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McGILL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA and McGILL SINFONIETTA
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GIIWEDIN
FIRST NATIONS OPERA

the music scene

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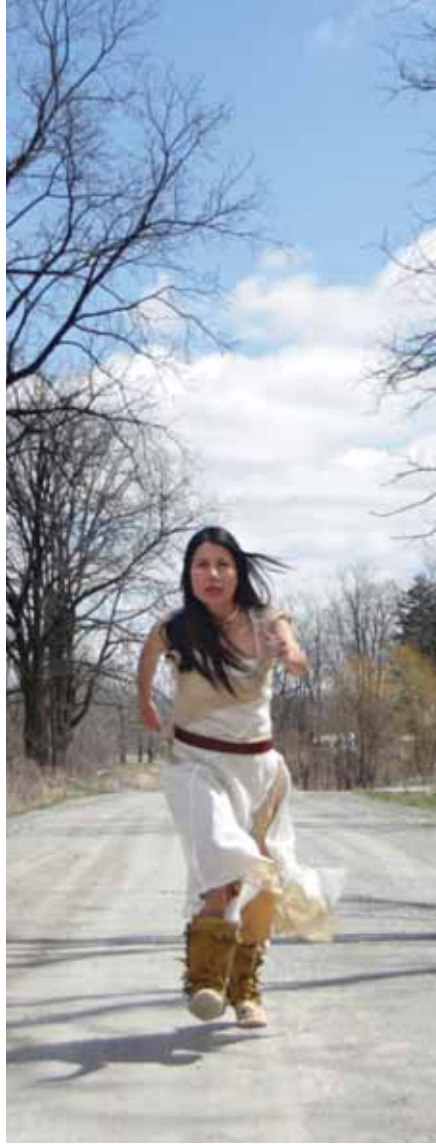
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GIIWEDIN

ABORIGINAL VOICES IN OPERA

Joseph K. So

Spring is opera time in Toronto—this year there are no fewer than six staged productions. As usual, the Canadian Opera Company and Opera Atelier will be front and centre, but for something different there is *Giiwedín*, a new opera presented by Native Earth Performing Arts and An Indie(n) Rights

Reserve. Written by Spy Dénommmé-Welch and co-composed by Welch and Catherine Magowan, it tells the story of a 150-year-old Aboriginal woman, Noodin-Kwe, fighting for her land. *Giiwedín* is unique in that it gives our First Nations people a voice in an art form that has historically been Eurocentric, from composers and performers to audience members. At first glance, it seems unusual that an Aboriginal artist like Dénommmé-Welch would have chosen this art form. But in fact the winds of change have been blowing for some years; witness the number of new creations by composers and librettists of diverse backgrounds who have chosen this genre for their storytelling.

Giiwedín is a labour of love for Dénommmé-Welch, who is Algonquin/Nishnawbe, and Catherine Magowan, a first-generation Canadian of Hungarian-Jewish descent. Dénommmé-Welch studied violin, film and theatre at university, and is currently pursuing a doctorate in indigenous music, opera and pedagogy. Magowan is a composer, arranger and bassoonist, having trained at the Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory. This is the first operatic venture for them and for Native Earth Performing Arts, an organization



SPY DENOMME-WELCH and Catherine Magowan

dedicated to the expression of the Native experience through theatre arts. When we sat down for our interview, Dénommmé-Welch looked improbably youthful, but it didn't take long to realize he's a mature and serious artist with a brilliant mind. Soft-spoken, articulate, friendly and intense, Dénommmé spoke with passion and purpose, allowing a glimpse into his creative world:

TMS: Tell us a bit about the story of *Giiwedín*?

SDW: *Giiwedín*, which means North Wind, is set in Temiskaming in 1890. It's about Noodin-Kwe, a woman living on the land she inherited from her ancestors. She has been living there since the 1700s—she witnessed the signing of the Royal Proclamation in 1763. She is 150 years old in 1890. Her age is symbolic in our traditional teaching of seven generations. In her case, she carries seven generations of knowledge, tradition and history. One day, a friend comes to tell her about an "Iron River" cutting through the forest. It's actually the railroad the French and the English are building from North Bay, bringing it as far as Moosonee. The plan is to use it as a viaduct to export resources—furs, logs, etc. It comes as a big warning to her. The opera is about her resistance.

Tell us about the genesis of the central character of Noodin-Kwe. Given that she is 150 years old, is her character entirely fictional? Is she based on native mythology?

SDW: Part of her character was inspired not so much by mythology as by our oral tradition of storytelling, stories used by elders to teach lessons to guide you in life. My grandmother told me about a river that's named after my great-great-grandfather, one of the last hereditary chiefs in the area before displacement occurred. I did a lot of research and discovered letters written by an ancestor to the government in July 1911. There was a verbal agreement that when the whites first came, \$15,000 was going to be paid as compensation. This part of it is historical. The detail is now ambiguous—I don't know if that's for all the land or some of it, or if it's like rent. There was no legal treaty. No legal document was ever signed or written. With the letter, this native woman is saying, "This is what the agreement was, but I just want the land back." We looked fully into this—there's no ground for the argument of this native woman, but it's a story that resonates across the country. What I find extremely empowering about her is that it predates women's rights. Women didn't vote at the time, and a lot of cultural practices were banned. For her to write this letter showed a lot of love for those who come later.

You've chosen the genre of opera to tell a story of the First Nations culture. Are you convinced that opera is a relevant medium to the Native experience? Why opera? Why not a play?

SDW: For me it is not a huge leap. Music has always been at the core of our native culture. Within my Nations, there are some who can sing as much as 6,000 years of their history. On that level, this opera spanning 300 years is kind of miniscule! For a time, I had taken a departure from music—I was trained in violin and self-taught in guitar. I went into theatre at university. A couple of years ago, when I learned to make my own drum, [music] started to call me back. Coming back to it has strengthened my story telling. I like the space to imagine that opera has opened up for me.

How do First Nations people feel about your creations? Are you writing *Giiwedín* for them as well as for non-natives?

SDW: Excited! People tell me it's what they've been looking forward to. It's very inspiring that they have such strong feelings about this. It feels relevant; it speaks to "now". When a work gets presented, you need to think who is the audience, who it is for. Sometimes a work can be widely received, but when you bring it to the community, they feel it is totally inaccurate. There's no justification for creative freedom, that you have the license to do it just because you are an artist. There's a responsibility in how you're telling the story. I seek permission from the elders. I don't just take the liberty; it has to be respectful.



MARION NEWMAN, Neema Bickersteth, Catharin Carew, and Jessica Lloyd in rehearsal

The score contains many different musical genres. How do you decide on which genres to use in a particular dramatic situation? Do you write accessibly?

SDW: Yes, we choose to write accessibly in a way that pleases us, and others. We've listened to everything—from Gilbert and Sullivan to Hildegard von Bingen to madrigals, early music, rock 'n' roll and jazz. Catherine and I study, listen, and read music purposefully to inform our decisions and choices, and applied different aesthetic techniques as a way to create various affects through music and sound. It's important not to make assumption as to who wrote what—just because I am Nishnawbe that I would be writing the traditional pieces. People might be surprised! Catherine has early music training, and it would be easy to think that she wrote all the baroque music and I stuck to the modern. It's a shared experience, and a spiritual experience, writing about something so close to your heart.

There is some snobbery in classical music circles about music that is very accessible, for example, music with hummable melodies. Since your score invokes many musical styles, are you worried that it might be considered derivative or lacking in originality?

SDW: No, I'm not. My biggest worry is that my work won't be memorable. So if people remember my music, people who relate to it even though they aren't familiar with the classical genre, then I've achieved something. I love this question—"is it derivative"—I'm still pondering it! I don't think what we've done will be perceived that way. I'm thinking of other composers writing accessible work—for me, it's exciting work. Historically there are all kinds of composers coming from different angles, critiquing each other. We're very open to hearing what others are saying about the work in progress. We're excited about what the response will be, as opposed to being apprehensive and fearful. ■

Giiwedín plays at Theatre Passe Muraille Mainspace
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MARION NEWMAN

FIRST NATIONS MEZZO

Joseph K. So

Spy Dénomme-Welch and Catherine Magowan have found in mezzo-soprano Marion Newman the ideal interpreter for Noodin-Kwe, the central character in *Giiwedín*. Not only does Newman possess a beautiful voice, she also happens to be Kwagwiltz and Salish from British Columbia. Newman has already sung leading roles, from Cherubino to Rosina to Carmen. With her First Nations heritage, she brings a unique perspective to Noodin-Kwe.

TMS: You are one of the very few native artists in opera. What draws you to this art form?

MN: Well, I've thought about this a lot. My aboriginal culture involves a pot-latch ceremony that's real theatre, with drumming, singing and acting. We use our voices to tell a story, which is what opera is! Music and storytelling are universal—it's not that far a stretch for me.

Is this the first native-themed classical work you've done?

MN: No, I did a *Magic Flute* in Vancouver with native West Coast themes that spoke so much of my home. There were moments when I was choked up seeing it on stage. It was very meaningful for me to see the opera presented this way.

What are your thoughts on Noodin-Kwe?

MN: This character makes me think of my paternal grandmother. She lived through a lot of changes, and had to learn new ways in order to fit in with the white culture that took over. She always kept her traditional beliefs. She would tell us stories about the incredibly hard things she went through, and yet still managed to laugh. Noodin-Kwe is going through the experiences of meeting the settlers, who are making new rules and forcing her people to live according to new laws. She is watching many of her people die of starvation and yet she manages to stay strong and keep fighting for her rights. We are still working through act one, but I'm feeling Noodin-Kwe's strength already. I am not trying to play her as a 150-year-old, but rather just as a compassionate, passionate, smart, perceptive, practical human being.

As a native artist, do you feel a certain responsibility in representing your people and your culture?

MN: Of course I do! I feel responsibility to First Nations people, to represent us well. I'm not Nishnawbe—I'm from the West Coast. I want to make sure I don't have gestures that don't fit, or mispronounce the words. I certainly feel the responsibility of telling a story that many of my relatives have been through, losing their homes, land and children. My father, for example, was taken to a residential school from five until 16, when he escaped. My responsibility is to carry on these stories, to let our cultures be seen in a light that invokes discussion among people.

EDITORIAL

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La Scena exists to inform, to help the reader understand, to invite the listener to experience something exceptional. *La Scena* brings the world of music to your door and fills your world with opportunity.

But globally, newspapers and magazines are cutting back on arts reporting. Comment and criticism are being replaced by advertising. Concert listings are practically non-existent and many artists just can't afford to buy advertising for their performances. Presenters are in the same bind, and halls are all too often only partly filled simply because they can't get the message out. We must be part of the solution, and *La Scena* offers a concert listings service for free.

La Scena operates on a shoestring budget, offering 680 pages in 10 issues each year. This translates into 350,000 words and 6,000 concert listings read by 500,000 people annually. Add to this our website that reaches more than 240,000 people each month and you begin to understand, as did Placements Culture, why *La Scena* is so important to the arts, and especially to you, our audience.

As I write this, I'm listening to Yannick Nézet-

Séguin conduct the Orchestre Métropolitain in Bruckner's 8th Symphony, which is nominated for a Juno. Before that, I had spent 10 minutes watching a video from our Today's Video Blog www.scena.org/blog/video of the great classical guitarist Julian Bream discussing his idol, Django Reinhardt! Did you know that Bream started studying the guitar because of Django?

