

A close-up portrait of a woman with dark, wavy hair, looking slightly to the right with a gentle smile. She is wearing a grey turtleneck sweater. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

the music Scene

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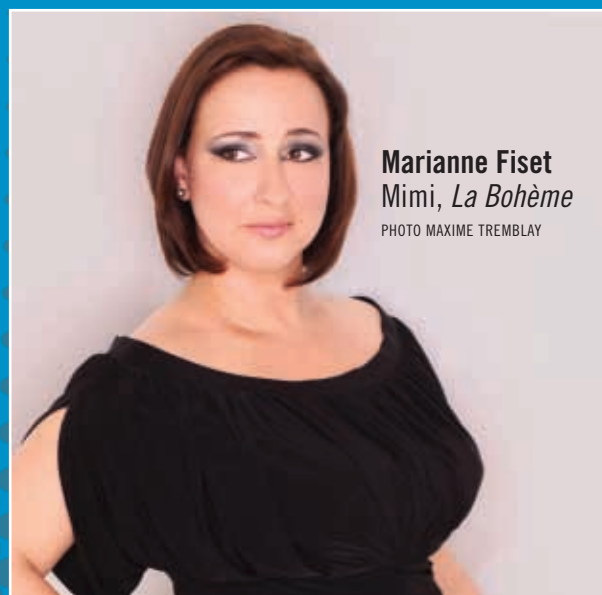
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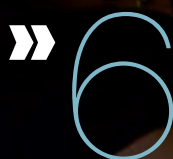
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COVER STORY



ADRIANNE PIECZONKA

Vissi d'arte

The reigning Canadian prima donna speaks openly about her art and her life.

FOUNDING EDITORS

Wah Keung Chan –
Philip Anson

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NEXT ISSUE »

The Music Scene Summer 2011
Canadian music and arts festivals
Appearance: June 3, 2011
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EDITORIAL

Last December 9, *The Music Scene/La Scena Musicale* concluded its 2010 Endowment Fund campaign with an entertaining recital featuring soprano Aline Kutan, pianist Martin Dubé and trombonist Matthew Russell at the Westmount home of Margaret Lefebvre. About 35 people braved the snow and traffic for a selection of traditional English carols featuring brass, an Armenian hymn and arias from *Lakmé* and *Roméo et Juliette*. The prevailing comment heard afterward was that the evening was magical. Music has that effect.

As for our Endowment Fund, thanks to supporters at our two fundraisers (the first was in Toronto on November 5, 2010 and featured Phillip Addis and Carolyn Maule) and 150 other donors, we raised \$40,000, which the Quebec government's Placements Culture program will generously match with another \$60,000, creating a total \$100,000 fund. The grant stipulates that we deposit the money in the Foundation of Greater Montreal for a period of 10 years and that we benefit from the annual interest earned. We hope that this will help TMS in the long term. See page 21 for the list of donors.

For those who missed our first Endowment Fund Campaign, your donation will still count as we will be launching a second Endowment Fund campaign later this year. In the short term, we are planning more fundraising activities for 2011 to help with our operating budget, including more intimate concerts.

Last Valentine's Day, *La Scena Musicale* helped spread romantic cheer through our first Singing Valentines fundraiser. Seven singers, including members of the Atelier Lyrique of the Opéra de Montréal (mezzos Aidan Ferguson and Emma Parkinson and baritones Philip Kalmanovitch and Pierre Rancourt), serenaded 25 valentines from across Canada over the phone. The other three singers were mezzo Rebecca Harvey, baritone Jeremy Carver-James and yours truly. Thanks again to our volunteer singers (see the ad on page 31 to visit their websites).

The most popular request was Saint-Saëns's "Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix," followed by "My Funny Valentine." Other songs offered included "L'invitation au voyage," "Morgen" and "Che gelida manina." The singers from the Atelier Lyrique reported that helping make the day for the valentines was the ultimate reward, showing again what live music can do. The idea was inspired by my many years of phoning birthday greetings to friends and family, and the surprised and thrilled reaction it got. Based on the positive feedback,



PHOTO Helen Tansey

Vocal star SHANNON MERCER is featured this month on page 10

we will offer birthday greetings as well as greetings for Mother's Day. To order a song or to be volunteer singer, please email donation@lascena.org

In the coming months, we will be launching an online auction of music and arts related items. We need the help of musicians and artists. Please contact us at fundraising@lascena.org to donate goods or services for the auction.

This Spring 2011 issue of *The Music Scene* is a special on Opera. Canada's leading dramatic soprano, Adrienne Pieczonka, is the cover artist. She performs at the COC as well as in recital at Koerner Hall this spring. Profiles of Shannon Mercer, coverage of Wish Opera, the new opera on Brian Mulroney, a profile of 2011 MET Audition winner Ottawa bass-baritone Philippe Sly, and previews of upcoming vocal concerts round out our opera coverage. And we're proud to provide readers with four guides in this issue: summer camps, subscription series, international music festivals and Canadian spring classical music festivals. In addition, check out our concert picks in Toronto and Ottawa as well as our CD reviews.

Have a great musical spring.

TMS

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

Canadian politics
meets opera in
Mulroney: The Opera;
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PHOTO Rhombus Media

Vissi
d'arte
ADRIANNE
PIECZONKA

by JOSEPH K. SO

“I am like the tortoise in ‘The Tortoise and the Hare’—slow and steady!” quips soprano Adrienne Pieczonka with a touch of self-effacing humour. Maybe so, but it is the textbook case of “slow and steady wins the race.” Since her debut in 1987 as the female convict in the COC *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, Pieczonka’s career has been approaching the quarter-century mark, which many of her diva colleagues fail to reach. Her calendar is booked well in advance, with plum assignments in some of the most prestigious venues in Europe and North America—Vienna, Munich, Berlin, Bayreuth, the Met, the COC, to name a few. Celebrated for her Wagner and Strauss, Pieczonka has also won acclaim in the Italian repertoire in recent years, as Amelia in *Simon Boccanegra*, Elisabetta in *Don Carlos*, and in the title role of *Tosca*, which she sang in San Francisco Opera and was simulcast to thousands at the AT&T Park. Last season, she had her first Met in HD exposure, as Amelia opposite the great Plácido Domingo. Her newest role, Senta in Wagner’s *Die fliegende Holländer* at the Paris and Vienna operas garnered rave reviews. A sign of her increasing stature, Pieczonka received the title of *Kammersängerin* at the Vienna State Opera, as well as the Order of Canada. Last fall, she received her first honorary doctorate bestowed upon her by McMaster University in Hamilton, a stone’s throw from Burlington, where the soprano grew up. Five years ago, after living in Europe for eighteen years, Pieczonka returned to Canada and bought a home in Toronto, which she shares with her partner in life and in art, mezzo-soprano Laura Tucker and their five-year old daughter Grace. Recently the singer was able to spend some time at home between gigs. During this brief hiatus, she attended the opening of *The Art of Canadian Music*, an exhibition of thirty paintings of famous Canadian musicians at the John B. Aird Gallery in Queen’s Park. Portraitist Tadeusz Biernot has created a strikingly original work on the soprano, at 60 x 78 cm, easily the largest canvas in the exhibition. Taking time out from preparing for her upcoming Desdemona for Deutsche Oper Berlin, Pieczonka graciously agreed to meet for a long, wide-ranging conversation about her life and her art:



CANADIAN PAINTER TADEUSZ BIERNOT unveils his portrait of Adrienne Pieczonka

Congratulations on your success as Senta. Tell us about your experience of singing this role in Vienna...

