August 13 to August 27.
850-384-5880, quarterprogram.com

KNEISEL HALL CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
Blue Hill, ME, from June 22 to August 23.
207-374-2811, kleisell.org

PORTLAND STRING QUARTET WORKSHOP AT ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE
Portland, ME, from July 23 to August 27.
207-796-7676, quarterprogram.com

BOWDOIN INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL
Brunswick, ME, from June 27 to August 28.
207-725-1400, bowdoinmusicfestival.org

PORTLAND CITY STRING QUARTET PROGRAM
Portland, ME, from June 16 to August 28.
207-796-7676, quarterprogram.com

MUSIC FROM ANGEL FIRE
Angel Fire, NM, from August 20 to September 6.
505-277-3223, musicfromangelfire.org

SANTA FE CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
Santa Fe, NM, from July 19 to August 24.
505-982-1960, stfmtf.org

SANTA FE OPERA
Santa Fe, NM, from July 3 to August 25.
505-986-5995, santafeopera.org

TAOS SCHOOL OF CHAMBER MUSIC PROGRAM
Taos, NM, from June 21 to August 9.
575-776-2388, taoschamelmusic.org

BARD MUSIC FESTIVAL
Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, from August 14 to August 23.
845-758-7500, fishercenter.bard.edu/bmf

CHAUTAUQUA INSTITUTION
Chautauqua, NY, from June 28 to August 29.
716-357-6250, 800-821-4ARTS, chautauqua.org

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA
Cooperstown, NY, from August 15 to August 25.
607-547-2255, glimmerglassopera.org

JUNE IN BUFFALO
Buffalo, NY, from June 1 to June 7.
716-645-0642, music.buffalo.edu/juneinbuf-
falo

LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL
New York, NY, from July 7 to July 26.
212.875.5000, lincolncenter.org

LUZERNE CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
Lake Luzerne, NY, from June 23 to August 23.
518-691-2771, luzernemusic.org

MAVERICK CONCERTS FESTIVAL
Woodstock, NY, from July 4 to September 6.
845-679-8348, maverickconcerts.org

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL
New York, NY, from July 20 to August 23.
212-721-6500, lincolncenter.org

MUSIC FROM SALEM
Cambridge, MA, from July 11 to August 16.
517-977-2495, musicfromsalem.org

SARATOGA CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
Saratoga Springs, NY, from August 5 to September 6.
518-587-3330, spac.org

SKANEATELES FESTIVAL
Skaneateles, NY, from August 12 to September 5.
315-485-7418, skaneateles.org

THE QUARTET PROGRAM AT SUNY
Fredonia, NY, from June 14 to August 2.
585-274-1592, quarterprogram.com

WINDBRUSH CHAMBER MUSIC
SUMMER CAMP DIRECTORY

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Strings The Thing
220 Manor Park Avenue, Penticton
Tel.: 250-493-7977
pentictionacademyofmusic.ca
Camp: June 7 – 10
Languages: English
An inspiring program of Chamber Music, String Orchestra, One-on-One Instruction and Master Classes. Learning and fun in beautiful Penticton
Langley Community Music School
Suzuki Summer Workshop
4899 207 St., Langley
Tel.: 604-534-2684 • langleymusic.com
Camp: July 20-23 • Limit: June 30
Cost: $185 – $240 • Scholarships: No
Languages: English
Disciplines: Pi, Vln, Cel
Unique opportunity for students and parents to be immersed in a nurturing and musical environment. Fiddling, paper crafts, drumming, ensemble classes and more.
Pulse Creative and Innovative Music Program and Festival
4899 207 St., Langley
Tel.: 604-534-2684 • langleymusic.com
Camp: July 24–August 2 • Limit: June 30
Cost: $45–$875 • Scholarships: No
Languages: English
Disciplines: Pi, Vln, Vla, Cel, Ww, ChM, Imp, Cmp.
Ten exciting days of creative music making with an emphasis on chamber music. Includes improvisation, composition and performance.
Victoria Conservatory of Music
Summer Music Academies
900 Johnson St., Victoria
Tel.: 250-386-5311, 866-386-5311
vcm.bc.ca/summer.htm
Camp: July 2 – Aug. 21
Limit: June 8 (most Academies)
Costs: $90–$1,200 • Scholarships: Yes
Languages: English
Disciplines: Vo, Fl, Fr, Rec, Br, Cdr, Gui, Sax, Cl, Ww, Per, Orch, Cho, ChM, Jz, Bl, EM, Th., Imp, Cmp, Mt, Dn, Fte.
Brass, Flute, Guitar, Jazz, Junior Jazz, Piano, String, Theory and Vocal Academies and Music Discovery Camp. Designed for beginning to advanced students and professionals with special components for young children.
Comox Valley Youth Music Centre
Courtney • Tel.: 250-338-7963 • cvymc.ca