Going through the latest issue of *La Scena Musicale* and *The Music Scene*, I discovered places where I can go with my family to learn a little more about music and become a better performer, even if it is only my friends and family who will hear me play! I saw that my nephew can dream of becoming a world-class conductor just like Winnipeg's Keri-Lynn Wilson or a star pianist like Yuja Wang.

La Scena, through its magazine and website, is also an important and unique tool for the education of students. Where should they study this summer? What is the latest news on the people who teach or compose for their instruments? How good are those latest CDs? What are Marc-André Hamelin, Valery Gergiev, Robert Lepage and Denys Arcand really like?

Thanks to Placements Culture and the Government of Quebec, we now have an opportunity to greatly improve the quality of our writing, our translations and the type of paper we use, thereby better serving our readers. We would also like to increase the print size to make reading the magazine easier for everyone. With our endowment fund we will be able to better serve the artistic and concert-going communities by increasing the number of issues and the number of copies printed. We will become more available to more people in more places than ever before. We will be able to keep our prices

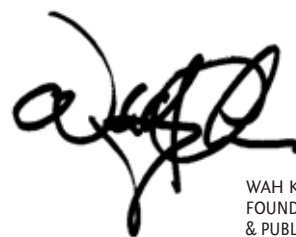
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WAH KEUNG CHAN
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YUJA WANG

» FEMALE CHINESE PIANIST ON THE RISE

L.H. Tiffany Hsieh

Perhaps what best describes Yuja Wang at the moment is the title of her soon-to-be-released second album: *Transformation*. On the cover, she is wearing a red, flowing, V-cut dress. Seated upright, with her hair down, she looks slightly demure, with a cast-down glance to the side. This womanly image departs from that of her debut album a year ago, which portrays a more playful look with a black halter-top, blue stockings and funky hair styling.

"I'm a woman—a girl," Wang laughed from her New York apartment, audibly packing suitcases for her concerts in Germany.

The 23-year-old Beijing-born piano virtuoso with a Canadian connection is a maturing young woman on her way to becoming something of a musical marvel. She is a bit of a tomboy, totally fresh and fearless. At least that's how Wang's recording label, Deutsche Grammophon, has packaged her since signing her on last January, joining the ranks of Lang Lang and Yundi (formerly known as Yundi Li). "It's nice to be in the same class with them since we are all Chinese, but I'm five years younger and I'm a woman—girl—so it's very, very different," said Wang.

Wang is just beginning to get a taste of the stardom her fellow Chinese pianists have enjoyed under DG handling, which recently resulted in the notorious yellow label dismissing Yundi, who got picked up by EMI, and Lang Lang ditching DG for Sony Classical for \$3 million.

Although her playing is not as poetic as Yundi's and is generally less persuasive than that of Lang Lang's, Wang succeeds tremendously in her refined sound and phrasing. Whether it's live concerts or a video clip on YouTube, whether it's solo piano, concerto or chamber music, she exudes a rare spark that speaks of boundless potential. That is what makes her such a jewel.

Born an only child to a dancer mother and a percussionist father, Wang began playing the piano at the age of six. Looking back, she said her unique childhood home environment played an important role in shaping who she has become today.

"It really helped me with my own artistry in an unconscious way," she said. "My parents have a great outlook and they are not pushy. They never said to me that I had to become a concert pianist when I grew up and they don't tell me what to do—not anymore. I think that's why I have no aversion to the piano."

Like Lang Lang, Wang began her formal musical training at Beijing's Central Conservatory of Music with Ling Yuan and Zhou Guangren. As a teenager, she honed her skills at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia with Gary Graffman, who also taught Lang Lang. However,



WANG RELEASES *TRANSFORMATION*, HER SOPHOMORE ALBUM, THIS APRIL.

the two pianists never crossed paths. "I'd see him all the time at concerts or at our teacher's office, but I never spoke to him," she said of him.

Similarly, when she and Yundi won in their respective class at the same piano competition in China, no words were exchanged. At the time, she was seven and he 11 years old.

By the time she was 11, Wang successfully auditioned for the month-long Morningside Music Bridge summer program at Calgary's Mount Royal College. She participated in this artistic and cultural exchange program between Canada and China for three years before taking up full-time residency in Calgary, where she learned English and studied with Hung Kuan Chen and Tema Blackstone at the Mount Royal College Conservatory.

"I guess I spent most of my teenage years alone, but I wanted to get away from home at that age anyway, so it was perfect," Wang said, giggling.

In the foreign land that was Calgary, she moved in with a local family. "They will always be my guardian family," she said. "Canada is like my second home. I go there on my vacations. Canadians are so nice."

Things progressed in presto for Wang after her transition to the Great White North. The following year, still just a scrawny 15-year-old, she won the Aspen Music Festival's concerto competition. Later that year, she packed her bags again and

Martin in the Fields.

The year 2009 turned out to be a benchmark for Wang's career. First, she signed an exclusive recording contract with DG for five albums, with support from one of her idols and Facebook friends, Italian conductor Claudio Abbado, who chose her to open his Lucerne Festival last summer in Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 3*. The concert was broadcast and telecast live in a Swiss program.

"I'm really lucky that I was chosen...there are always lots of young talented pianists in China," Wang said. "People like Charles Dutoit and Claudio Abbado have made a difference in my life."

Of course, there was also the worldwide buzz of being asked by Michael Tilson Thomas to perform at his YouTube Symphony Orchestra event at Carnegie Hall. The much-hyped concert coincided with her DG-released debut recording, *Sonata & Etudes*, which consists of the second piano sonatas of Chopin and Scriabin, the B-minor sonata by Liszt, and etudes by Ligeti—a repertoire Wang chose over encore pieces as a way to make a statement.

And she did just that. *Sonata & Etudes* showcases her flawless technique and her ability to program and pull off pieces that might seem to be beyond her maturity. The album went on to garner a Grammy nomination for best instrumental soloist performance, and Wang's status as one of the brightest classical music stars to have

headed south of the border to work with Graffman at Curtis.

"When I came to North America to study music, I had to make sure I knew what I was doing," Wang said, recalling the learning curve. "In China, I put all my trust in my teacher."

Wasting no time in trusting herself, she made her European debut in 2003, playing Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 4* with David Zinman and the Tonhalle Orchester Zürich in Switzerland.

In 2005, replacing a sick Radu Lupu at a day's notice, she made her North American debut with Ottawa's National Arts Centre Orchestra, performing the same Beethoven concerto under the baton of Pinchas Zukerman. Critic Jean-Jacques van Vlasselaer in *Le Droit* proclaimed, "a star is born", propelling Wang into the spotlight. She went on to sub for Martha Argerich in 2007 with Charles Dutoit and the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No. 1*, and for Murray Perahia in 2008 with the touring Academy of St.

PHOTOS: FELIX BROEDE COURTESY OF DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON



emerged from China was secured.

Last November, she toured with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, stopping by Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall. On May 1, she will return solo to Koerner Hall for her first Toronto recital, playing Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes*, Schubert's *Three Lieder* (Liszt transcription), a selection of Scriabin's poems and etudes, and Prokofiev's *Sonata No. 6*.

Unlike her contemporaries, Wang is active in social media. She describes herself on Facebook as "an egocentric, shameless prima donna" who has "the possibility of turning into a geisha" and openly states she is in a relationship with Matt Muckey, associate principal trumpeter with the New York Philharmonic. (Yundi's Facebook status is single and Lang Lang's is unlisted.) On Twitter, instead of promoting her itineraries the way many concertizing artists do, Wang tweets a lot about food. What's with the gourmet fascination? "My mother is a great cook. I don't cook, but I love food. I would say it's my second passion," Wang said.

Wang's second CD, *Transformation*, is due out in April. The recording, a kind of a sequel to *Sonata & Etudes*, takes listeners on an excursion with Brahms' *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, Ravel's *La Valse*, Scarlatti's sonatas, and Stravinsky's *Petrouchka*.

"It's a concept very similar to my first CD, which is a solo album as well. It's very technically demanding, but I've been playing these pieces in concerts this season and I feel very comfortable with them. They are definitely in my fingers," Wang said.

Also very much in her fingers are Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto and his *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*, both of which she will record over two live concerts in Ferrara, Italy, with Abbado conducting the Mahler Chamber Orchestra on April 11 and 13.

"That's how Claudio loves it. He doesn't like to record things when it's not live," Wang said. "I have worked with him several times before, but not this piano concerto. I guess we'll see what happens."

Asked if she's feeling a bit nervous about it, "It's a good thing when I get nervous. I feel like something good is going to happen," she said.

"Because I play so many concerts these days (about 100 a year), I want to feel that I'm ready and it's fresh every time. Sometimes I'll tell myself that this is the last time I'm going to play this piece, or that it's the first time I'm playing it, because no matter how many times I've played it, it's the first time for the audience." ■

Yuja Wang in Concert:

»April 6. Montreal, Salle Wilfrid Pelletier with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ludovic Morlot

»May 1. Toronto, Koerner Recital Hall

»May 13. Vancouver, Orpheum Theatre

NOTES



Crystal Chan

LUMINATO FESTIVAL CELEBRATES FOURTH YEAR

The fourth edition of the Luminato Festival will take place June 11 to 20. The annual event celebrates "arts and creativity" with performances and events from the fields of theatre, music, visual art, literature, dance, food, cinema and much more. A majority of the events are free or low-cost. Last year's festival drew 1.5 million people.

The big event of this year's festival is the North American premiere of *Prima Donna*, an opera composed by Rufus Wainwright which tells the story of an aging soprano trying to rejuvenate her career in the 1970s. To coincide with the premiere, Wainwright will be in town for a concert to promote his upcoming album, *All Days are Nights: Songs for Lulu*. www.luminato.com

COMPOSER MARY GARDINER PASSES AWAY AT AGE 77

Composer and educator Mary Gardiner passed away at age 77 on February 1. Recently, Gardiner was awarded the inaugural Calgary Art Song Prize, and on October 23, 2009, a sold-out tribute concert of her works took place in Toronto. As a "builder of bridges between composers and teachers and students," she was awarded the 2003 Friends of Canadian Music Award—a national honour that has been bestowed on only a small handful of musicians.

A champion of new Canadian music, Gardiner worked at the Canadian Music Centre and the Alliance for Canadian New Music Projects. She founded and chaired for many years the Association of Canadian Women Composers and also held an extended tenure as President of the Alliance for Canadian New Music Projects. During that time she helped establish a number of Contemporary Showcase centres that, to this day, promote the performance and enjoyment of Canadian music by young musicians.

LA SCENA MUSICALE LAUNCHES DAILY INTERNET MUSIC VIDEO PICK BLOG

Music lovers can now head to www.scena.org/blog/video for videos guaran-



teed to inspire, entertain and educate. The **Today's Video** blog (started on January 1, 2010) handpicks from the vast number of videos posted on the Internet by *La Scena Musicale/The*

Music Scene / La SCENA(LSM)'s team of seasoned music journalists and professionals. Videos will loosely be featured in the following themes: Singers, opera, and vocal; Orchestra; Chamber music and solo instrumental; New music; Music and talk; Readers' suggestions; and Funny videos.