You know it's funny—Senta was never a role I was dying to sing. Vocally it's a real challenge—very dramatic and very high. It requires youthfulness in the voice and a ringing top. This was the second time I did it, the first was in Paris, and I'll do it again next year in Bayreuth with Thielemann. I'm conscious of not filling my calendar with too many Sentas. Just like Sieglinde, it has been a very rewarding part for me—I got fantastic reviews in the Willy Decker production in Paris. It's surprising that the roles you don't think are going to be so great turn out to be so rewarding.

You are known for your Wagner and Strauss, but you've been adding more and more Italian roles. You're singing Tosca all over, including the COC next season. How do you manage to switch back and forth between the Italian and the German repertoires?

The answer may disappoint you—I approach them the same way! I worked on Desdemona a little bit this morning... Of course you have to think of the difference in the language, a bit more *legato* and more *portamenti* in Italian and not so much in the German rep, although I use it in Senta—and in Elsa totally! I'll be doing Amelia in *Ballo* and Aida, both big roles. I try to sing lyrically, and to use *piano* whenever I can and to keep the lightness in my voice.

When you prepare a role, do you listen to recordings? Who do you listen to?

When I was preparing Amelia in *Simon Boccanegra*, I listened to Tebaldi. For Tosca, I watched Callas and Gobbi video from Covent Garden... just to watch her intensity, her gestures and her eyes! When I was preparing Senta, I tried to find who could be the ideal Senta for me. You've got Varady and Studer; and then there's Anja Silja who did it at twenty—crazy!

Let's talk a little about your upcoming COC Ariadne, one of your signature roles. Ariadne is a woman who can only be fulfilled by having a man in her life. Given the 21st century post-feminist critique, isn't she a little old-fashioned? Why do you love her so much?

It's not fair! (laughs) Look at Senta and Elsa—a lot of Wagner is misogynistic. You know I don't have an issue with Ariadne, if you think of her as a Greek goddess and you put yourself back in her time. Maybe she's a bit mad; [...] maybe she has lost touch with reality. You have this polarization—in the Prologue she's the diva, and then in the Opera itself you have this forlorn, bereft woman. I am married to a woman, so why am I even doing this role? Because the music is glorious! The duet between Zerbinetta and the Composer is so beautiful. I just sang *Ariadne* in Munich with Alice (Coote) and Jane (Archibald). It was wonderful. I hope the Toronto audience will love it.



TMS
COVER
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IT'S SURPRISING THAT THE ROLES YOU DON'T THINK ARE GOING TO BE SO GREAT TURN OUT TO BE SO REWARDING...

PHOTO Johannes Iffkovits

It's a subtle opera—the Composer's ode to music is so beautiful, and Zerbinetta's aria is always a showstopper. My music is more cerebral—sometimes I must say you sing and sing, and.... (more laughs)

If you had to choose between “Ein schönes war” and “Es gibt ein Reich,” which would you pick?

“Ein Schönes war”—it's so beautiful! And it's more difficult, more exposed...those B-flats have to be floated. “Es gibt” doesn't move me as much. Do you know one of my first professional jobs was as Naiad in *Ariadne*? In Vancouver, Jean Stilwell, Martha Collins and I were the nymphs! Judy Forst was the Composer, Mary Jane Johnson was Ariadne and Barbara Kilduff was Zerbinetta.

You also have concerts coming up in Toronto—your recital at Koerner Hall and Beethoven's 9th at the Black Creek Festival. Have you sung in Koerner Hall before? What's on the recital program?

No I haven't even heard a classical concert there yet—only Barbara Cook! It's a very impressive facility... world class, really. I'm so pleased they asked me, even though it's a bit challenging for me as it's during the run of *Ariadne*. It's an all-German program—Schubert, Strauss, and Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder*. My pianist is Brian Zeger. And I'm going to sing some show tunes at the end as homage to Barbara Cook. She is 83 but she still has that youthful quality—she sounds like a young girl! As to Black Creek, I've only been there for tennis! When I look at the line-up, with Domingo and Maazel—wow, it's right for Toronto. Bravo!

You've mentioned that you enjoy teaching. What draws you to teaching? What makes a good teacher?

I think teaching for me is a combination of passing on my knowledge and experience as well as continuing to delve into the mystery of singing. It's a never-ending process and I am amazed at how much I learn from working with each singer. I am still very much evolving as a voice teacher and feel that there are still several years until I can dedicate myself wholly to teaching. I don't think there is a certain recipe that makes a good teacher—some famous singers were not good teachers. So to be a good teacher it's not necessary to have had a big career as a professional singer. I think empathy and excellent listening skills are imperative. A young singer is often on an emotional journey and there can be tears and frustration along the way. A good teacher will approach each pupil as an individual and be sensitive to the student's needs.

You are now in the 24th year of your career, a very good length by any standard. To what do you attribute your longevity? How do you keep your voice healthy and in good condition?

I make sure there are breaks in my calendar, not just going from one job to the next, taking summer vacations. I keep working with my teachers—Mary Morrison here in Toronto, and Hilde Zadek when I'm in Europe. I've been working hard to keep the lyricism in my voice as much as possible. It's easy to get on a wrong track vocally and start singing too heavily. I've discovered that sometimes 'less is more' and the ability to float and sing pianissimo is imperative to my technique and approach. I often feel that singing pianissimo is a dying art now-

adays. I'm proud that my career is in its 3rd decade while so many singers today often don't end up singing more than 10 years professionally. Like I mentioned, my "tortoise mentality" has been good in that I have been patient and never been keen to be an overnight star. The pressure has been taken off and I am content to sing wonderful roles in wonderful houses, and not be a media darling or megastar.