ONTARIO

Music at Port Milford
Summer: Milford / Winter: 288 Washington Ave, Pleasantville, N.Y. • Tel.: 914-439-5039
mpmcamp.org
Camp: July 9–19 • Limit: May 18
Cost: $725–$775 • Scholarships: Yes
Languages: English
Disciplines: Vo, Fl, Vln, Vla, Cel, Bas, Orch, Cho, ChM, Intensive chamber music program in beautiful Prince Edward County. Outstanding Faculty. Focused, cooperative atmosphere shape the Port Milford experience. Est.1987
JVL Summer School for Performing Arts
North Bay, Ontario
Tel.: 416-882-7499, 905-882-7499
musicissummer.com
Camp: July 5–9 • Limit: May 18
Cost: $1,725 • Scholarships: Yes
Languages: English
Disciplines: Vo, Fl, Vln, Vla, Cel, Bas, Orch, Cho, ChM, MT. The course offers young musicians of all ages an intensive, highly professional training under the tutelage of a distinguished faculty.
Ontario Music Centre
P.O. Box 1400, Peterborough
Tel.: 705-878-7997 • cammaclakefield.ca
Camp: August 2 – 16 (2 one-week sessions)
Limit: July 30 • Cost: $1,245 (music fees plus adult domestic)</p>

ALBERTA

Music Creative Residences
1071 Terrapin Mountain Dr., Box 1020, Banff
Tel.: 800-565-9593
banffcentre.ca/music
Camp: Sept. 7- Dec. 11, Jan. 6–Mar. 26, 2010
Limit: April 10 and Aug. 11, 2009
Costs: From $54/day • Scholarships: Yes
Languages: English
Disciplines: Pi, Cld, Br, Ww, Per, ChM, Jz, Ww.
These self-directed residencies at the Banff Centre allow emerging and professional musicians time to focus on personal artistic development within Banff National Park.
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harmonymusic.ca

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A unique opportunity to share a musical holiday with family and friends on Lake MacDonald, in the beautiful Laurentians north of Montreal! Welcome to beginner and experienced amateur musicians! Programs for adults, for children 4-11 years old and for adolescents. All minors must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

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national@cammac.ca
http://www.cammac.ca/english/TabLM/Summer.shtml

Centre Musical du lac MacDonald
28 juin – 16 août 2009

Voici une occasion privilégiée de partager des vacances en musique avec famille et amis. Le Centre Musical accueille les musiciens amateurs de tous niveaux au bord du lac MacDonald dans les belles Laurentides au nord de Montréal. Programme pour adultes, pour enfants (4-11 ans) et pour adolescents. Tous les mineurs doivent être accompagnés d’un parent ou d’un tuteur.

Renseignements à 888-622-8755, ¶
national@cammac.ca
http://www.cammac.ca/francais/TabLM/Summer.shtml
Music at Port Milford
Chamber Music/Chorus/orchestra

SUMMER CAMP PICKS
Laura Bates

Southern Ontario bustles with a multitude of summer music activities for children to explore. Whether staying close to home in a city day camps or discovering new territories at an overnight camp, your children will greatly benefit from the experiences and friendships they make.

For overnight camps, there are two standard options available: day camps and overnight camps. Day camps are usually located in close proximity to your children's home, allowing them to experience music and nature in a controlled environment. These camps typically offer a variety of activities, including music classes, workshops, and performances, as well as outdoor activities such as swimming, hiking, and sports. They are ideal for children of all ages, and many offer scholarships to make them accessible to a wider range of families.