Each post will include an accompanying review or commentary. Visitors can then join the discussion themselves. Visitors are invited to submit their favourite video by emailing it to todayvideo@lascena.org. One of these videos will be chosen for publication each week.

The **Today's Video** site is *LSM*'s fourth blog. Its partner blog, www.scena.org/blog, was recently honoured as one of the "Top 100 Sites for Literati" in November 2009.

STACCATO NOTES

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S PERFORMING ARTS AWARDS

Lifetime Achievement Award Winners:

» Bryan Adams, Françoise Faucher, Walter Homburger, Edouard Lock, Robin Phillips, Buffy Sainte-Marie

Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts Winners:

» Mohammed and Yulanda Faris
National Arts Centre Award Winner:
» Yannick Nézet-Séguin

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NEW DEAN

» The University of Toronto has named Don McLean as Dean of their Faculty of Music, to start January 1, 2011

WALTER HOMBURGER

MANAGER EXTRAORDINAIRE

Emilio Comay del Junco

For someone who can't play—or even read—music, Walter Homburger has certainly made a profound mark on it. His achievements were recently recognized with a Governor General's Award for Lifetime Achievement for his 50-plus-year career managing the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO) and musicians such as pianist Glenn Gould and violinist James Ehnes.

Born in 1924 in Karlsruhe, Germany, Walter Homburger was exposed early to music. "My father used to play recordings of Enrico Caruso," Homburger reminisced. Homburger left Germany before the outbreak of the Second World War, arriving in Toronto in 1940, after a brief stop in England. "There wasn't that much music going on," Homburger recalls. "There was the TSO with a 24- or 26-week season, a Women's Music Club which gave about five concerts, and that was that."

Despite his lack of formal musical education, Homburger dove into reviving Toronto's (and Canada's) classical music landscape. After spending a few years adjusting to his new home and listening to a great deal of music, he founded the International Artists' Concert series in 1947.

Then unknown in the classical music business, Homburger nonchalantly described his process of selecting artists, "I used to listen to a lot of recordings and go to record stores and ask them who was selling these days and occasionally I brought the artist."

His first concert was a performance of lieder by the celebrated German soprano Lotte Lehmann who came up from New York. Homburger remembers audience members leaving the recital because of their unfamiliarity with the material, a testament to Toronto's isolation from the rest of the classical music world. Although internationally renowned (Lehmann had appeared on the cover of *Time* Magazine in 1935), few Torontonians had heard of her. "It's always problematic to bring someone unknown, since the audience doesn't have reasons yet to go hear them," Homburger said.

In 1947, Homburger discovered Gould at a Kiwanis Competition in Toronto. "I used to go to the Kiwanis Music Festival and one day I heard this 13-year-old pianist come out. I was very impressed and I told his parents and I wanted to manage him," he said. Despite early uncertainty, Homburger soon found success. By the 1950s, the 17-year-old Gould was performing on live radio for the CBC, and Homburger's concert series was featuring musicians like Vladimir Horowitz and Isaac Stern, as well as branching out to include non-classical players, such as Louis Armstrong.

In 1957, when the Cold War was at its height



PHOTO: TONY HAUSER

and relations between the USSR and the West were at their lowest point, Homburger arranged something out of the ordinary. Gould, then still a young up-and-coming Canadian pianist, went to Russia in May. "We started in Leningrad. The first concert was half-full, but by the time it was finished it was jammed," he recalled. "The intermission was long; people went and phoned their friends and told them to come!"

The two decades following the war was a time of transformation for classical music in Canada. According to Homburger, the changes were in large part due "to the influx of immigrants in the 30s and 40s from places where classical music was written with a capital K." He explained that before they could form a viable audience for classical music, "they had to establish themselves economically. ... They now had enough money to travel back to Europe."

Coupled with increased radio coverage and government support, classical music was poised to expand exponentially. "The COC [Canadian Opera Company] and the National Ballet were both founded at that time, and the three levels of government were very supportive of the arts," Homburger explained.

Appointed as managing director of the TSO in 1962, Homburger arrived at an organization with "a 28-week season, no pension plan and a 4,000-person subscription base," and left 25 years later

in 1992 "with full employment, a 50-odd week season and 36,000 subscribers."

Homburger's success is in many ways a testament not only to the effectiveness of hard work but also to instinctive judgment and good luck. Speaking about how he discovered new talent, he simply stated, "I guess it's inborn, you either like something or you don't." This sense of intuition is highlighted by the fact that he is not musical himself.

Now 86 years old and finally retired for good—after emerging from retirement in 1993 to manage James Ehnes—Homburger spoke about his recent recognition through the Governor General's Award for Lifetime Achievement: "I'm very honoured; I don't know if I deserve it, but it's wonderful."

He was also quick to talk about the future of classical music, stressing the role of education in guaranteeing its viability. "None of the schools teach music anymore... you have to have outreach programs for the younger generations, make sure they get the type of music that is not too difficult for them to understand," he said, underlining the importance of flexibility. "In the old days it used to be classical, but right now it could be modern music." ■

Homburger will be awarded at the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Gala on May 1, 2010 at Southam Hall of the National Arts Centre, Ottawa at 8 p.m. Tickets are available at www.nac.cna.ca

SOUTHERN ONTARIO VOCAL PREVIEW

Joseph K. So

Spring in Southern Ontario brings not just longer days and warmer temperatures, but a delectable array of operatic offerings, with no less than six staged productions. The Canadian Opera Company's spring season opens with a revival of its controversial *The Flying Dutchman* in 8 performances, without intermission, from Apr. 24 to May 20. Russian Evgeny Nikitin sings the title role and Mats A Imgren, last seen as Hagen in the Ring Cycle, returns as Daland. Julie Makerov, last seen in *From the House of the Dead*, sings Erik. Johannes Debus leads his first opera since appointed COC's music director. Next up is the first-ever staged production of Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* in Toronto, with Italian soprano Serena Farnocchia, last seen as a gleaming-voiced Luisa Miller in the title role. The exciting Bulgarian Alexandra Pendatchanska makes her COC



TORONTO MENDELSSOHN CHOIR

debut as Elisabetta, and American tenor Eric Cutler sings Roberto. Antony Walker conducts. The production comes from Dallas Opera (8 performances from May 1 to 30). *Idomeneo* closes the COC spring season with 8 performances from May 9 to 29. Mozart tenor Paul Groves makes his company debut in the title role. Others in the cast include mezzo Krisztina Szabo as Idamante, soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian as Ilia, soprano Tamara Wilson as Elettra, and tenor Michael Colvin as Arbace. A departure from previous years is the new initiative of a special performance on May 19 showcasing members of the COC Ensemble Studio. Colvin, a former Ensemble member who has recently been singing in the UK, takes on the title role in this performance. www.coc.ca. Opera Atelier presents a new English language production of *The Marriage of Figaro*, with a largely Canadian cast. Baritone Olivier Laquerre sings his first Figaro, with baritone Phillip Addis reprising his Count. COC Ensemble member mezzo Wallis Giunta sings Cherubino,



MALTESE TENOR
JOSEPH CALLEJA

Two of the four concerts of the Roy Thomson Hall Vocal Series fall in the spring months, with Canadian soprano Alexandra Deshorties (Apr. 25) making her local debut. A very young Maltese tenor **Joseph Calleja** sang Rodolfo for the COC *La Bohème* ten years ago. He went on to become a huge star on the opera stage. Some of you might have seen his Hoffmann last fall at the Met in HD series. He returns to Toronto for the first time in recital on May 28, a show that was originally scheduled for last November. It is not to be missed. www.roythomson.com.



CANADIAN BARITONE GERALD FINDLEY

and soprano Carla Huhtanen is Susanna. American soprano Peggy Kriha Dye, last fall's Iphigenie, returns as the Countess. David Fallis conducts. There will be the usual six performances in eight days at the Elgin Theatre (Apr. 24 to May 1). www.operaatelier.com. Fifty minutes down the QEW, Opera Hamilton presents the perennial Puccini favourite *La Bohème*, with a youthful all-Canadian cast of Miriam Khalil (Mimi), Roger Honeywell (Rodolfo), Virginia Hatfield (Musetta) and Peter Barrett (Marcello). Conductor Cal Steward Kellogg leads the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra and the Opera Hamilton Chorus in two performances at the Great Hall in Hamilton Place (April 22 and 24). www.operahamilton.ca. Finally, our cover story features Giiwedini produced by the Native Earth Performing Centre.

In addition to the above six, the Glenn Gould



CANADIAN SOPRANO
MIRIAM KHALIL

School of the Royal Conservatory of Music presents four performances of Massenet's comic opera *Cendrillon* at Koerner Hall (Mar. 20, 21, 23, 25). All principal roles are double-cast with young voices from the GGS. Uri Mayer conducts. www.rcmusic.ca

Finally, Opera in Concert presents a single performance of Bellini's *I Puritani* on March 28 at 2:30 pm at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts.

Soloists are Edgar Ernesto Ramirez, Justin Welsh, Bruce Kelly, and Kristin Mueller-Heaslip. Yes, it is with piano accompaniment, but given that this opera is unlikely to be staged in Toronto in the near future, this is your chance to hear it. www.operainconcert.com

Canadian baritone **Gerald Finley** makes a highly anticipated return to Toronto, in a "Mother's Day Matinee" at Koerner Hall, Royal Conservatory of Music, on Sunday May 9, 3:00 pm. One of the greatest recitalists you're ever going to hear, Finley sings Schumann's *Heine Songs*, Grieg's *5 Songs* from op. 48, and Ravel's *Histoires Naturelles*. His long-time concert partner Julius Drake is at the piano. www.rcmusic.ca.

On April 28 at 7:30 pm at Koerner Hall, the **Toronto Mendelssohn Choir** presents *A Night at the Opera*, with soprano Joni Henson, mezzo Lauren Segal and baritone Doug MacNaughton, under the baton of Noel Edison. Rick Phillips is host. No tenor has been announced at press time, although Richard Margison will appear as the guest! www.tmchoir.org. On Sunday May 2, Aldeburgh Connection presents an unusual program called *City of Villages*. Billed as a "village walkabout in song", it features music reflecting the diversity of the various communities that make up Toronto. The program includes past commissions by Aldeburgh Connection. Soloists are soprano Lucia Cesaroni, mezzo Allyson McHardy, tenor Lawrence Willford, and baritone Benjamin Covey. As usual, they serve tea at intermission! www.aldeburghconnection.org.

PREVIEWS





ISRAELI PIANIST YEFIM
BRONFMAN



CANADIAN PIANIST
LOUIS LORTIE



ESPRIT ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR
ALEX PAUK

■ INSTRUMENTAL CONCERT PREVIEW

FROM HADELICH TO LANG, A MUSICAL SMORGASBORD

L.H. Tiffany Hsieh

One of the brightest rising stars in classical music is coming to Port Hope's Cameco Capitol Arts Centre (March 28) for an intimate recital.

Augustin Hadelich, the 25-year-old Italian-born German violinist, is the winner of the 2009 Avery Fisher Grant. His recent success—Carnegie Hall and Hollywood Bowl debuts to just name a couple—is all the more remarkable since he was forced to stop playing the violin in 1999, when a fire on his family's farm severely burned his bow arm, face, and upper body. He picked up the bow again in 2001.