What (and who) are the most important things (and people) in your life now? If you were to draw your career to a close tomorrow, how do you want to be remembered? Of course we all know that you have many years ahead of you career-wise, but it is nice once in awhile to reflect and take stock...

My family is the most important thing in my life. That being said, I feel I have recently developed a new level of devotion and commitment to my singing and to my career—it's very interesting! But my family grounds me and brings me such joy and pleasure. Singing does this as well but, alas, it is fleeting! If I were to quit singing tomorrow, I'd like to be remembered as an artist who has brought joy to many people and who was a generous person who enjoyed nurturing young singers.

Speaking of young singers, what advice do you have for these aspiring artists ready to step into the opera world?

Enjoy your lives! Enjoy the journey you are on, and be thankful you are able to sing glorious music. Be passionate about your art... embrace it and go for it!

TMS

» April 30, May 3 - 29: Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, title role, Canadian Opera Company coc.ca
 » May 7: Recital, Koerner Hall rcmusic.ca



AT HOME

When I am home, I'm usually not performing so I tend to focus on my family. Need I say I'm a morning person—I get up early, around 7 a.m. and make breakfast for our daughter Grace and take her to school by 8:15. Then I practice for about an hour and a half—I enjoy doing this in the morning, so that the day is then free for other things. I like taking power walks or working out at the gym. School pick up for Grace is 3 p.m., and often we will have a play date at our house. Dinner is about 5:30 p.m. and both Laura and I enjoy cooking. I enjoy reading stories to Grace at bedtime. Then I like to relax by watching a bit of television, reading or soaking in the tub! I'm often in bed by 10 p.m.! I've never been a night owl but I do enjoy going out for dinner with friends or to the theatre or a concert.

A Day in the Life of a Prima Donna

ON THE ROAD

When I'm on the road I still wake up early, often before 8 a.m., even on the day of a performance—strange but true! I like to go for a power walk or do some yoga in the morning after breakfast, then vocalize around 11 a.m. or noon if it's a performance day. I eat at around 2 or 3 p.m. and then I don't eat until after the performance. I try to eat things like fish or chicken with some rice or potatoes and I also try to avoid heavy meals after a show. I take a catnap after lunch. I try to skype my family at breakfast (Toronto time), as this is a wonderful way to stay connected to my family. What did we ever do before skype—it's the most marvelous invention and it's free! It's hard on the road when I'm separated from my family for weeks at a time but I just try to make the most of each day and keep positive!

NOTES

NOTES CONTINUE ON PAGE 11

by CRYSTAL CHAN AND
JOSEPH K. SO

ALAIN TRUDEL THE NEW MUSIC DIRECTOR OF ORCHESTRA LONDON

Orchestra London announced on April 6 that Orchestre symphonique de Laval's Alain Trudel will be its new music director. This follows several guest appearances by Trudel with the OL. Trudel is also the artistic director and principal conductor of the National Broadcast Orchestra, an ensemble created by CBC Radio Orchestra musicians after it was disbanded, the principal guest conductor of the Victoria Symphony Orchestra, the conductor of the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra, and a regularly invited conductor of the National Youth Orchestra of Canada. The OL performs over 50 concerts each season. CC

Celebrated for his interpretation of works by Britten and Tippett, his Aschenbach in *Death in Venice* received critical acclaim and is preserved on DVD. Tear last sang as Emperor Altoun in *Turandot* at the Royal Opera Covent Garden two seasons ago. He has been suffering from cancer of the esophagus since last fall. JKS



RICCARDO MUTI PHOTO Todd Rosenberg

RICCARDO MUTI WINS THE BIRGIT NILSSON PRIZE

Conductor Riccardo Muti has been awarded the prestigious Birgit Nilsson Prize. The prize comes with a \$1-million remuneration. Muti is the second winner of the prize, after Plácido Domingo, who received it in 2008, three years after Nilsson passed away. Muti has been the music director of the Chicago Symphony since 2010, and over his illustrious career he has been at the helm of such orchestras as London's Philharmonia Orchestra, Filarmonica della Scala, Philadelphia Orchestra and has guest conducted the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics. CC

CANADIANS COME THIRD AT ROYAL OPERA HOUSE BIENNIAL

The Canadian team of Joel Ivany, Camellia Koo and Jason Hand came third in the 6th Biennial Europäischen Opernregie-Preis that took place at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden in March. The team competed against 212 other participants from 24 countries, and was picked as one of four team finalists. Each team submitted a directorial and design concept for Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. The winning team, from the UK, was chosen for the originality of its concept, as well as its suitability to the stages of the northern Italian opera houses (Brescia, Como, Pavia, and Verona) where the work will be performed in the coming season. The competition is held every two years. Many of the winners are now working successfully as directors and set and costume designers. Ivany, who led the Canadian team, is currently assistant director of a production of *Rigoletto* at the Den Norske Opera in Oslo, Norway. He will also assist director Robert Carsen in the upcoming Canadian Opera Company's production of *Orfeo ed Euridice* (May 8–28). JKS

MUSIC CRITIC KEN WINTERS PASSES AWAY

Ken Winters, aged 81, passed away on March 22, after a heart attack. He was a critic for newspapers including, most recently, the Globe and Mail, and co-editor of the original edition of The Encyclopedia of Music in Canada. He had worked for more than 40 years at the CBC, hosting shows such as *Mostly Music*, *Personalities in Music*, and *Ken Winters on Music*. CC

YAKOV KREIZBERG DIES AT 51

Music director of the Monte Carlo Philharmonic, chief conductor of the Netherlands Philharmonic and Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, Yakov Kreizberg passed away on March 15, following a long illness. After emigrating to the U.S. from Russia in 1976, Kreizberg became a rising star in the conducting world, landing fellowships at Tanglewood, studying with Leonard Bernstein and Michael Tilson Thomas, and winning the 1986 Leopold Stokowski Conducting Competition. His last public appearance as a conductor was with the Netherlands Philharmonic on Valentine's Day 2011. CC



Songwriter and poet LEONARD COHEN received the Glenn Gould Prize this year.

NINTH GLENN GOULD PRIZE LAUREATE IS LEONARD COHEN

Out of a shortlist of other distinguished international artists, singer-songwriter-poet Leonard Cohen has been presented with the \$50,000 Glenn Gould Prize. The award is presented every two years to a living artist in recognition of lifetime achievement. One of his most-covered signature tunes is "Hallelujah." Recent past laureates include el Sistema founder Dr. José Antonio Abreu (2008), Pierre Boulez (2002), Oscar Peterson (1993) and Yo-Yo Ma (1999). CC

IN MEMORIAM: ROBERT TEAR (MARCH 8 1939 - MARCH 29 2011)

Welsh tenor Robert Tear passed away at age 72. Born in Barry, Glamorgan, Wales, Tear made his operatic debut in 1966 as Peter Quint in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*. He made his Royal Opera debut as Lensky in *Eugene Onegin* in 1970.