Overnight camps, on the other hand, are typically located further away from home and offer a more immersive experience. These camps provide a unique opportunity for children to engage in music and nature in a safe and supportive environment. They offer a range of activities, including music classes, workshops, and performances, as well as a variety of outdoor activities such as swimming, hiking, and sports. Overnight camps are ideal for children who are ready to explore new environments and make new friends.

Regardless of which type of camp you choose, make sure to do your research and select a camp that meets your child's needs and interests. Look for camps that have experienced and qualified instructors, a safe and healthy environment, and a strong focus on nurturing your child's musical talent and growth.

The following is a list of some of the top summer music camps in Ontario, each offering unique opportunities for children to explore their musical interests and talents.

1. Lake Macdonald Music Centre
   - Location: Harrington, ON
   - Ages: 10-16
   - Focus: Chamber music, orchestra, and vocal music
   - Cost: $390-$830

2. National Music Camp
   - Location: Lakefield, ON
   - Ages: 10-17
   - Focus: Chamber music, orchestra, and vocal music
   - Cost: $350-$600

3. Interprovincial Music Camp
   - Location: Lakefield, ON
   - Ages: 13-17
   - Focus: Chamber music, orchestra, and vocal music
   - Cost: $300-$1100

4. Atlantic Provinces Music Camp
   - Location: Lakefield, ON
   - Ages: 10-15
   - Focus: Chamber music, orchestra, and vocal music
   - Cost: $200-$350

5. Canadian Amateur Musicians Music Camp
   - Location: Lakefield, ON
   - Ages: 16-20
   - Focus: Chamber music, orchestra, and vocal music
   - Cost: $250-$350

6. Lake MacDonald Music Centre
   - Location: Harrington, ON
   - Ages: 10-17
   - Focus: Chamber music, orchestra, and vocal music
   - Cost: $390-$830

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10. Canadian Amateur Musicians Music Camp
    - Location: Lakefield, ON
    - Ages: 16-20
    - Focus: Chamber music, orchestra, and vocal music
    - Cost: $250-$350
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### VOCAL MUSIC

**Bach Cantatas BWV 51, 82a & 199**

Natalie Dessay, soprano; Neil Brough, trumpet; Le Concert d’Astrée/Emmanuelle Haim

Virgin Classics 50999 250123 2 2 (63 min 35 s)

★★★★★★ **$5**

Soprano Natalie Dessay is a fabulous Zerbinetta, Queen of the Night, Olympia, Manon, Marie, Amina, Pamina, and any of the dozens of roles she brings alive on the opera stages of the world – I count her as one of my very favourites. But a Bach singer? Judging by this disc of three Bach Cantatas, I must reluctantly conclude that I would rather hear her in something else. Of course the voice is beautiful, but stylistically it is not suited to early music. The vocal mannerisms that make her so endearing and distinctive in other repertoire appear rather odd – even arch and cloying – here, as when she accentuates a note just before singing it. Perhaps it is because we are so used to the instrumental sounds of echt baroque voices in Bach that Dessay’s soft-grained soprano, with its bel canto and operatic sensibilities, doesn’t blend so well with the period instruments. Emmanuelle Haim’s work is exemplary as always, but don’t look to this disc as a model of authenticity. Dessay also has problems with the low tessitura of a few passages. The soprano dedicates this album to the memory of Martin Luther King, but doesn’t tell us why. The recorded sound is lovely. To be sure, Dessay fans will want it, but likely not the baroque purists.

**Handel: Arias**

Rolando Villazon, tenor; Gabrieli Players/Paul McCreesh

Deutsche Grammophon 477 8056 (59 min 26 s)

★★★★★★ **$5**

The downhill slalom that is Rolando Villazon’s career hits another obstacle in this off-piste adventure. The Mexican tenor, who last week cancelled a Werther in Paris after an underpowered opening, can’t get much right at the moment. Whatever the problems that forced him to take a long break in 2007, the freshness and fearlessness have not returned and the voice sounds brittle at the top. Siring Handel relieves him of romantic stress and exploits a knack for the baroque that he showed in a Monteverdi project with Emmanuelle Haim and her gutsy strings. That, however, was before the break. Here, with Paul McCreesh and the Gabrieli Players in a cold church in Tooting, he delivers more spills than thrills. Set pieces from Tamerlano and Rodelinda lack strength by way of expression while “Ombra mai fu”, the roof-raiser from Serse, is so subdued it hardly happens.