Hadelich will bring the 1683 ex-Gingold Stradivarius on loan to him as the gold medalist of the 2006 International Violin Competition of Indianapolis. He will team up with Canadian pianist Ian Parker, cousin of pianists Jon Kimura and Jamie Parker, in a program that includes works by Stravinsky, Beethoven, and Schumann. www.porthopefriendsofmusic.ca

Led by conductor Alex Pauk, the Toronto-based Esprit Orchestra is never short of programming ideas. In an all-Canadian concert at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts' Jane Mallett Theatre (March 31), violinist Erika Raum will give the world premiere of her husband Omar Daniel's *Violin Concerto*, a piece composed specially for her using ancient Estonian Runo-songs as source material.

Other highlights from this concert will include R. Murray Schafer's *Flute Concerto* (with Robert Aitken as soloist), José Evangelista's *Concerto con brio* for string quartet and string orchestra, and Denis Gougeon's *À l'aventure!* www.espritorchestra.com

The Royal Conservatory of Music's new Koerner Hall has so far proven itself a valuable addition for Toronto, especially when it comes to recitals. Perhaps for sentimental reasons, the Russian-Israeli pianist Yefim Bronfman (April 1) will grace the hall in a program that includes Beethoven's 32 *Variations*, Schumann's *Faschingschwank aus Wien*, Prokofiev's *Sonata No. 2*, and Tchaikovsky's *Grand Sonata in G, Op. 37*.

Bronfman made his international debut in 1975 with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Zubin Mehta, father of Mervon Mehta, executive director of RCM Performing Arts.

The Berlin-based Canadian pianist Louis Lortie (April 11) will also drop by Koerner Hall to celebrate Chopin's 200-year birthday anniversary. In an all-Chopin program, Lortie will perform several *Nocturnes*, all four *Ballades*, the *Berceuse Op. 57 in D-flat major*, and the *Barcarolle Op. 60 in F-sharp major*. www.rcmmusic.ca

As part of the University of Toronto Faculty of Music's chamber music series, the Juno-winning Gryphon Trio, which makes its Wigmore Hall debut on March 28, returns to Walter Hall (April 5). Violinist Annalee Patipatanakoon, cellist Roman Borys, and pianist Jamie Parker will tackle Chopin's *Piano Trio* and Brahms' *Piano Quartet in A major, Op. 26* (with violist Steven Dann). www.music.utoronto.ca

The Chinese piano phenom Lang Lang, who turns 28 in June, is no stranger to audiences around the

world. However, the band he's presently on tour with is making its North American debut.

The Schleswig-Holstein Festival Orchestra, founded by Leonard Bernstein, consists of some of the world's finest young musicians under the age of 27, each handpicked through a rigorous auditioning process. Led by conductor-pianist Christoph Eschenbach, who gave Lang his now-legendary debut at the Ravinia Festival in 1999, the whole gang will be at Roy Thomson Hall (April 6) for a one-night-only concert featuring Lang Lang in Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 17 in G Major, K. 453*. Also programmed are Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 1* and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*. www.tso.ca

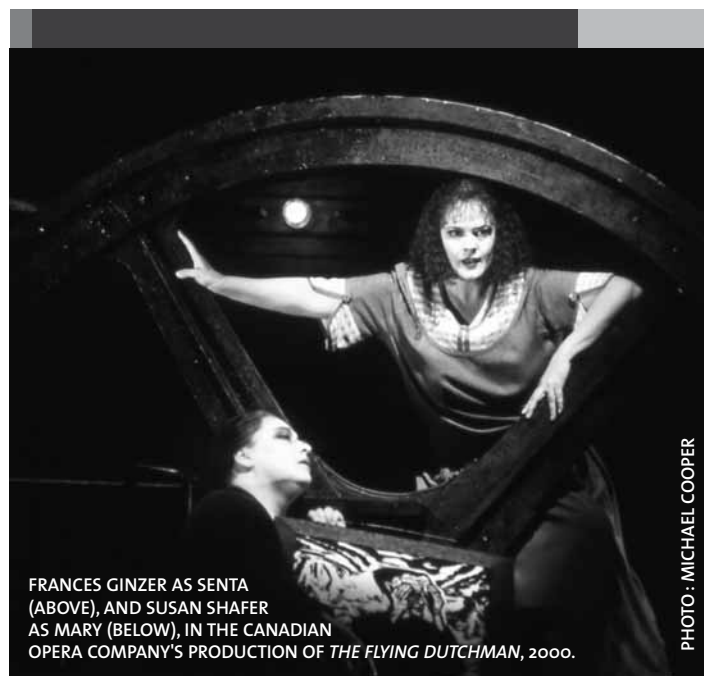
Tafelmusik has been a force of nature in Canada when it comes to anything and everything Baroque. To celebrate the 40th anniversary of Earth Day worldwide, music director Jeanne Lamon will lead and present a program, aptly titled *Forces of Nature*, at their home base of Toronto's Trinity-St. Paul's Centre (April 7-11). The concert will be backlit with photographic visuals and the program includes excerpts from Rameau, Vivaldi, Geminiani, Haydn, Telemann, and Buonamente. www.tafelmusik.org

The versatile Amici Chamber Ensemble—clarinetist Joaquín Valdepeñas, cellist David Hetherington, and pianist Serouj Kradjian—invites Canadian baritone Russell Braun on stage for its last concert of the season at the Glenn Gould Studio (May 2). The program will feature songs of Jewish-Czech composer Viktor Ullmann, Ukrainian composer Kyrylo Stetsenko, and Armenian composer Father Gomidas, as well as chamber works by Gideon Klein and Erwin Schulhoff. All composers featured in this concert were victims of genocide. www.glenn Gouldstudio.cbc.ca

■ 2010 INTERNATIONAL OPERA FESTIVAL PREVIEW

Joseph K. So

Canadian opera companies usually take a summer hiatus, so seriously addicted opera fans often travel abroad for their fix. For them, opera-heaven would be to festival-hop from April to October, starting with the Salzburger Osterfestspiele (April), moving on to Prague Spring Festival's Festival in St. Petersburg, or to the Holland Festival for their contemporary music and dance offerings. Things *really* heat up in July and August, with multiple venues large and small vying for your entertainment dollars—Munich, Glyndebourne, Bregenz, Salzburg, Santa Fe, Glimmerglass, Bayreuth, Savonlinna, Verona, Torre del Lago, Orange, Macerata and Pesaro, just to name a few. By September, if you're not yet totally exhausted, catch the last weeks of the Proms in London. For a late-season fix of rare operas, there's always Wexford in Ireland (Oct.). My own choices for 2010



FRANCES GINZER AS SENTA (ABOVE), AND SUSAN SHAFER AS MARY (BELOW), IN THE CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY'S PRODUCTION OF *THE FLYING DUTCHMAN*, 2000.

PHOTO: MICHAEL COOPER

include Munich and Santa Fe, but maybe also Savonlinna, Salzburg, and Glimmerglass. With the new strength of the Canadian dollar against other currencies, opera hopping just got a lot easier. This brief preview, reflecting my personal tastes, is not meant to be exhaustive.

Among European festivals, my favourite is the Munich Opera Festival in July. Among the highlights: the great Finnish soprano Soile Isokoski sings Mme. Lidoine in *Les Dialogues des Carmélites*, and the wonderful Rolando Villazon, in his comeback year, is scheduled for two performances of *L'elisir d'amore*. Jonas Kaufmann and Karita Mattila sing in *Tosca* in the Luc Bondy production already seen at the Met. Robert Dean Smith takes over *Lohengrin* from Kaufmann. Ramon Vargas is Don Carlos, and Mariusz Kwiecien is Don Giovanni. The revival of *Tannhäuser* with the husband-wife team of Peter Seiffert and Petra Maria Schnitzer will be conducted by Kent Nagano. There is also a new production of Strauss's rarity, *Die schweigsame Frau* with Diana Damrau. www.bayerische.staatsoper.de

Equalling in musical excellence and richness is the Salzburg Festival. Seven operas are on offer this year, with a revival of *Roméo et Juliette*, with Anna Netrebko but sadly no Rolando Villazon – Romeo will be sung by Polish tenor Piotr Beczala and American Stephen Costello. Amazingly, the evergreen soprano Edita Gruberova, now in her 60s, is singing *Norma* with Joyce DiDonato as Adalgisa. There are new productions of *Orfeo*, *Lulu* – with Patricia Petibon, and *Elektra*, with Waltraud Meier singing her first Klytemnestra. www.salzburgfestival.at

Wagnerites make the annual pilgrimage to Bayreuth Festival (July 25-Aug. 28), which this year presents performances of *Lohengrin*, *Parsifal*,

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg, plus the *Ring Cycle*. A highlight is sure to be German tenor sensation Jonas Kaufmann's Lohengrin, although with Hans Neuengels as Regie, be ready for some outrageous mise-en-scene. Well-known singers this year include Jonas Kaufmann, Johan Botha, Annette Dasch, Evelyn Herlitzius, Lucio Gallo, Christopher Ventris, Klaus Florian Vogt, and Canadian Lance Ryan as Siegfried. Tickets to the Festival remains the hardest and the most prized of all—routinely, applicants wait an average of seven seasons, unless they are members of a Wagner Society! www.bayreuther-festspiele.de

Another interesting opera festival, near the Arctic Circle, 320 km north of Helsinki, is Savonlinna Opera Festival (July 2-31). Opera performances take place in the dramatic Olavinlinna Castle. On the program are *Carmen*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Elektra*, and *Lucia di Lammermoor*, this last opera starring Cuban soprano Eglise Gutierrez, who sang it in Montreal last year. The conductor is Italian Paolo Olmi who just conducted *Otello* at the COC. www.operafestival.fi

If you love the English countryside, be sure to go to the Glyndebourne Festival. The festival will be presenting *Billy Budd*, *Così fan tutte*, *Macbeth*, *Don Giovanni*, *Hansel und Gretel*, and *The Rake's Progress*. Several Canadians will sing there this year, including the fabulous Gerald Finley as Don Giovanni. Bass Phillip Ens sings in *Billy Budd* and Robert Gleadow in *Così fan tutte*. www.glyndebourne.com

On this side of the pond, I can recommend Glimmerglass Opera (www.glimmerglass.org), Tanglewood (www.tanglewood.org), Ravinia Festival, Spoleto USA (www.spoletousa.org), and Santa Fe Opera (www.santafeopera.org). My favourite is Santa Fe Opera Festival (June 27-Aug. 23). The magnificent outdoor theatre with its superb acoustics and the spectacular New Mexican desert landscape beckon visitors from the world over. The five operas this summer are *Madama Butterfly*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, *Albert Herring*, and the world premiere of *Life is a Dream*. Among the Canadians in the Festival are soprano Erin Wall singing the three heroines in Hoffmann, baritone James Westman as Sharpless, baritone Joshua Hopkins repeating his Papageno, and Roger Honeywell as the tenor lead in *Life is a Dream*.