2011 JUNO AWARD WINNERS

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Lara St. John, *Mozart/Scott and Lara St. John/The Knights*
Classical Album of the Year: Vocal or Choral Performance - **Gerald Finley, *Great Operatic Arias***
Classical Composition of the Year - **R. Murray Schafer, "Duo For Violin And Piano", *WILD BIRD***

THE GRYPHON TRIO



PHOTO John Beebe



SHANNON MERCER A TRADE- MARK VOICE

by **CRYSTAL CHAN**

INTERVIEW BY WAH KEUNG CHAN

Warm, clear, and easy on the vibrato, Shannon Mercer's trademark sound is unmistakable. The Canadian soprano is hailed as a leading Baroque vocalist, with the honours to prove it: most recently, a 2011 Juno nomination and a 2011 Opus Awards win and three nominations. Known for her versatility, Mercer is not one to be pigeon-holed, succeeding in early music, opera, contemporary and folk music, and holding her own in seemingly any genre she turns to.

Witness her current role in *Love Songs*, a one-woman show written by SMCQ 2011-2012 homage composer Ana Sokolovic. In the demanding hour-long performance Mercer sings a cappella and performs monologues, using 100 languages, all the while playing a chair and drum as percussion instruments. It's a virtuosic maelstrom of styles, weaving Baroque influences with contemporary music, experimental vocal techniques, and spoken word. Her voice fits seamlessly into each mode. "It shows off my ability to sing different styles," she says. Mercer and reporters alike have noted the strong effect the performance, featuring love songs and poems from around the world, has on audiences, who often give way to tears. Mercer is currently touring the show in western Canada, following performances in Toronto, Amsterdam, and Paris.

FROM OTTAWA TO CARNEGIE HALL

At 34, Mercer has already accomplished more than many do in a lifelong career. Named a "Leader of Tomorrow" by Maclean's, she is the recipient of numerous awards including a Career Development Grant and the Virginia Parker Prize from the Canada Council for the Arts, the 2004 Bernard Diamant Prize, and the Women's Musical Club of Toronto Career Development Award. Ensemble Caprice's December 3, 2009, performance of Bach's Mass in B minor, which featured Mercer, won Early Music Concert of the Year at this year's Opus Awards.

A juggler of many projects, she has an extensive discography—nine records in seven years. *O Viva Rosa* (2010), a finalist at this year's Opus for Early Music Record of the Year, brings to light unpublished music by Francesca Caccini, whom Mercer describes with reverence as "a very unique voice in music, but, as a female composer, sadly, not always taken seriously." The album is her sixth under the Analekta label, but she hasn't renewed her contract with them. Next year, ATMA will be issuing two recordings featuring Mercer: Bach's St. John Passion and a Purcell disc.

With one Juno win already under her belt for her part in Ensemble Caprice's *Gloria! Vivaldi's Angels* in 2009, this year sees a nomination for Ensemble Caprice's *Salsa Baroque* disc, another acclaimed record with her name on the credits. Also in 2009, Mercer surprised listeners with a turn to folk music with the release of *Wales, The Land of Song*. "To those who know me as a classical vocalist, this Welsh folksong album may seem odd," she writes in the liner notes. "But this music, this Welsh culture and heritage is the reason I became

a singer... My father's mother was left in a basket on the steps of an orphanage in June of 1913 in Gelligaer, Glamorgan, South Wales. My father immigrated to [Canada] in 1967 along with my mother and my three eldest siblings... He discovered the Ottawa Welsh Society and began to sing with the Gwalia Singers. I was able to carry on this inherited tradition when, at the age of 15, I traveled to Wales to sing in the prestigious Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod. I returned to Canada as a proud ambassador, bringing home the winning silver cup!"

By this time, Mercer had been taking voice lessons for eight years with Joan Burnside, as well as playing guitar and violin. Her life revolved around music, highlighted by the annual Kiwanis Music Festival. At Canterbury, an arts high school, she gained experience in many musical and artistic genres. "That helped me become a well-rounded singer," she explains. "I was able to draw on all that and not get stuck on one genre of music."

It was at McGill that Mercer's passion for early music took off, when she discovered that early music ensembles provided more stage time. It turned out she had a natural ease with the genre, and she com-

pleted a double major in vocal performance and early music. In Montreal, she became known as a baroque specialist, starting out in professional choirs such as the Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal (SMAM) and La Chapelle de Québec of Les Violons du Roy. "There is a stigma saying you have to sing with *this* colour voice for this and another for something else," says Mercer. "At McGill, nobody ever said to me 'you have to sing that way.'" Voice teachers Thérèse Sevadjian and Lucille Evans encouraged Mercer to hold on to her own voice, reveling in its tone, strengths, and weaknesses rather than try to change it with each role. "I've always used my own voice, for Baroque or other music. I realize that with different repertoire you're required to have more or less of a steady rate of vibrato."

Mercer's voice has, naturally, subtly changed over the years, yet the essence of her sound has remained unchanged. Even though she's never been able to pop what she jokingly calls "Z sharps" (impossibly high notes), she now finds her voice dropping lower and developing a richer timbre, which matches her increased stamina, confidence, knowledge, and emotional depth.

After McGill, Mercer developed a separate opera persona by studying at the University of Toronto's Opera School, followed by San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Summer Program and the Canadian Opera Company (COC) Ensemble Studio. Now based in Toronto, she performs on stages across North America and Europe, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Hollywood Bowl, Royal Albert Hall, and Covent Garden. She has performed for opera companies including the COC, l'Opéra du Québec, Opera Lyra Ottawa, Opera Ontario, Opera Atelier, Toronto Operetta Theatre, and Opéra national de Montpellier, in addition to dozens of ensembles and orchestras. Displaying a strong sense of humour and great theatrical flair, Mercer starred in the Gemini-nominated filmed comic opera *Burnt Toast* as well as *Not the Messiah*, a musical based on Monty Python's *Life of Brian*, written by the creators of *Spamalot*.