This, along with three other arias, is not written for tenor at all but for mezzo-soprano. Why bother to raid the girls’ dressing-room, you wonder, when Rolando has so little to bring to the party?

**Mozart: Opera & Concert Arias**

Diana Damrau, soprano; Le Cercle de l’Harmonie/Jerémie Rhorer

Virgin Classics 50999 250123 2 2 (73 min 21 s)

★★★★★★ **$5**

German soprano Diana Damrau is arguably the best coloratura today, combining sparkling voice, stunning agility, and high voltage stage magnetism. I saw her Zerbinetta in Munich last summer and was completely bowled over. On this Mozart disc she eschews the stratosphere for lower roles the likes of Susanna, Contessa, Donna Anna, Donna Elvira and Vitellia. She still has her high Es and Fs, thank you very much, but this selection likely indicates that these roles figure in her future. Considering that she debuted as Barbarina in 1995, her vocal development is amazing. Her voice is a little reminiscent of the great Edda Moser, who had volume and temperament, unlike other coloratura sopranos. Like Moser, Damrau has a pretty solid lower register that gives her singing more dramatic impact. But she doesn’t forsake delicacy – her “Deh vieni non tardar” is as exquisite as her “Martern aller Arten” is fiery. That said, the tessitura of Vitellia’s “Non piu di fiori” is too low for her, and she has a penchant for adding alternate floritura to a few of the arias, which may not be to everyone’s taste. Le Cercle de l’Harmonie, under conductor Jerémie Rhorer, plays with energy and precision, but his tempo is sometimes idiosyncratic. The recorded sound has great clarity. All in all, this is one of the very best Mozart soprano arias discs in recent memory.

### INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

**Bruckner: Symphony No 8; WA Mozart: Symphony No 38 ‘Prague’**

Staatssymphonie Dresden/Bernard Haitink

Hänssler Profil PH07057 (2CD 114 min 04 s)

★★★★★★ **$5**

In 1996, DG published a stunning recording of Bruckner’s Eighth Symphony with this orchestra under the direction of Giuseppe Sinopoli. It was a performance (of the Nowak edition) to rank with those of Karajan and Boulez with the VPO (also for DG). Until the Sinopoli account is restored to the catalogue, the present issue will serve as a very acceptable substitute. Haitink has always favoured the slightly more revisionist Haas edition of 1939 for this symphony, which he recorded it in Amsterdam twice and again in Vienna. The 2002 Dresden interpretation is arguably his finest achievement in the work, with the orchestra yielding a uniquely rich and opulent sound. By a quirk in the engineering, the strings enjoy a slight edge in the recorded balance, which is typically cued to the avalanches of brass. Thus, we can enjoy a more lyrical variation in the symphonic narrative. This is a performance to cherish. Sinopoli coupled his performance with the Strauss Metamorphosen, which complemented the emotional impact of the symphony. In Mozart’s Prager, Haitink serves up the perfect anodyne.

This set is Volume 24 in the Hänssler Edition Staatssymphonie. Previous issues have preserved a host of remarkable performances. Volume 30 in the series should not be missed by collectors of vintage recordings, as it includes the complete recordings of Fritz Busch with the Staatskapelle on three CDs with a DVD supplement and lavish documentation (PH07032).