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619-239-0100 • www.mainlymozart.org

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San Diego, CA, from August 6 to 27
858-459-3728 • www.ljms.org

ASPEN MUSIC FESTIVAL AND SCHOOL

Aspen, CO, from July 1 to August 22
970-925-9042 • www.aspenmusicfestival.com

BRAVO VAIL VALLEY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Vail, CO, from June 25 to August 3
877-812-5700 • www.vailmusicfestival.org

CENTRAL CITY OPERA

Denver, CO, from June 26 to August 8
303-292-6500 • www.centralcityopera.org

COLORADO MUSIC FESTIVAL

Boulder, CO, from June 26 to August 6
303-449-1397 • www.coloradomusicfest.org

CRESTED BUTTE MUSIC FESTIVAL

Crested Butte, CO, from July 3 to August 5
970-349-0619
www.crestedbuttemusicfestival.com

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Norfolk, CT, from July 9 to August 21
860-542-3000 • www.yale.edu/norfolk

SARASOTA MUSIC FESTIVAL

Sarasota, FL, from May 31 to June 19
866-508-0611 • www.sarasotaorchestra.org

MUSIC BY THE LAKE

Williams Bay, IL, from June 26 to August 1
262-245-8501 • www.aurora.edu/mbtl

RAVINIA FESTIVAL

Ravinia, IL, from June 20 to August 15
847-266-5100 • www.ravinia.org

ASTON MAGNA FESTIVAL

Great Barrington, MA, from June 17 to July 17
413-528-3595, 800-875-7156
www.astonmagna.org

BANG ON A CAN SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVAL

North Adams, MA, from July 12 to August 1
718-852-7755 • www.bangonacan.org

BERKSHIRE CHORAL FESTIVAL

Sheffield, MA, from July 17 to August 7
413-229-8526 • www.chorus.org

CAPE COD CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

North Chatham, MA, from August 2 to 20
508-247-9400 • capecodchambermusic.org

MOHAWK TRAIL CONCERTS' SUMMER FESTIVAL

Charlemont, MA, from July 2 to 31
413-625-9511 • www.mohawktrailconcerts.org

ROCKPORT CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Rockport, MA, from June 10 to July 18
978-546-7391 • www.rcmf.org

TANGLEWOOD FESTIVAL

Boston, MA, from June 26 to August 29
617-266-1492 • www.bso.org

CHESAPEAKE CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Eastern, MD, from May 30 to June 20
410-819-0380
www.chesapeakechambermusic.com/festival

BOWDOIN INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Brunswick, ME, from June 26 to August 7
207-373-1400 • www.summermusic.org

INTERNATIONAL MUSICAL ARTS INSTITUTE/FESTIVAL

Fryeburg, ME, from July 8 to 31
617-965-4745
www.home.earthlink.net/~imaifryeburg

KNEISEL HALL CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Blue Hill, ME, from June 25 to August 29
207-374-2811 • www.kneisel.org

PORTLAND CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Portland, ME, from August 12 to 21
800-320-0257 • www.pcmf.org

PORTOPERA

Portland, ME, from July 29 to 31
207-879-7678 • www.portopera.org

SALT BAY CHAMBERFEST

Damariscotta, ME, from August 10 to 20
207-522-3749 • www.saltbaychamberfest.org

GILMORE KEYBOARD FESTIVAL

Kalamazoo, MI, from April 17 to May 8
269-342-1166 • www.thegilmoreiscoming.com

SUMMERFEST CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Kansas City, MO, from July 10 to August 1
816-510-0978 • www.summerfestkc.org

BREVARD MUSIC CENTER SUMMER INSTITUTE & FESTIVAL

Brevard, NC, from June 25 to August 8
828-862-2100 • www.brevardmusic.org

HIGHLANDS-CASHIERS CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Highlands, NC, from July 9 to August 15
828-526-9060 • www.h-cmusicfestival.org

MEADOWLARK MUSIC FESTIVAL

Lincoln, NE, from June 13 to 19, 402-477-2522
www.meadowlarkmusicfestival.com

WATERTOWN VALLEY MUSIC CENTER SUMMER CAMP CONCERTS

Waterville Valley, NH, from July 25 to August 7
603-236-8688 • www.wvmusiccenter.org

CAPE MAY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Cape May, NJ, from May 20 to June 10
609-884-5404 • www.capemaymac.org

MUSIC FROM ANGEL FIRE

Angel Fire, NM, from August 20 to September 5
575-377-3233 • www.musicfromangelfire.org

SANTA FE CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Santa Fe, NM, from July 18 to August 23
505-983-2075, 505-982-1890
www.santafechambermusic.com

SANTA FE OPERA

Santa Fe, NM, from July 2 to August 28
505-986-5900, 800-280-4654
www.santafeopera.org

TAOS SCHOOL OF CHAMBER MUSIC PROGRAM

Taos, NM, from June 20 to August 8
575-776-2388 • www.taoschoolofmusic.com

BARD MUSIC FESTIVAL

Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, from August 13 to 22
845-758-7900
www.fishercenter.bard.edu/bmf/

BRIDGEHAMPTON CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Bridgehampton, NY, from July 28 to August 22
212-741-9073, 631-537-6368 • www.bcmf.org

CARAMOOR INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Caramoor, NY, from June 26 to August 11
914-232-5035 • caramoor.org

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA

Cooperstown, NY, from July 9 to August 24
607-547-2255 • www.glimmerglass.org

JUNE IN BUFFALO

Buffalo, NY, from May 31 to June 6
716-645-0624
www.music.buffalo.edu/juneinbuffalo

LUZERNE CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Lake Luzerne, NY, from July 5 to August 23
518-696-2771 • www.luzernemusic.org

MAVERICK CONCERTS FESTIVAL

Woodstock, NY, from June 27 to August 29
845-679-8348 • www.MaverickConcerts.org

MUSIC FROM SALEM

Cambridge, NY, from July 10 to August 15
518-677-2495 • www.musicfromsaalem.org

NEW DIRECTIONS CELLO FESTIVAL

Ithaca, NY, from June 11 to 13
607-277-1686 • www.newdirectionscello.com

SKANEATELES FESTIVAL

Skaneateles, NY, from August 11 to September 4
315-685-7418 • www.skantfest.org

OREGON BACH FESTIVAL

Eugene, OR, from June 25 to July 11
541-346-5666 • oregonbachfestival.com

MUSIC AT GRETNNA

Mt. Gretna, PA, from August 1 to September 6
717-361-1508 • www.gretnamusic.org

KINGSTON CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Kingston, RI, from July 21 to August 1
401-789-0665
www.kingstonchambermusic.org

SPOLETO FESTIVAL USA

Charleston, SC, from May 28 to June 13
843-579-3100 • www.spoletousa.org

AMERICAN FESTIVAL FOR THE ARTS

Houston, TX, from June 14 to July 14
713-522-9699 • www.afatexas.net

AUSTIN CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL & WORKSHOP

Austin, TX, from July 9 to 31
512-454-0026
www.austinchambermusic.org

MIMIR CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Fort Worth, TX, from July 5 to 16
817-257-5443 • www.mimirfestival.org

ROUND TOP FESTIVAL-INSTITUTE

Round Top, TX, from June 6 to July 18
979-249-3129 • www.festivalhill.org

VICTORIA BACH FESTIVAL

Victoria, TX, from June 8 to 12
361-570-5788 • www.victoriabachfestival.org

MOAB MUSIC FESTIVAL

Moab, UT, from September 2 to 13
435-259-7003 • www.moabmusicfest.org

UTAH FESTIVAL OPERA

Logan, UT, from July 7 to August 7
800-262-0074 • www.ufoc.org

GREEN MOUNTAIN OPERA FESTIVAL

Waitsfield, VT, from May 30 to June 20
802-496-7722
www.greenmountainoperafestival.com

KILLINGTON MUSIC FESTIVAL

Rutland, VT, from June 20 to July 30
802-773-4003
www.killingtonmusicfestival.org

MANCHESTER MUSIC FESTIVAL CONCERT SERIES

Manchester, VT, from July 8 to August 19
802-362-1956 • www.mmfvt.org

MARLBORO MUSIC FESTIVAL

Marlboro, VT, from July 17 to August 15
215-569-4690 • www.marlbormusic.org

VERMONT FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

Mad River Valley, VT,
from August 1 to September 5
802-496-6682 • www.vermontartfest.com

VERMONT MOZART FESTIVAL

Burlington, VT, from July 18 to August 8
802-862-7352 • www.vtmozart.com

YELLOW BARN MUSIC SCHOOL AND FESTIVAL

Putney, VT, from June 16 to August 7
802-387-6637 • www.yellowbarn.org

SEATTLE CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Seattle, WA, from July 5 to August 13
206-283-8808
www.seattlechambermusic.org

BACH DANCING & DYNAMITE SOCIETY CHAMBER FESTIVAL

Madison, WI, from June 11 to 27
608-255-9866
www.bachdancinganddynamite.org

GREEN LAKE FESTIVAL OF MUSIC

Green Lake, WI, from June 11 to July 25
920-748-9398 • www.greenlakefestival.org

MIDWEST YOUNG ARTISTS SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Kenosha, WI, from June 13 to July 25
847-926-9898 • www.mya.org/summer/

AUSTRALIA

BRISBANE FESTIVAL

Brisbane, from September 4 to 25
61-7-3833-5400
www.brisbanefestival.com.au

AUSTRIA

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF MUSICAL STUDIES IN GRAZ

Graz, from July 5 to August 15
816-268-3657 • www.aimsgraz.com

BREGENZER FESTIVAL

Bregenz, from July 21 to August 22
43-5574-4076 •
www.bregenzerfestspiele.com

INNSBRUCK FESTIVAL OF EARLY MUSIC

Innsbruck, from August 8 to 29
43-512-571-032 • www.altemusik.at

SALZBURG FESTIVAL

Salzburg, from May 21 to 24
43-662-804-5500 • www.salzburgfestival.com

WIENER FESTWOCHE

Vienna, from May 14 to June 20
43-1-589-2222 • www.festwochen.at

CROATIA

DUBROVNIK SUMMER FESTIVAL

Dubrovnik, from July 10 to August 25
385-20-326-100, 385-20-326-107
www.dubrovnik-festival.hr

CZECH REPUBLIC

PRAGUE SPRING INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Prague, from May 12 to June 6
420-2-5731-2547 • www.festival.cz

DENMARK

CARL NIELSEN INTERNATIONAL MUSIC COMPETITION AND FESTIVAL

Odense, from May 30 to June 9
45-6375-0055 • cncmp.odensesymfoni.dk

FINLAND

HELSINKI FESTIVAL

Helsinki, from August 20 to September 5
358-9-6126-5100 • www.helsinki.fi

ORIVESI SUMMER FESTIVALS

Orivesi, from June 5 to August 14
358-3-334-3549 • www.orivedensuvi.fi

SAVONLINNA OPERA FESTIVAL

Savonlinna, from July 2 to 31
358 15 476 750 • www.operafestival.fi/

SYMSA SUMMER SOUNDS

Sysma, from July 3 to 10
www.sysmansuvisoitto.com

FRANCE

ACADÉMIE-FESTIVAL DES ARCS

Les Arcs, from July 18 to August 6
33-14-007-1148 • www.festivaldesarcs.com

CHORÉGIES D'ORANGE

Orange Cedex, from July 15 to August 7
33-49-034-2424 • choregies.com

FESTIVAL D'AIX-EN-PROVENCE

Aix-en-Provence, from June 4 to July 21
33-43-408-0217 • www.festival-aix.com

FESTIVAL D'AUVERS-SUR-OISE

Auvers-sur-Oise, from May 27 to July 12
33-13-036-7777 • www.festival-auvers.com

FESTIVAL DE MUSIQUE DE STRASBOURG

Strasbourg, from June 3 to 25
33-38-815-4466 • www.festival-
strasbourg.com

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE COLMAR

Colmar, from July 2 to 13
33-38-920-6897 • www.festival-colmar.com

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE MUSIQUE DE BESANÇON FRANCHE-COMTÉ