This year's season has seen or will see her perform with the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Arion Baroque Orchestra, Portland Baroque Orchestra, Les Voix Baroques, Ensemble Caprice, Les Violons du Roy, the Welsh music group Skye Consort, the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Houston's Mercury Baroque, and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

BREAKING THE RULES

As multifaceted as her talents and interests are, early music holds a particularly special place. "It's like I was born in that time. Purcell is one of, if not *the*, favourite composer of mine, and as for Handel, Bach, Mozart, I've always felt a connection with them. The music really speaks to me and suits my voice," she states. She loves the challenge of tackling music that's still relatively shrouded in mystery, enjoying the task of interpreting old scores with only several treatises, theories, and your own imagination to guide you. There are challenges specific to composers, too; while some composers such as Handel write perfect lines tailored to singers' capabilities (a lot of singers dub Handel "medicine for the voice"), others such as Bach write vocal lines in an instrumental way,

creating long lines without a space to breathe naturally. When she was younger, she pushed through “ridiculous phrases.” Now, she feels lucky she has great breath control and has learned not to force herself too far. “When you’re in performance your breath changes significantly because of your nerves,” she explains. “Whether it’s nervousness or excitement, it affects you the same way: your breath becomes more shallow. You shouldn’t put the pressure on yourself to make it through crazy phrases; you should breathe where it feels comfortable.”

Mercer also has a talent for improvisation and ornamentation, writing her own cadenzas. In Baroque tradition, the *da capo* (repeat) of the first part of a song is usually open to the performer for embellishment, allowing each to create their own “version” to best show themselves off. Latter-day vocal stars such as sopranos Francesca Cuzzoni and Faustina Bordoni participated in musical duels, each trying to perform more virtuosic cadenzas than the other. There are no hard-set rules, but Mercer likes traditional ornaments that don’t stray too far from the initial melody or hit the stratospheres of a performer’s range: all in good taste. Mercer’s cadenzas are so admired by colleagues that many have asked for permission to use them or even for her to write for them. She herself rarely borrows from other singers. She listens to recordings (some of her favourites are by Emma Kirkby) to hone in on techniques she likes but she builds her own unique vocabulary—not by emulation, but through trial and error. “I never listen to a recording of a piece until I’ve already learned the notes,” she says. “You develop your



“I’VE NEVER FOLLOWED THE RULES. I’M VERSATILE; IF I GOT STUCK IN ONE GENRE OF MUSIC, I WOULDN’T BE ABLE TO TRY CRAZY THINGS.”

own ornamental style, just like you develop the way you dress.”

It might seem Mercer is stepping in a very different direction with a contemporary piece like *Love Songs*, but for her, “there’s a cross-over between early and contemporary music as there’s a certain ability to be spontaneous, improvisational, and take things that are not written in the score and make the piece your own, whereas in classical or Romantic music it’s really written in the piece and you mustn’t stray.” She’s eager to work on other contemporary works, and is extremely excited

about another Sokolovic piece she’s premiering this June in Toronto: *Svadba – The Wedding*.

In the end, Mercer welcomes any project, regardless of genre, as long as she feels connected to the piece and the other performers. In December, she even narrated a Toronto Symphony Orchestra concert, singing not one note.

“I’ve never followed the rules,” she admits with a laugh. “I’m versatile; if I got stuck in one genre of music, I wouldn’t be able to try crazy things. I think there’s this joke about me where whenever an organization goes: ‘hmm we need a soprano for kazoo, who could do that... oh, Shannon Mercer!’ I’m always inspired and excited about the next project.”

You can’t compare yourself to others, she believes. “There are people at the top of their game, but it can be lonely and unfulfilling. I don’t want that to happen. I don’t want to stop loving it. I will never be a Wagnerian soprano, and I’m okay with that—I have to try to be the best I can be at what I can do.”

Many of her fellow musicians have advised her that, in the end, the sole priority becomes making amazing music with amazing people. It’s now her personal goal. “One of the great things about her is that she is not only a very fine singer, but so much fun to work with,” says Artistic Director of Ensemble Caprice, Matthias Maute. “Working hard and cracking jokes at the same time don’t exclude each other!”

TMS

» April 16, *Mulroney: The Opera* in movie theatres
 » May 5-6, Enwave Theatre: Charpentier’s *La Descente d’Orphée aux Enfers*, James Rolfe’s *Orpheus and Eurydice*
 » June, The Queen of Puddings Music Theatre
www.shannonmercer.com

NOTES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA DECLARES BANKRUPTCY

After 111 years in operations, the board of the prestigious Philadelphia Orchestra voted on April 16 to file for bankruptcy protection, making it the first major American ensemble to do so. For now, the PO will continue to perform concerts. In an attempt to save the orchestra from liquidation, they are expected to announce a \$214 million fundraising campaign, their largest to date. The musicians have also been asked to take a 16% pay cut as well as other concessions. CC

MIMC QUARTERFINAL CANDIDATES ANNOUNCED

The 10th Montreal International Musical Competition (this year dedicated to piano) has announced 24 candidates (average age 25) from twelve countries for the quarterfinals (May 24-26), each vying for the \$30,000 top prize. Canada has the most pianists with four: Tina Chong, Younggun Kim, Steven Massicotte, and Avan Yu. The semi-finals will take place May 27 and 28, while the finals will be held on May 31 and June 1. As in past years, all rounds can be viewed live (audio-video) courtesy of Espace-musique. The international jury includes Arnaldo Cohen (Brazil), Jean-Philippe Collard (France), Mari Kodama (Japan), James Parker (Canada), Benjamin Pasternack (United States), Imre Rohmann (Austria) and Lilya Zilberstein. www.concoursmontreal.ca CC

VANCOUVER OPERA MOVES INTO NEW HOME

To unite its production and administrative facilities, the Vancouver Opera will be moving to a new rehearsal, production, storage, box office, and administrative space: the Vancouver Opera Centre (1945 McLean Avenue, near Commercial Drive). Its main stage performances will continue to be performed at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre downtown. CC

THE POLITICAL SIDE of the ARTS

by REBECCA CLARK

This May 2, will arts policy influence your vote as it did in the 2008 election? According to a July 2008 report from the Conference Board of Canada, Canada’s artistic and cultural sector is responsible for 7.4% of Canada’s total real GDP and over 1.1 million jobs. Support from the Canadian government is essential to the sector.

The Conservative government increased Canada Council for the Arts funding by 20% to more than \$180M, and, along with 14 Canadian network and telecommunications companies, helped create the Canadian Media Fund. But in 2008, Harper implied that the arts were irrelevant to Canadians, and have repeatedly delayed the \$25M Canada Prize announced in the 2009 budget. This year, the Tories promise to support the Royal Conservatory and the Canadian Periodical Fund. In its budget, the Tories introduced a tax credit for families of \$500 per child enrolled in “eligible arts or cultural activities,” five years after introducing a similar tax credit for sports; note, the credit effectively gives \$75 per child.