**Bruno Walter: Symphony in D minor**

NDR Sinfonieorchester/Leon Botstein

Col 777 163-2 (59 min 30 s)

★★★★★ **$5**

The best way to enjoy this disc is to approach it without inflated expectations. In 1907, young Bruno Walter made a decent first of a symphony, which compares well with the efforts of a host of lesser-known contemporaries. It is by no means a negligible composition: not great music, but music created by a great musician. The symphony is given a strong opening in a 20-minute moderato movement. The slightly shorter adagio is placed second and this presents an inward and rather maudlin aspect. Throughout the work there are examples of brilliant instrumental effects and ensemble scoring. At the end, in terms of structure and symphonic logic, the whole cannot equal the sum of the parts. It is deserving of sympathetic attention as a link to a crucial period in German music and not least because of Walter’s modernist embroi- dery of the Romantic idiom. American conductor Leon Botstein secures an exemplary performance from Günter Wand’s old orchestra. Collectors pleased with the results are also urged to hear Symphony No 1.
This is smart programming, amply displaying Léonardelli’s strengths as both a technician and a melodist. The title track, a Mozetich composition, is accompanied by the Penderecki String Quartet and Joel Quarrington on bass, giving Léonardelli freedom to take a melodic role, a capacity she handles with ease; the harp never loses its sense of linear motion, no matter how dense the underlying texture. Léonardelli’s sensitive voicing and phrasing in Song of Nymphs (also a Mozetich composition) sets the interpretative standard.

Léonardelli’s tremendous interpretive ability is matched by astonishing engineering and production. Harp recording has come a long way in the past 10 years, but too many harpists with wonderful, rich-sounding instruments have churned out tinny, unsatisfying records. Here, producer Anton Kwiakowski could trick you into believing you’re sitting next to a $24,000 Lyon and Healy, not your $240 stereo system. It doesn’t get much better than this for solo musicianship or recorded sound.

Dacapo followed up this recording by issuing the composer’s sarcasm (viz his six-minute Eleventh and the opera, Antikrist). With the sixteenth and final symphony, Langgaard is back in customary form in the purely orchestral mode. Rival recordings from the Danacord label were not available for comparison but finer interpretations than those of Dausgaard would be hard to imagine. Audio quality is outstanding, especially in SACD surround sound.

Walton: Cello Concerto
Pieter Wispelwey, cello; Sydney Symphony Orchestra/Jeffrey Tate
Onyx 4042 (66 min 22 s)

The Walton orphan has a new champion. Not as catchy as his violin concerto, the cello piece is delivered with pensive beauty by a daring Dutchman, Pieter Wispelwey, and the excellent Sydney Symphony Orchestra under Jeffrey Tate. The companion works – by Bloch, Ligeti and Britten – provide an altogether novel context, one that will obligate you to rethink Walton’s known qualities.

WA Mozart: Symphonies Nos 31 ‘Paris’, 39, 40, 43 ‘Jupiter’
Ensemble orchestral de Paris/Johan Nelson
Ambroise/naive AM 182 (2CD: 116 min)

The American conductor John Nelson stepped down as the music director of the Ensemble orchestral de Paris in 2008 he programmed the last three Mozart symphonies for their final concert and recording. In a decade with the orchestra, Nelson won renown for his interpretations of Berlioz and recorded a pedal-to-the-metal Beethoven symphony cycle (AM 183). His approach to Mozart is similar: swift and sure with the mannerisms of period performance. These accounts are enormously enjoyable. On the subject of ‘period’ equivalency, Nelson’s rendering of the Jupiter Symphony makes Claudio Abbado’s recent recording with Orchestra Mozart (DG Archiv) seem dowdy in comparison although the timings are almost identical. Compared to Sir Charles Mackerras'
and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (Linn Hybrid SACD), again with very similar timings movement by movement, the Parisians must take second place on stylistic points and recording quality. Symphony No 31 'Paris' is included as a bonus. It is a very satisfying performance, but would it have killed them to include the alternative andante? The set is recommended if the selection of works suits personal requirements. WSH

**DVD**

**Bach for Brass**

*German Brass*  
Medici Arts 2050338 (60 min)