Besançon, from September 16 to 26
33-38-182-0872 • www.festival-
besancon.com

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE PIANO LA ROQUE D'ANTHERON

La Roque d'Anthéron, from July 23 to August 21
33-44-250-5115 • www.festival-piano.com

FESTIVAL MILLE ET UNE NOTES

Limousin, from July 20 to August 14
33-55-525-2101 •
www.festival1001notes.com/

LES FLORAISONS MUSICALES

Bollène, from June 26 to October 17
33-49-030-3600 • www.floraisonsmusi-
cales.com/

LES NUITS PIANISTIQUES

Lignane Puyricard, from August 2 to 28
33-61-677-6089 •
www.lesnuitspianistiques.com

GERMANY

BAYREUTHER FESTSPIELE

Bayreuth, from July 25 to August 28
49-921-78780 • bayreuther-festspiele.de/

BEETHOVENFEST BONN

Bonn, from September 10 to October 9
49-228-201-0345 • www.beethovenfest.de

DRESDEN MUSIC FESTIVAL

Dresden, from May 19 to June 6
49-351-486-6666 • www.musikfestspiele.com

EUROPEAN MEDIA ART FESTIVAL

Osnabrück, from April 12 to 25
49-541-21658 • www.emaf.de

GÖTTINGEN INTERNATIONAL HANDEL FESTIVAL

Göttingen, Lower Saxony, from May 14 to 25
49-551-384-8130
www.haendel-festspiele.de

MUNICH OPERA FESTIVAL

Munich, from June 24 to July 31
49-89-218501 • www.staatsoper.de

MUSIKFEST BERLIN

Berlin, from September 2 to 21
49-30-2548-9244 • www.berlinerfestspiele.de

SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN MUSIK FESTIVAL

Schleswig-Holstein, from July 10 to August 29
49-451-389570 • www.shmf.de

GREECE

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF THE AEGEAN

Hermoupolis, Syros, from July 14 to 25
30-2281-085192 •
www.festivaloftheaegean.com/

IRELAND

WEST CORK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Bantry, from June 25 to July 3
353-27-52789 • www.westcorkmusic.ie/

ISRAEL

FELICJA BLUMENTAL INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Tel Aviv, from May 10 to 15
972-3-607-7070 • blumentalfestival.com

ITALY

FESTIVAL DEI 2 MONDI

Spoleto, from June 18 to July 4
39-0743-221689 • www.festivaldispoleto.com

FESTIVAL PUCCINI

Torre del Lago, from July 16 to August 22
39-0584-350567 • www.puccinifestival.it

MAGGIO MUSICALE FESTIVAL

Florence, from April 29 to June 22
39-055-2779350 • www.maggiofiorentino.com

RAVENNA FESTIVAL

Ravenna, from June 9 to July 13
39-0544-249244 • www.ravennafestival.org

ROSSINI OPERA FESTIVAL

Pesaro, from August 9 to 22
39-072-138001 • www.rossinioperafestival.it

JAPAN

PACIFIC MUSIC FESTIVAL SAPPORO

Sapporo, from July 8 to August 4
81-11-242-2211 •
www.pmf.or.jp/index_en.html

NETHERLANDS

HOLLAND FESTIVAL

Amsterdam, from June 1 to 23
31-20-788-2100 • www.hollandfestival.nl

NORWAY

BERGEN INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Bergen, from May 26 to June 9
47-5-521-0630 • www.fib.no

RUSSIAN FED.

STARS OF THE WHITE NIGHTS FESTIVAL

St Petersburg, from May 21 to July 19
7-812-326-4141 • www.mariinsky.ru/en/

SLOVENIA

LJUBLJANA FESTIVAL

Ljubljana, from July 6 to August 26
386-1241-6000 • www.ljubljanafestival.si

SWITZERLAND

LUCERNE FESTIVAL IN SUMMER

Lucerne, from August 12 to September 18
41-41-226-4400 • www.lucernefestival.ch/

VERBIER FESTIVAL

Verbier, from July 16 to August 1
41-848-771-882 •
www.verbierfestival.com/index.php?page=home_en

ZURICH FESTIVAL

Zurich, from June 19 to July 12
41-44-269-9090 • www.zuercher-
festspiele.ch

TURKEY

38TH INTERNATIONAL ISTANBUL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Istanbul, from June 3 to 30
90-212-334-0734 • www.iksv.org

UK

ALDEBURGH FESTIVAL

Snape, from June 11 to 27
44-1728-687110 • www.aldeburgh.co.uk

BATH INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FEST

Bath, from May 26 to June 6
44-1225-463362 • www.bathmusicfest.org.uk

BBC PROMS

London, from July 16 to September 11
44-20-7589-8212 • www.bbc.co.uk/proms

BRIGHTON FESTIVAL

Brighton, from May 1 to 23
44-1273-709709 • www.brightonfestival.org

EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Edinburgh, from August 13 to September 5
44-131-473-2099 • www.eif.co.uk

GLYNDEBOURNE FESTIVAL OPERA

East Sussex, from May 25 to August 29
44-1273-815000 • www.glyndebourne.com

HENLEY FESTIVAL

Henley-on-Thames, from July 7 to 11
44-1491-843400 • www.henley-festival.co.uk

LAKE DISTRICT SUMMER MUSIC INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Kendal, from July 30 to August 15
44-8456-442144 • www.ldsm.org.uk

LLANGOLLEN INTERNATIONAL MUSICAL EISTEDDFOD

Llangollen, from July 5 to 11
44-1978-862001
www.international-eisteddfod.co.uk

LUFTHANSA FESTIVAL OF BAROQUE MUSIC

London, from May 13 to 22
44-20-7222-1061
www.lufthansafestival.org.uk

OPERA HOLLAND PARK

London, from June 1 to August 14
44-20-7361-3570
www.operahollandpark.com

ST. MAGNUS FESTIVAL

Kirkwall, Orkney Islands, from June 18 to 23
44-1856-871445 • www.stmagnusfestival.com

THREE CHOIRS FESTIVAL

Gloucester, from August 7 to 15
44-1452-529819 • www.3choirs.org

WELSH PROMS

Cardiff, from July 11 to 24
44-29-2087-8444 • www.welshproms.co.uk

YORK EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

York, from July 9 to 17
44-1904-632220 •
www.ncem.co.uk/yemf.shtml

www.festivals.scena.org



DEAR COMPOSER

Michael Colgrass

Michael Colgrass is a Pulitzer Prize-winning composer and educator.

I RECEIVE MANY LETTERS FROM CHILDREN. Here is one such letter from a teenager at Laurel Valley High School in New Florence, Pennsylvania, one of several who were encouraged by their high school band director, Jim Colonna, to write to a composer. I have a continuing correspondence with the students. Their letters are a ray of hope that the arts and living artists have meaning for young people. Mr. Colonna is an example of what one teacher can accomplish by stimulating the minds of his students.

LETTER FROM:

» Jaclyn Kuzminsky, » Age 13 » Bolivar, Pennsylvania

Dear Mr. Colgrass,

I wrote a report about your music. I know you don't want to read about yourself, but you might get a different perspective on your music. Most of the people who wrote about you were probably older and have formed an opinion of how they think music should sound. Since you're a "modern composer," I think modern minds should give their opinion because their minds are more open, but can still give their opinion with feeling. I find it really exhilarating when music totally changes your emotions, then it stops and you're so confused you don't know whether to cry, laugh, or yell at them for making you feel like that.

Now I have a question: How do you focus your attention when you want to create?

DEAR JACLYN,

You're asking a question that has puzzled some of the best minds in music. Let me offer two ideas on this subject:

1) Creativity is a habit. Think of the habits you have right now and how you developed them. For example, do you have a time when you study? Perhaps between five and six, just before supper? (I assume you do your homework!) Recall how you developed that habit and how it feels to have it. Have you noticed that if you do your homework at the same time every day you tend to concentrate more easily? The idea is to do the same with creating. To create with ease and comfort, you need a place physically set apart from your other activities, because creating is an act set apart from other things.

2) Establish a set location for creating only. Lay out your materials on your "creating" desk—music paper, notes to yourself, lists of ideas, etc.—and don't ever do anything else on that desk. That way when you return the next day everything will be just as you left it and your mind can "pick up where it left off." This helps you organize your ideas. Whenever you have an idea you can write it down and place it in your own creative spot, even if you have no time to work on it at that moment. This way you accumulate ideas and have a "home" for them—they will be waiting for you when you get back to that creative location. Also, your unconscious mind will work on an idea for you in the meantime since you have clearly identified the idea and your mind has a place to locate it physically. I call this technique "anchoring a location." Your brain learns that when you sit down at that spot creative ideas come to you, because that's all you do in that spot—create. ■

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BORIS BROTT

» MUSIC EDUCATION AS THE “MOST WONDERFUL CALLING”

L.H. Tiffany Hsieh

Although the 66-year-old conductor Boris Brott began giving public concerts playing the violin at a young age, his fondest early musical memories are the private performances that took place at home. “My mother lined up teddy bears and put bow ties on them, and I had to give concerts to them every Saturday from the time I was two years old,” Brott recalled.

Brott, conductor and music director of the New West Symphony in Los Angeles and the McGill Chamber Orchestra in Montreal, is revered for his multimedia educational concerts for young people. He may have lost his teddy bears long ago, but the big kid at heart has written hundreds of scripted concerts such as *There’s an Animal in My Orchestra* and *Trick or Treat to a Wicked Beat* for students.

Looking back, Brott said the seminal point when his interest in music education “all of a sudden reawakened” was between 1968-1970, when he served as assistant conductor to Leonard Bernstein at the New York Philharmonic.

“He is, to me,” Brott said, “the consummate teacher. He has the ability to make the most complex issues simple. His young people’s concerts were just magical. Today, they are still a very important tool for educating children. They reawakened



for me the vital nature of educating and demystifying classical music to young people.”

So in 1988, Brott established the Brott Music Festival in Hamilton and, a year later, founded the National Academy Orchestra of Canada to provide training for young professional graduates of

post-secondary education.

“The mission is not so much to teach anyone anything specific, but rather to create an ambiance where it’s first and foremost an experience that is pleasant, enjoyable, and communicative, and not boring,” said Brott, who has also conducted student matinees and young people’s concerts for the National Arts Centre Orchestra for over 20 years and was named its principal youth and family conductor in 2004.

“People come with preconceived ideas, certainly kids do. The constant wallpaper of music that comes at us has dumbed down our whole sense of listening. You can’t escape it, so it’s no wonder that for young people the idea of actually sitting and listening quietly to music is a foreign thing. You have to get over that first.”

One of the first things in creating a successful children’s concert is interactivity. Brott said, “They must actually do something and it has to be theatrical.” For example, the orchestra builds up a storm, dividing the audience into four parts and using various parts of their body to depict rain, hail and lightning. The concert, projected on big videos, becomes a dialogue between the orchestra, the conductor, and the audience.