The Liberal party promises to double Canada Council for the Arts funding to \$360M. They also promise to reinstate funding for PromArt and Trade Routes with \$25M. As for media concerns, the Libs want greater access to broadband internet without usage caps for Canadians and have worked for effective copyright laws.

The NDP believes in creating new arts touring funds to replace PromArt and Trade Routes and, like the Liberals, in net neutrality and copyright reform that “[balances] consumers’ and creator’s rights.” They also support tax averaging for artists, which can ease income tax time for artists whose incomes vary greatly from year to year.

Valuing Culture: Measuring and Understanding Canada’s Creative Economy by the Conference Board of Canada is available free of charge at www.conferenceboard.ca

MULRONEY

THE OPERA

A former Prime Minister gets the operatic treatment

by JOSEPH K. SO

Who says politics and art don't mix? Or to be more precise—who says political themes make deathly dull subjects in the arts? The fact is that politics have always been fodder for the operatic imagination, from Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* to Adams' *Nixon in China*. But typically composers treat their subject with the utmost seriousness, even reverence. Not so Canadian composer Alexina Louie and writer/librettist Dan Redican. They have taken an outrageously funny look at one of the most flamboyant and controversial figures in Canadian politics in their newest creation *Mulroney: The Opera*. Filmed by Rhombus Media with actors and a separately recorded soundtrack with opera singers, the film premiered in selected cinemas across Canada on April 16 (there will be an encore presentation on April 27) as part of the Met in HD series, introduced by Peter Gelb no less. Four years in the making, it represents the continuing collaborative efforts of composer Louie and producer Larry Weinstein. They had previously collaborated on *Toothpaste* and *Burnt Toast*, two works that have won critical acclaim. *Mulroney: The Opera* is a much more ambitious project, with a budget of \$3.5 million and a huge cast of actors and singers. It captures a particularly interesting moment in Canadian history, a time populated by larger-than-life personalities like Brian Mulroney and Pierre Elliott Trudeau. As the film begins, it's 2002 and the dignitaries are gathered on Parliament Hill for the unveiling of the Mulroney official portrait. In flashback style, the film goes on to give the viewer a snapshot of the former PM—his childhood in Baie Comeau, his romance with one Mila Pivnicki, his dramatic election win, and the subsequent controversies and scandals that plagued his two terms in office.

I was fortunate to have had a sneak peek at the film and the accompanying documentary. Without giving too much away, I can say that, typical of this genre, *Mulroney: The Opera* is not meant to be a history lesson. Rather, it retells Mulroney's story in an outrageously comedic fashion, one that is a strange mix of truth and fancy. To be sure, it cleverly captures Mulroney the man and the politician. The



PHOTOS Rhombus Media

cast of characters that made up the Mulroney era are also finely drawn; in fact, the film pokes fun at everyone, living or dead. Stylistically it's like a series of political cartoons, as librettist Dan Redican so succinctly puts it. Not only has Redican contributed a brilliant libretto, he is also hilarious as the bumbling Fictitious Historian, a sort of "speaker" or "narrator" such as one finds in certain Greek tragedies. Musically the work does not pretend to be original—it's best described as eclectic, consisting of a pastiche of musical styles that somehow manages to work. The Baie Comeau scene is like a page out of Gilbert & Sullivan, complete with a swaying chorus. Opera buffs are bound to get a kick out of the many literal quotations from famous operas—*Don Giovanni*, *Flying Dutchman*, *La bohème*, *Carmen*, even *Dido and Aeneas*! Who can resist the outlandish images of Trudeau and Mulroney in a combative tango set to the music of the *Habanera*? Or in the film's dénouement when Mulroney desperately intones "Remember me... remember me..." from "Dido's Lament"?

Actor Rick Miller is a tour-de-force Mulroney. The make-up department deserves some sort of award.



Though he looks nothing like the politician in real life, after three-hour make-up sessions and a prosthetic chin, Miller's transformation is nothing short of astounding. Others are equally impressive—the profile of Trudeau (played mischievously by Wayne Best) reclining on a chaise lounge, cape and all, sniffing a red rose is priceless. Despite having separate singers and actors, the lip-synching is nearly perfect. The casting of light tenors for several of Mulroney's antagonists—including John Turner—portrays them as wimpy foes next to the manly baritone of Okulitch (*pace* character tenors!). The ultimate question has to be: What would be the reaction of the real life Mulroney to this film? The accompanying documentary seems to offer him an olive branch. It stresses that the whole thing is all in fun—"It's not a grueling satire; there's a certain affection [for him]; if not in the words, it's in the music," says producer Weinstein. Okulitch adds that the film "is not trying to be a realistic recreation of his life—it's meant to be a satire." The reaction of the 18th prime minister of Canada to *Mulroney: The Opera* is anyone's guess. Will he even see it? Perhaps the final chapter of the Mulroney saga remains to be written.

TMS

April 27 in select theatres. www.mulroneytheopera.ca

WHEN YOU WISH UPON AN OPERA...

The newest operatic kid on the block kicks off with Rose Marie

by JOSEPH K. SO

What's more quintessentially Canadian than the Rockies, Mounties, Indians and Romance? It's billed as a Canadian love story between a French girl and an English boy, set in the wild west of the Canadian Rockies. Throw in a scintillating score with catchy tunes, sung by up-and-coming singers with beautiful voices and attractive stage presence, and you've got the right ingredients for success. That's certainly the strategy of Wish Opera, in its inaugural production of Rudolf Friml's operetta, *Rose Marie*. Founded in the spring of 2010, Wish Opera has as its mission the fusion of fashion and design with the beauty of the operatic art form in productions that appeal to the contemporary audience. Given its mandate to support and nurture Canadian artists, *Rose Marie* stars an all-Canadian cast, led by Quebec mezzo-soprano Maude Brunet as Rose Marie La Flamme. Her love interest, English Canadian miner Jim Kenyon, is sung by baritone Todd Delaney. Bass-baritone Olivier Laquerre is Rose Marie's brother Emile. This musical was a huge hit on Broadway in 1924, and it was adapted for film no less than three times. The most famous version was the 1936 Hollywood movie starring Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy, and the song "Indian Love Call" became the signature tune of this screen couple. Soprano Tonia Cianciulli is the driving force behind this ambitious venture. Recently she spoke with *TMS* about her new project:

Tell us a little about your background as an artist and what is your vision for Wish Opera. Can you explain the concept of combining music with fashion and design for our readers?