★★★★★: $$$$$

A is for apples; B is for Bach and – brass! Traditionally, Bach has been known for his string and keyboard compositions, so brass players have felt left out, until now. The German Brass Ensemble includes brass players of the highest calibre from across Germany, who have taken to the challenge of playing transcriptions of Bach's works and performing them live in his church in Leipzig. Thanks to modern instruments, and especially the virtuoso musicians involved, the musical limitations that one might expect brass players to encounter while interpreting Bach's complicated works are, well, not a problem. In fact, their playing is quite impeccable. This DVD is excellent from start to finish, both musically and cinematographically. The musicians are filmed close up and in groups in the celebrated St. Thomas Church. Although Image Entertainment distributed this recording first, in 2000, Medici Arts has significantly improved the packaging and especially the sound quality. MG

**Robert Schumann: Genoveva**

Juliane Banse (Genoveva), Shawn Mathey (Golo), Martin Gantner (Siegfried), Cornelia Kallisch (Margaretha), Alfred Muff (Drago), Orchestra and Chorus of the Zurich Opera House/Nikolaus Harnoncourt  
Stage Director: Martin Kušej  
Video Director: Felix Breisach  
Arthaus Musik 101327 (146 min)

★★★★★★: $$$$$

**Franz Schubert: Alfonso und Estrella**

Olaf Bar (Mauregato), Luba Orgonasova (Estrella), Alfred Muff (Adolfo), Thomas Hampson (Froila), Endrik Wottrich (Alfonso), Arnold Schoenberg Choir, Chamber Orchestra of Europe/Nikolaus Harnoncourt  
Stage Director: Jürgen Flimm  
Video Director: Brian Large  
Naxos 2110260 (139 min 44 s)

★★★★★★: $$$$$

Genoveva, Schumann's only opera, was written off as a failure at the premiere in 1850. However, according to Nikolaus Harnoncourt, "Genoveva is a work of art for which one should be prepared to go to the barricades." And so he does, to great effect in the cause of good music. Schumann employed no dialogue and a minimum of recitative, which puts a premium on the orchestral score. In truth, Genoveva is a cut above most German opera between Weber and Wagner and it is fully deserving of revival. Sadly, stage direc-

tor Matin Kušej approaches it as a damaged goods, updating the setting to the composer's own time and squeezing the action into Schumann's ultimate destination: a room (a white room with a single chair and a sink) in an asylum for the insane. Under collective psychosis, the untended inmates reenact an obscure drama. When the servants burst in to slaughter one of the characters, it is as if they've escaped from some lower, filthier order of Bedlam. There is much semicomatose posturing and Kušej seems to be dicing with parody. They loved it last year in Zurich, though, and it might appeal to some as an alternative to regular group therapy.

Alfonso und Estrella was staged at the Theater an der Wien in May 1997 to mark the Schubert bicentennial. It is altogether a happier revivial, strongly cast in an audience-friendly staging. The composer regarded Alfonso und Estrella as his finest composition for the stage. It was never performed during his lifetime. The plot revolves around a dynastic clash in medieval Spain, but the presentation is advanced to the 19th century. The opera displays Schubert's musical mastery at the expense of dramatic development. He just cannot let the tension build without deploying another glorious aria, tender duet or rousing chorus. Outstanding performances by Orgonasova and Hampson inspire enthusiasm and dedication from all who tread the
stage. Naxos gives us another evening of great entertainment from an unexpected source.

**WSH**

**Richard Wagner: Tristan und Isolde**

Richard Decker (Tristan), Jordan Derkova (Isolde), Marek Wojciechowski (King Marke), Ulf Paulsen (Kurwenal), Alexandra Petersamer (Brangäne), Kostadin Arguirov (Melot), Anhthelas Philharmonie Dessau / Golberg Berg

Stage Director: Johannes Felsenstein

Video Director: Brooks Riley

Arthaus Musik 30425 (2 DVD 224 min)