“If one could communicate the wonder of discovery in young people, that would be a mission for me,” Brott said. “I think it’s the most wonderful calling that you could have.” ■

■ CHOOSING THE RIGHT ARTS CAMP

Crystal Chan

Summer camp has a long-lasting impact on children. Arts and music camps offer the time and opportunities to learn new skills, start lasting friendships and bring your child in contact with leading arts teachers. To pick the best arts camp for your child, consider the following.

LEARNING TO CREATE

Investigate the camp’s philosophy. Different personalities and goals need different environments. A more challenging environment could suit one child, while the same would stifle another who would do better at an exploratory camp that emphasizes trying different arts rather than improving on one instrument or artistic discipline. Look over a sample schedule from previous years with your child.

Performing arts camps can require an audition. Make sure to check out audition guide-

lines early and help your child prepare with a private teacher if necessary.

A big treat is when a camp concludes with a show for other students and even better, for family as well. This gives children a chance to showcase proudly what they’ve learned.

PLAY IT SAFE

Ideally, the camp director should have a solid background in education, camp administration, and the art the camp specializes in. Ask the director how they vet and train monitors as well as how many return each year. The number of monitors should be proportionally higher for younger children but the monitor-to-child ratio should be no more than 10. The majority of the camp monitors should be over 18 and have childcare experience. Security measures and medically trained personnel should be clearly organized and in place.

Choosing the right type of environment will also help your child enjoy a carefree experience. Specifically, consider whether your child is ready for a sleep away camp. A healthy camp

experience also depends on bathroom facilities and food. Is your child fussy about food and sharing quarters?

Also, consider the makeup of the other children: is it for campers with several artistic disciplines, or only for those with a very focus similar to your child’s (example: a camp for woodwind players only)? Is it a co-ed camp? What is the age range of enrolled campers?

MAKING IT EASY FOR YOU

Cost is an important criterion. Remember that some camps offer financial assistance. Other factors to consider: if it is a day camp, does it work well with everyone else’s schedules? What about summer family vacations?

Separation can be hard for both you and your child. Ask about the policy with packages, letters, email, phone calls, and visits.

The most important step is to sit down with your child and go through these concerns together. Ultimately, it is their summer experience and they need to be involved in making the decisions. ■

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Compiled by Laura Bates

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SONY PAYS \$3 MILLION TO WIN PIANIST LANG LANG

Norman Lebrecht

The richest headhunt ever seen in classical music has ended with the world's most coveted pianist switching teams at a critical moment for the industry.

The Chinese musician Lang Lang, 27, has signed for Sony Classical for \$3 million, an executive familiar with the move at his old label Deutsche Grammophon told me. A Sony spokeswoman in London said that the company would not comment.

Lang Lang is credited with an explosion of music teaching in his own country, where more than 40 million children are said to be taking private piano lessons. A tinkling of Ravel can be heard from high-rises in boomtown Tianjin.

He has been a star in the West and an Elvis-like figure back home ever since he sold out Carnegie Hall, performing the Grieg concerto



at the age of 19, in 2001. That year he was mobbed on his first return to Beijing with the Philadelphia Orchestra. The pianist signed a record contract with Deutsche Grammophon, part of Vivendi SA's Universal Music Group.

He released his first disc in 2003, featuring concertos by Tchaikovsky

and Mendelssohn, with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Daniel Barenboim.

Since then, Lang Lang has regularly topped the classical charts and, on occasion, achieved sales of pop music dimensions. In a specialist genre where releases sell in a few hundreds, Lang Lang sells in the hundreds of thousands.

BIGGER THAN PAVAROTTI

Opening the Beijing Olympics in July 2008 on a snow-white piano, he was watched by more than five billion viewers and achieved bigger worldwide recognition than any classical hero since Luciano Pavarotti. A piano manufacturer created the Lang Lang Steinway. The Prince of Wales asked him to premiere a concerto he had commissioned in memory of his grandmother, the Queen Mother. Lang Lang had the world at his feet and was accustomed to getting his own way.

At the rarified Deutsche Grammophon, which shelters such media-averse pianists as Martha Argerich, Maurizio Pollini and Krystian Zimerman, Lang Lang's noisy populism was never an easy fit. When he demanded the dismissal of Yundi Li, the first Chinese winner of the International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition, the label acquiesced immediately, according to a dissenting producer. (Yundi Li has put a softer spin on his departure). Lang Lang was the one artist no label could afford to lose.

So when Sony rebooted its classical wing last April after a long dormancy, the new chief, Bogdan Rosic, was given an open checkbook and told: "Get Lang Lang."

MIDEM FESTIVAL

Last week, at the Midem Festival in Cannes, France, the industry was abuzz with leaks and executive rumors that Sony Classical had signed Lang Lang for \$3 million—peanuts for a footballer but so huge for a classical artist that the Sony Corp. provided funds from outside the classical budget. The U.K. magazine *Gramophone* reported the move on Jan. 26, without giving a figure.

Although Sony has refused to comment on either the signing or the sum involved, an executive at Deutsche Grammophon confirmed both the signing and the fee in an e-mail to me.

Lang Lang wasn't immediately available for comment. He was playing in the national auditorium in Madrid at the weekend. He is also involved in raising funds for Haiti as a UNICEF ambassador. His responsiveness to world affairs is another source of value to the music industry. He signed a three-year sponsorship agreement with Sony in April 2008 to promote its hardware products globally.

CLASSICAL CLOISTERS

The implications of his transfer extend far beyond the cloisters of classical music. Sony has scored a blow against the market leader while Universal has been caught in transition, with its chairman Doug Morris due to step down this summer.

At stake is the last frontier for western classical music—the burgeoning middle-classes of the East Asia economies. In China, recorded music is routinely pirated and consumers are unused to paying for their stars. Only an artist of Lang Lang's compelling attraction can change those habits—and all labels are aware of that.

EMI has just signed Yundi Li on the rebound, while Deutsche Grammophon has Yuja Wang in the offing—with support from conductor Claudio Abbado, who chose her to open his Lucerne Festival last summer.

Still, the capture of Lang Lang gives Sony a decisive advantage. ■

Lang Lang will perform Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 17 in G Major, K. 453* on April 6, 2010 with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (Roy Thomson Hall, 8 p.m.)



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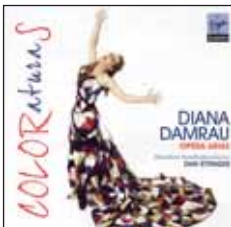
WSH: Stephen Habington, NL: Norman Lebrecht,
 PER: Paul E. Robinson, JKS: Joseph K. So

VOCAL MUSIC

COLORaturaS

Diana Damrau, soprano; Münchner
 Rundfunkorchester/Dan Ettinger
 Virgin Classics 5099951931322 (73 min 59 s)
 ★★★★★ \$55

German soprano Diana Damrau is arguably the best coloratura soprano of the new generation, combining a lovely voice with stunning technical ease along the lines of a young Natalie Dessay, and an alluring stage presence. This new disc shows off her sparkling voice beautifully in such selections as Juliette's Waltz in *Roméo et Juliette* and Zerbinetta's showpiece in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, which incidentally I saw her sing magnificently in Munich three years ago. Her 'Caro nome' here is note-perfect, as is 'Glitter and be gay' from Bernstein's *Candide*, although without quite the scintillating dramatic acuity of Natalie Dessay in a live 1997 recording. Israeli Dan Ettinger is the ever responsive and supportive maestro, bringing out



lovely sounds from the Munich Radio Orchestra. Perhaps as a former baritone, Ettinger is particularly attuned to the needs and wants of the singer! If there is a flaw, it would be Damrau's less than perfect diction in some of the songs – she has a tendency to suppress the consonants and her French is particularly indistinct. The voice is happiest in the highest reaches, so a low-lying piece like 'O mio babbino caro' finds her pushing her weak chest register. Sometimes when she presses the voice at the top, it can turn a little edgy, but these are minor quibbles. The booklet contains a 100-word mini-essay by Damrau herself plus a more substantial piece on the arias by Andrew Huth; texts in three languages, but no artist bios. Highly recommended. **JKS**

The Mozart Album

Danielle de Niese, soprano; Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment/Sir Charles Mackerras
 Decca 478 1511 (65 min 51 s)
 ★★★★★ \$55

Born in Australia of Sri Lankan parents and raised in the U.S., Danielle de Niese is an opera company manager's dream – a beautiful voice, inherent musicality, solid training, superb thespian skills, alluring stage presence, all packaged in the face and body of a super-model. In a few short years, she has shot to the top of the lyric soprano heap, complete with a recording contract with Decca. This is her second solo album, after a very successful debut disc of Handel arias. Having seen her live a number of times – as Nanetta as early as 2000 in Santa Fe when she was only 21, then as Rodelinda at the COC, and more recently as Eurydice and Poppea – I do feel she is best appreciated live in the theatre. The voice is a fine one though not as great as her fame would indicate – the top can be a little shrill and brittle, as in the high C of Alleluja, and her scale isn't always perfectly even. But in the theatre, the power of her personality is such that she comes across as nothing less than sensational. On this disc she sings arias of Ilia, Despina, Susanna, Zerlina, all in the lyric-soubrette *fach*, with the sole exception of Donna Elvira. There is also the ubiquitous *Exsultate, jubilate* and *Laudate Dominum*. She sings all the selections beautifully if without a par-



ticularly wide palette of expression. The booklet has an essay by Brian Dickie, head of Chicago Opera Theatre and once the head of the COC. De Niese herself pens a "thank you note" to practically everyone – her parents, Sir Charles, the orchestra, the Decca team, Kiri Te Kanawa, Bryn Terfel, her agent, even Mozart himself! This is a charming disc for anyone interested in this young soprano. **JKS**

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Beethoven: Piano Concertos 1-5


Evgeny Kissin, piano; London Symphony Orchestra/Sir Colin Davis
 EMI Classics (2 68173 2: 71 min 05 s; 2 68184 2: 66 min 11 s; 2 68186 2: 41 min 48 s)
 ★★★★★ \$55

The Beethoven piano concertos are a recording milestone in every keyboard virtuoso's career. Evgeny Kissin tested the waters in 1997 with performances of the Second and Fifth with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by James Levine. That disc was well received by critics. Kissin returned to the same recording venue at Abbey Road Studios in 2008 to lay down an entire cycle. These issues will attract the interest of the pianist's masses of fans... But, but, but, wouldn't these fans have already gone for the original 3-CD bargain box released in October 2008 (and apparently still available)?

EMI's marketing foibles aside, these are rather good performances with excellent recorded sound quality. There is no faulting the soloist's grasp or technique. Yet in a crowded field Kissin cannot conjure up a distinctive character to enhance our understanding and appreciation of this vital music. There is none of the subtle rhetoric of Richard Goode (Nonesuch) or the fizzing unpredictability of Mikhail Pletnev (DG), nor the quick wit and retort of Olli Mustonen directing the Tapiola Sinfonietta from the keyboard (Ondine).