I am a classically trained singer—I studied voice at the University of Western Ontario. The idea for Wish Opera came out of an event I did for clients of my husband's company six years ago. We took over an empty loft space in the Liberty Village area in downtown Toronto, painted it white and we had six or seven different artists displaying their works. We had a stage built for live jazz, opera, and fashion; it represented a fusion of the arts. We got great feedback from the arts community. This event provided a platform for artists to gain exposure and experience. Through that I developed a passion for working with artists of all mediums, and I see this as a way of expanding the audience of opera. By fusing the different art forms, we are opening it up to younger people,

TONIA CIANCIULLI:

We are just focusing on bringing things up to date and making them accessible to the modern day audience.

people who may not even think of going to the opera. In our productions, in addition to singers we also feature Canadian designers of fashion, furniture, interiors, and photographers.

Last year at the Wish Opera Launch Concert at York University, you announced plans for a production of *Don Giovanni* in a different venue and with a different conductor. Why the change?

We had planned to do *Don Giovanni* up at York University, but after the launch, we quickly realized that to sustain the company we needed to be downtown. A lot of our audience are in the downtown core—that's just the reality of it. We found a new home in the John Bassett theatre at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. It's a stunning 1,300 seat facility, and they are excited to have us there. We also found a new music director in Kerry Stratton. He's got an incredible personality and is very supportive of Canadian talent.

Combining the beauty of music with fashion and design, which are by nature also expressions of beauty. In other words "beauty" figures prominently in the ethos of Wish Opera. Does that mean when it comes to opera singers, you want them to be beautiful too?

(Laughs) I guess that's an understandable question! No, we are looking for singers who can perform the role—we are not looking to fill the roles with the same tall, skinny people! Ideally we want to hire singers who can do a quality job. Where the fashion comes in at this point is that we are pulling pieces from different designers' lines that we can use as costumes. It gives the designers exposure and lets people know that there are lots of local talent. For *Rose Marie* we have two designers from Montreal who have agreed to feature their lines on stage for us. There's actually a scene in *Rose Marie* that takes place in a dress boutique in Quebec City where a little fashion show takes place!

That's not in the movie...

No it's not, because the movie is not true to the original operetta. In the original this scene does exist. The Montreal designers are Denis Gagnon and Marie Saint Pierre—they are very talented and certainly designers to watch. When we get a larger budget, we'll be able to go to the designers and ask if they can create specific costumes for us. For now we are just going with what they already have.

Considering that you use contemporary designers, is it safe to say your productions are going to have a contemporary feel to them, as opposed to traditional productions?

Well, I am not looking for things to be abstract. If it's more contemporary, it'll be more accessible for the audience. We might be doing period pieces as well, but for now, I think we are just focusing on bringing things up to date and making them accessible to the modern day audience.

Tell us about your plans for the orchestra.

We are forming a Wish Opera Orchestra. Kerry (Stratton) can speak to that. Trumpeter Andre Dubelsten is working with Kerry to pull together a team. For *Rose Marie* it will be an orchestra of 19 or 20 musicians. This work has a lot of Canadian content—it's set in the Rockies and we have an all-Canadian cast. We've even have the RCMP on board. They are often reluctant to come to these events as people often don't take them seriously. I had to convince them that it would be a good opportunity for them to educate the public. Before curtain, Constable Terry Russel will appear, dressed in his Royal Red Surge regalia, and speak to the audience about the significance of the Mounties uniform. Canadian painter Charles Pachter has also agreed to be on board. He is well known for his renderings of the Canadian flag and the Queen on the moose and his classic painting of a Mountie—you can't get more Canuck than that (laughs)! **TMS**

Friml & Stothart: *Rose Marie*, April 15 & 16, John Bassett Theatre, 255 Front Street West, Toronto www.wishopera.ca

PHOTO Monica McKenna



MALCOLM LOWE to perform
Brahms with Darren Lowe

PHOTO Michael Lutch



FANS OF YUJA WANG can catch her
at the National Arts Centre



SOPRANO DONNA BROWN will
appear with Thirteen Strings

PHOTO www.duobrazil.com



ANGELA HEWITT
in recital on May 7

PHOTO Bernd Eberle

The Bogotá Philharmonic Orchestra, Colombia, public institution attached to the "Secretaría Distrital de Cultura, Recreación y Deporte" of the Mayor's Office of Bogotá

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

of selection for individuals interested in taking part in the
Invitation to Compete No.001 of 2011 for the provision of the
following posts:

- One (1) vacancy for
Bassoon Group Leader – Grade 05**
- One (1) vacancy for Orchestra Musician
Violoncello – Grade 03**
- One (1) vacancy for Orchestra Musician
Violoncello - Grade 02**
- One (1) vacancy for Orchestra Musician
Violin – Grade 01**

Nature of the post: Public Servant
Engagement: Working Contract.

APPLICATIONS:
From 02nd May to 10th June 2011

FURTHER INFORMATION:
info@ofb.gov.co
www.filarmonicabogota.gov.co



CULTURA, RECREACIÓN Y DEPORTE - Orquesta Filarmónica de Bogotá

OTTAWA

by JULIE BERARDINO

VERDI REQUIEM

The Polish-born Canadian soprano Maria Knapik has performed throughout Europe and North America, including Carnegie Hall. Highly involved in the promotion of the arts, she recently was awarded a gold medal from the American Institute of Polish Culture. She will be featured soloist in Verdi's Requiem, alongside mezzo Renée Lapointe, tenor Enrique Pina and baritone Jeffrey Carl, under the direction of Michel Brousseau, her partner and companion. This unique event is a collaboration between the Ottawa Classical Choir and New World Philharmonic Orchestra. May 21, NAC. www.ottawaclassicalchoir.com

EXCITING PROGRAM AT THE NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE

In addition to a beautiful afternoon of chamber music of Brahms, on May 8 at 2 p.m. with **Malcolm and Darren Lowe**, the NAC offers the opportunity to hear rising stars on May 16 at the Finals of the 2011 NAC Orchestra Bursary Competition.

» On the symphonic side, the amazing pianist **Yuja Wang** performs the virtuosic Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini by Rachmaninov on May 25 and 26. Sibelius's First Symphony and *Freak in Burbank* by contemporary Swedish composer Albert Schnelzer are also on the program. Thomas Dausgaard, conducts.