* German tenor Christoph Prégardien seems to have stopped singing opera, focusing his energies on the concert stage (leader and oratorio), for which he is highly esteemed. He is also a noted pedagogue and among the most prolific of recording artists, with over 130 albums to his credit. In this live performance, the tenor revisits this Schubert cycle which he had previously recorded to critical acclaim. At 52, the voice has lost some of its youthful bloom, but there is still plenty of its inherently ingratiating quality remaining, a requisite for this cycle that tells the story of a young man. He lightens his bar-tenor and sings with sweetness and delicacy. Unlike the eccentrical stage mannerisms of fellow song specialists Matthias Goerne, Ian Bostridge and Wolfgang Holzmair, Prégardien is a model of stillness. Occasionally he gesticulates with his hands; otherwise he prefers to act with his voice. Invaluable is the 26-minute interview in which Prégardien gives us his take on singing Schubert, and his own evolution of singing this cycle for the last thirty years. Taped live at the Stuttgart Mozartsaal, the audience is absolutely quiet and attentive, only showing its appreciation by applauding vociferously at the end. Long time collaborative pianist Michael Gees started a little heavy-handedly, but soon hit his stride. Prégardien gave us three wonderful encores – including a dramatic “Aufenthalt” and a mellifluous “Die Taubenpost”, all from Schwanengesang. The two artists each received a long stemmed red rose at the end – much deserved!**

**Schubert: Die schöne Müllerin**

Christoph Prégardien, tenor; Michael Gees, piano

Medici Arts 1104 (104 min)

* German tenor Christoph Prégardien seems to have stopped singing opera, focusing his energies on the concert stage (leader and oratorio), for which he is highly esteemed. He is also a noted pedagogue and among the most prolific of recording artists, with over 130 albums to his credit. In this live performance, the tenor revisits this Schubert cycle which he had previously recorded to critical acclaim. At 52, the voice has lost some of its youthful bloom, but there is still plenty of its inherently ingratiating quality remaining, a requisite for this cycle that tells the story of a young man. He lightens his bar-tenor and sings with sweetness and delicacy. Unlike the eccentrical stage mannerisms of fellow song specialists Matthias Goerne, Ian Bostridge and Wolfgang Holzmair, Prégardien is a model of stillness. Occasionally he gesticulates with his hands; otherwise he prefers to act with his voice. Invaluable is the 26-minute interview in which Prégardien gives us his take on singing Schubert, and his own evolution of singing this cycle for the last thirty years. Taped live at the Stuttgart Mozartsaal, the audience is absolutely quiet and attentive, only showing its appreciation by applauding vociferously at the end. Long time collaborative pianist Michael Gees started a little heavy-handedly, but soon hit his stride. Prégardien gave us three wonderful encores – including a dramatic “Aufenthalt” and a mellifluous “Die Taubenpost”, all from Schwanengesang. The two artists each received a long stemmed red rose at the end – much deserved!**

**Wagner: The Mastersingers, Hitler's Siegfried: The life and times of Max Lorenz**

A documentary film by Eric Schulz and Claus Wischmann

With Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, baritone; Klaus Geitel, tenor; Walter Felsenstein, stage director; Michael Volkmann, dramaturge; Richard Decker, general director; Hilde Zadek, soprano


Various soloists; Vienna Symphony Orchestra (Fidelio); Chorus and Orchestra of the Komische Oper Berlin

Artistic Director: Walter Felsenstein

Arthaus Musik 301 345 (10 DVD – 911 min)

* What a difference a year can make. The deluxe version of this box was released early in 2008 at a suggested retail price in excess of $500. The bargain version reviewed here may be had for as little as $200. It offers essentially the same exquisite-ly restored contents as the original and is worth every penny. A cornucopia of supporting documentary material has been retained. Interviews with Felsenstein, production notes and film clips from other performances during the period 1945-1961 enrich the experience of a ‘festival in a box’.

* As LP Hartley noted, “The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.” Arthaus has served the cause of proto-historical opera on film admirably with vintage collections from the Glyndebourne Festival and Hamburg State Opera. The Walter Felsenstein Edition is doubly foreign because Felsenstein plied his trade from 1947 in the other Berlin: the Soviet zone of occupation. Communists exploited and manipulated the arts, and opera was no exception. Felsenstein toiled away for the
greater glory of socialism despite the wretched living conditions of East Germany, the bloody suppression of the workers’ revolt of 1953 and the subsequent erection of the Berlin Wall. Violent enforcement of confinement made the place a mockery of the last scene of Fidelio. Felsenstein’s opera house would have been infested with KGB and Stasi informers. That said, the productions on view here reflect a high standard of artistic integrity—at what personal cost to the director, we can only guess.