This series offers a distinction in the accompaniment of the LSO. In his Beethoven symphony cycle (Philips), Sir Colin Davis revealed a traditionalist approach that placed him slightly to the right of Otto Klemperer. Davis showcases the orches-





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tra's strings and winds to memorable effect. **WSH**

Brahms: Violin Sonatas

Anne-Sophie Mutter, violin; Lambert Orkis, piano

Deutsche Grammophon 477 8767 9 (67 min 46 s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$

Just when you think Anne-Sophie Mutter has nothing more to offer beyond the ice-queen brand, she comes up with a performance of the Brahms sonatas that is humbling in its quietude. Sample the Adagio of the G-major sonata for a lesson in mature self-exploration. Mutter is almost inside herself with concentration and Lambert Orkis plays porcelain accompaniment in a reading of fragile transparency, irresistible throughout. **NL**



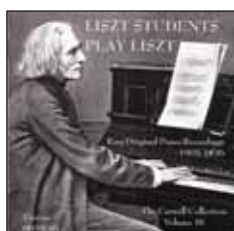
Liszt Students Play Liszt: Rare Original Piano Recordings 1905-1926

Eugene d'Albert, Arthur Friedheim, Emil Sauer, Alexander Siloti, Frederic Lamond, etc., piano

Pierian CD 0039/40 (122 min 46 s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$

Franz Liszt was undoubtedly one of the greatest of all piano virtuosos. Like so many other legendary figures, he did not live long enough to be able to make recordings. Fortunately, some of his students did and this new CD set brings together many of their recordings, with the best sound quality we have ever had. This album will almost certainly become a valuable reference tool for any pianist looking for guidance on how to play the music of Liszt.



All of the students represented on this disc attended master classes with Liszt in Weimar between 1882 and 1886. They were admitted only after demanding auditions and most of them went on to have major careers. But we need to bear in mind that while their work with Liszt must have been invaluable, they made their recordings more than twenty years later. We also need to understand that these recordings were originally produced as piano rolls. Such recordings are by their very nature still controversial as to their reliability as accurate reproductions of the way any given artist played. The recordings on this CD set were made under the direction of Kenneth Caswell in Austin, Texas, using a restored 1923 Feurich Welte piano, and sound very convincing.

For study purposes it would have been helpful to have the same Liszt works played by several different pianists. There is only one such example: the Hungarian Rhapsody No. 12 played by Bernard Stavenhagen and Arthur Friedheim respectively. While both men studied with Liszt, their approach to this piece could not be more different. Stavenhagen treats it in an improvisatory fashion, as if intent on bringing out the gypsy flavor. Friedheim, on the other hand, is almost severely 'classical.' This comparison reminds us that stu-

dents are seldom carbon copies of their teachers, no matter how illustrious the teachers. **PER**

Mahler: Symphony No. 2 'Resurrection'

Yvonne Kenny, soprano; Jard van Nes, mezzo-soprano; London Philharmonic Orchestra & Choir/Klaus Tennstedt

LPO 0044 (93 min 57 s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$

Longer than any performance on record except Otto Klemperer's last gasp, this live Royal Festival Hall recording from February 1989 is a legend to the 3,000 of us who were there and even more so to many who weren't. Klaus Tennstedt, the most sensitive and impulsive of conductors, opened the Resurrection at a tempo of such stubborn deliberation that it seemed the second coming would never come.

But instead of causing impatience, the interpretation exerts an irresistible tension for 94 eventful minutes. There is nothing vain or wilful in Tennstedt's approach. By stretching textures, he allows us to hear inner voices, to hold our breaths as a double-bass plucks a solo pizzicato, to marvel at the interwoven conversations of the vast symphonic mass. The opening movement ends in dark dread, the second in mute helplessness. Then Mahler hits the big drums and the works rise out of the known world into realms where the devil has the best tunes.

Mezzo-soprano Jard van Nes offers tranquility in the Urlicht song, but Judgement Day follows with chorus and soprano Yvonne Kenny and the outcome remains uncertain until the conductor drops his arms and, in the frozen hush, we discover, half-amazed, that we are still alive. The experience on record, engineered with maximum discretion by Tony Faulkner, is hardly less shattering than in the hall that night in February 1989. This is one of the elite Mahler recordings that, indispensable and unforgettable, yields a new understanding of a mighty work. **NL**



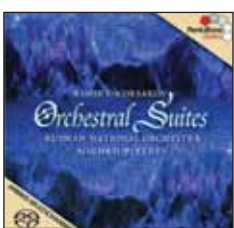
Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov: Orchestral Suites

Russian National Orchestra/Mikhail Pletnev

PentaTone PTC 5186 362 Hybrid SACD(60 min 32 s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$

For two decades the standard recommended recording of this music has been that of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra conducted by Neeme Järvi (Chandos). The Malaysian Philharmonic under Kees Bakels also turned in fine Rimsky-Korsakov performances in recent years for BIS but the selection of orchestral suites from stage works was far from complete. Now Mikhail Pletnev and his thoroughbred Russian National Orchestra offer three superb Rimsky suites in what can be considered definitive accounts. The recordings were made in Hilversum, Netherlands in January of last year. The audio qual-



ity is demonstration quality and it is a special treat to be able to use the surround sound option to be immersed in the sensuality and boldness of Rimsky's orchestration. Pletnev exploits every nuance of these confections and makes us realize afresh what a unique gifted tune-smith this composer was. While collectors await more outstanding Rimsky-Korsakov from this source, note that the RNO and Pletnev are also recording for Ondine. A ravishing performance on 2 CDs of the complete score for Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* (ODE 1167-2D) was released by the Finnish label concurrently with the disc reviewed here. **WSH**

W.A. Mozart, J. B. Wendling: Flute Concertos

Bernhard Krabatsch, flute; Salzburg

Mozarteum/Ivor Bolton

Oehms OC 747 (75 min 48 s)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$

Reverting to an ego-free, pre-James Galway style, Bernhard Krabatsch plays the two concertos on a simple wooden flute with the Salzburg Mozarteum, sympathetically conducted by Ivor Bolton. The difference is just so refreshing. This Mozart feels organic, fair-trade and eco-friendly. It is rounded off by a pretty C-major concerto by Johann Baptist Wendling (1723-1797). Mr Krabatsch has flair without swagger, a nice touch. **NL**



■ BLU-RAY

Richard Wagner: Der Ring Des Nibelungen

Juha Uusitalo (Wotan), John Daszak (Loge), Franz-Josef Kapellmann (Alberich), Gerhard Siegel (Mime), Matti Salminen (Fasolt), Stephen Milling (Fafner), Anna Larsson (Fricka), Sabina von Walther (Freia), Lilya Bannik (Donner), Germán Villar (Froh), Sylvia Vázquez (Woglinde), Ann-Katrin Naidu (Wellgunde), Hannah Esther Minuttillo (Floßhilde); Orquesta de la Comunitat Valenciana/Zubin Mehta

Staged by La Fura dels Baus; Stage Director: Carlus Padrissa

Video Director: Tiziano Mancini

C Major Blu-ray (700604: 194 min; 700804: 245 min; 701004: 256 min; 701204: 309 min)

★★★★☆ \$\$\$\$\$

Dedicated Wagnerians with inquiring minds have a tough decision to make. Are they to rush out and purchase the individual issues of the latest video Ring cycle or gamble on saving a few bucks on the fall release of complete boxed sets (Blu-ray or conventional DVD)? These Valencia productions are terrific and certainly fine enough to justify acting in haste.

La Fura dels Baus is a versatile (and acrobatic) Catalan theatre company. Zubin Mehta caught them in performance at the Salzburg Festival and



suggested their participation in staging the Valencia Ring. In this, and his stipulation that the new opera house recruit a world class Wagner orchestra ("Because a Wagner orchestra can play anything."), house intendant Helga Schmidt fulfilled his wishes and also assembled a remarkable singing cast. La Fura's stated intention was to show "the suicidal degradation of nature by technological man." To achieve this goal, a great deal of high technology and gadgetry is employed. Stage scenery was largely replaced by giant screen 3-D animation designed and operated by Franc Aleu. The costumes by Chu Uroz make the gods look godly and evoke the development of primitive man to the decadence of the Gibichungs. Carlus Padrissa binds all of this together to produce something that reflects Wagner's original (and until now impossible to realize) stage directions. There is a single, but psychologically apt, self-indulgence and scarcely an awkward pause in the entire marathon. Above all, Padrissa succeeds on the level of pure storytelling.

Maestro Mehta's direction of the score can stand comparison with the best. A musician who has pondered the scores for a half-century gives us the performance of a lifetime. Mehta makes the music into a major protagonist in the drama. At the final curtain, he leads the entire orchestra onto the stage to take a well-deserved bow. The vocal cast is outstanding in the quality of singing and the ability to portray the characters. Juha Uusitalo (Wotan/Wanderer), John Daszak (Loge), Franz-Josef Kapellmann (Alberich) Gerhard Siegel (Mime), Peter Seiffert (Siegfried) and Petra Maria Schnitzer (Sieglinde) render landmark performances. The steadfast Wagner veteran, Matti Salminen, takes on

the roles of Fasolt, Hunding and Hagen with great distinction. But perhaps the greatest discovery of cycle is the pairing of Jennifer Wilson and Lance Ryan as Brünnhilde and Siegfried. A perfect match-up in these roles has been hard to achieve in recent years. Hopefully the Wilson/Ryan combination will continue to grace opera stages for the foreseeable future. There is not one weak link in the cast.

Collectors who insist on traditional staging of the Ring are probably best served by the Metropolitan Opera production conducted by James Levine (DG). For those who remain mesmerized by the Bayreuth productions of Boulez/Chereau (DG) and Barenboim/Kupfer (Warner), this Valencia Ring is very much in the same league. It surpasses by a vast margin last year's award-winning Copenhagen Ring (Decca).

WSH

■ BOOK

BravO! The History of Opera in British Columbia

By Rosemary Cunningham / Vancouver: Harbour Publishing, 2009 (208 p.)

ISBN: 978-1-55017-486-1

This volume is published to coincide with the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Vancouver Opera and the 30th anniversary of the Pacific Opera Victoria in 2010. In 208 nicely printed and lavishly illustrated pages that also include full performance histories, detailed notes, bibliographies and an index, author Rosemary Cunningham has penned the first and only volume on opera in BC. Cunningham divides the

book into Prologue, Overture, Interlude, three Acts and a Finale. History buffs will like the Prologue that provides an outline of earliest operatic performances in BC, and the Overture that gives a glimpse of the social history that gave impetus to the establishment of the opera companies. It is said that BC has the highest per capita opera audience in Canada. A retired librarian, Cunningham counts herself as a fan. She writes reverentially of Irving Guttman, "the father of opera in Western Canada" and conductor Richard Bonyng and his wife, soprano Joan Sutherland. It was their presence that put VOA on the map in the early years. Vancouverites heard Dame Joan long before she came to the COC in the 80's, when her voice was past its prime. To this day, the only opera company in Canada where the great Plácido Domingo has sung remains the VOA. Big name stars meant deficits that subsequently plagued the tenure of both Brian McMaster and Robert Hallam. Cunningham writes about this period in a detached way, with no mudslinging. She gives brief mentions of other operatic initiatives such as the university music programs, summer festivals, new professional and semi-professional companies that have sprung up in recent years. Her tone is upbeat, concluding the book with an expression of confidence in the future. This volume is a must-read for anyone interested in opera in BC.

JKS



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