The Felsenstein Edition bookends the Hamburg State Opera collection (Arthaus 101261) to yield a theatrical ‘Tale of Two Cities’. From the perpetual post-war squallor of East Berlin to the industrial and creative powerhouse of Hamburg in the 1960s was quite a stretch. Felsenstein produced superb interpretations of established fare while Hamburg’s artistic leadership, under the artistic direction of Rolf Liebermann (until 1993), experimented with world premieres of Menotti and Penderecki and may even have produced the definitive Wozzeck on film. The two houses meet head-on with Figaro and it most be said that Hamburg in 1967 prevails, with better singers and a superior conductor (Hans Schmitt-Isserstedt). The Hamburg gaiety comes across as genuine while Felsenstein’s principals are less forthcoming (or perhaps over-rehearsed). It is nevertheless worth watching. The drama of Don Giovanni seems to be intensified by the director’s discomfort with the subject. At 85 minutes, Felsenstein’s treatment of Fidelio may be more like a film based on Beethoven’s opera, with plenty of thundering hooves for emphasis but it reveals the roots of his cinematic inspiration. Otello is the first production in colour made by Felsenstein, and it succeeds in no small part thanks to the alert conducting of Kurt Masur. The real gems of the set are the Janáček and the brace of Offenbach. Cunning Little Vixen receives an ultra-naturalistic approach. The spell-binding score is superbly executed by Václav Neumann in the pit. Tales of Hoffmann and Bluebeard show that the operetta troupe of the Komische Oper included some brilliant comic actors. Names such as Hanns Nocker, Werner Enders and Melitta Muszely may be unknown to us but they were unbeatable in their specialty.

Arthus’s lavish care on the set and all items were provided with PCM stereo soundtracks. Felsenstein followed the quaint custom of rendering French and Italian librettos into German for the stage. To give him credit, he personally prepared every translation.

The set provides an overview of the life’s work of a legendary stage director. It demonstrates that the past is worth revisiting and reminds us of how Felsenstein inspired the following generation of directors on both sides of the inner border.

WH

William Walton: At the Haunted End of the Day
Lady Susan Walton, Laurence Olivier, Sacheverell Sitwell, Yehudi Menuhin, Julian Bream, Iona Brown, Ralph Kirshbaum, Yvonne Kenny, John Shirley-Quirk, Carmen de Sauty; Philharmonia Orchestra/Simon Rattle; Grimethorpe Colliery Band/Elgar Howarth; Christ Church Cathedral Choir, Oxford/Simon Preston; Goldsmith Choral Union & Highgate Choral Society; Los Paraguayos
Directed by Tony Palmer
TP-DVD113 (99 min)

Tony Palmer has made more than one hundred films about prominent musicians including Britten, Stravinsky, Wagner, Callas and Menuhin. He is undoubtedly the leading director in this field, and his work on living musicians has enduring historic value. The Walton film was made in 1981, just two years before the celebrated British composer passed away. We see a somewhat unhappy man, his life’s work behind him, living out his final days with his wife Susana on the island of Ischia, just off Naples. We catch glimpses of Walton during his days of triumph but we are left with the impression that while proud of his achievements he rather suspects they do not amount to much in the great scheme of things.

Unfortunately, there are plenty of critics who agree with this rather harsh self-assessment, and find him clearly inferior to his contemporaries Britten and Tippett. Façade, the result of his famous collaboration with Edith Sitwell, seemed terribly avant-garde in 1922 but is apt to sound merely precious and contrived today. The orchestral music was once played by the likes of Karajan, Szell, Stokowski and Solti but has now almost disappeared from the international repertoire. And while Walton began his career as something of an anti-establishment figure he had polished enough apples to be chosen to write official marches for the coronation of both King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II. Walton’s music was appropriate to the circumstances while cut from the same cloth as Elgar’s similar works in the genre.

The film shows the young Simon Rattle conducting Belshazzar’s Feast with passion and captures the incomparable John Shirley-Quirk in his prime singing the baritone solos. We also have a memorable al fresco performance of the Five Bagatelles for solo guitar played by Julian Bream in the garden at Ischia in the presence of the composer.

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