» On June 1, be carried away by the grandiose and fantastic poetry of Mahler's Fourth Symphony. The finale will feature soprano Erin Wall, whose agile coloratura technique has earned her critical acclaim. Pianist Jon Kimura Parker performing Mozart's 27th and last piano concerto; Pinchas Zukermann conducts. www.nac-cna.ca

ANGELA HEWITT

Always popular, a recital by pianist **Angela Hewitt** is a must, especially since all ticket sales of the May 7 concert go to support the Bruyère Foundation, champions of the well-being of aging Canadians. It's a demanding program of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms, full of nuance and subtlety. Christ Church Cathedral. www.chamberplayers.ca

THIRTEEN STRINGS

A refreshing program awaits you on May 10, when conductor Kevin Mallon leads the Thirteen Strings and the Junior Thirteen Strings. The wonderful soprano **Donna Brown** will perform works by Arne, Purcell and Britten's *Les Illuminations*. St. Andrew's Church. www.thirteenstrings.ca

PHOTO Holger Hage

Thank You!

Received between Dec. 1, 2009 and Nov.30, 2010.

TITANIUM CIRCLE (\$5000+)

Danielle Blouin
Michel Buruiana
Wah Keung Chan

PLATINUM CIRCLE (\$2500+)

Sandro Scola
Joseph K. So

SILVER CIRCLE (\$500+)

Claude Bernatchez
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Iwan Edwards
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Noël Spinelli

BRONZE CIRCLE (\$250+)

Katherine Bartosh
Gilles Cloutier
Pierre Corriveau
Jonathan Crow
Nicole Dasnoy Le Gall
Suzette Frenette
Margaret Lefebvre
Paul Robinson

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS (\$100+)

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Helina Drahotsky
Morty N. Ellis
Eleanor Evans
Michelle Fountaine
Paul Gagné
Roch Gagnon
Madeleine Gervais
Françoise Grunberg
Marie-Thérèse Guay
Lisa Haddad
Claire Goyer Harel
Eleanor Hope
Malle Jurima-Romet
Daniel Kandelman
Brian E Keefe
Michel Lacombe
Mario Lamarre
Jean-Marc Laplante
Monique Lecavalier
Suzanne Lépine
Adèle Lessard
Jacques Major
Robert McKhool
Lucie Ménard
Jacques Mercier
Jeanne-d'Arc Messier
James Edward Neville
Carolyn R. Osborne
Francine Ouellette
Paule Ouimet-Scott
Madeleine Palmer
Claudette Perencin
André Petit
B. Presser
Madeleine Pulichino
Donald Rawlings
Jean-Guy Raymond
Lidia Rosselli-Orme
Claude Routhier
Jean-Luc Routhier
Zita Roy
Avelino Rubilar
Jean-Guy Sabourin
Eunice Sebastio
Mary Soderstrom
Frans Suffeleers
Elizabeth J Taylor
Marguerite D. Tessier
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PHOTO Yves Rivard



PHOTO Lauri Eriksson

SOUTHERN ONTARIO VOCAL PREVIEW

by JOSEPH K. SO

It may not look or feel like it, but spring is officially here in Southern Ontario, and with it come plenty of operatic blooms. Top on the list is the three-production Spring Season of the Canadian Opera Company, led by the return of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (Apr. 23 – May 25). It was last staged by the COC in April 1996 with the marvelous Anna Caterina Antonacci as Angelina. This time around it will be mezzo Elizabeth DeShong in the title role, with sensational high tenor **Lawrence Brownlee** as her Prince Charming, called Don Ramiro in the Rossini opera. Baritone Brett Polegato is Dandini and Italian buffo Donato DiStefano returns to the COC as Don Magnifico. Conductor Leonardo Vordoni makes his COC debut. Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Apr. 30 – May 29) returns after a 16-year absence, this time with soprano Adrienne Pieczonka in one of her signature roles. Alice Coote is the Komponist and Canadian soprano Jane Archibald is Zerbinetta. These ladies recently sang together in *Ariadne* in Munich and it was fabulous. Bacchus is tenor Richard Margison, and Sir Andrew Davis makes his COC conducting debut. The third production is Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* (May 8 – 28) with the fabulous countertenor Lawrence Zazzo as Orfeo and Canadian soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian as Euridice. Early music specialist Harry Bicket returns to the COC to conduct. www.coc.ca

Another high profile show is Opera Atelier's *La clemenza di Tito* (Apr. 22– May 1). It marks the return of Canadian soprano/pop culture diva **Measha Brueggergosman** to OA after her sensational Elettra in *Idomeneo* three seasons ago. She is singing the dramatic role of Vitellia. The exceptional male soprano Michael Maniaci returns to OA as Sesto, and the title role is taken by dramatic

tenor Krešimir Špicer. David Fallis conducts. www.operaatelier.com

On the recital front, soprano Adrienne Pieczonka will take time out from her run of *Ariadne* to sing an all-German *liederabend* at Koerner Hall, with Brian Zeger at the piano. On the program are songs by Schubert, Strauss, and Wagner's *Wesendonck-Lieder*. In my interview with her recently, she said she's programming as encores some show tunes, as homage to the great Barbara Cook who recently appeared at Koerner Hall. www.rcmusic.ca

The International Resource Centre for Performing Artists will present a week of opera coaching (May 5–9) in Toronto by renowned Metropolitan Opera vocal coach Joan Dornemann and La Scala's Vincenzo Scaleria. The sessions are open to the public for \$20. The week culminates with a concert on May 11 to celebrate Toscanini. www.international-resourcecentreforperformingartists.com, 416-362-1422

Finnish diva **Karita Mattila** is making one of her rare visits to Toronto on May 5 and 7, as soloist with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, in an evening of (nearly) all Finnish music. On the program are works by Saariaho, Sibelius, Ravel and Bloch. Mattila will be singing in Sibelius' *Luonnotor* as well as in *Mirage*, a piece composed for her by Saariaho. Hannu Lintu conducts. www.tso.ca

The Aldeburgh Connection is presenting its annual *Schubertiad* in memory of Greta Kraus on May 1 at Walter Hall, University of Toronto. The soloists are soprano Gillian Keith, tenor Lawrence Wiliford and baritone Tyler Duncan. Stephen Ralls and Bruce Ubukata are at the piano. www.aldeburghconnection.org

On May 8 at the Glenn Gould Studio, the Off Centre Music Salon is presenting its Czech/Russian and Italian Salons, with the colourful title *Lost in Love... and sometimes Lust!* Soloists are tenor Colin Ainsworth, baritone Peter McGillivray, and sopranos Rachel Cleland-Ainsworth and Lucia Cesaroni. Boris and Inna Zarankin are, as usual, at the keyboard. www.offcentremusic.com

TMS

FROM TOP LEFT:

1. LAWRENCE BROWNLEE
2. MEASHA BRUEGGERGOSMAN
3. MAUDE BRUNET
4. KARITA MATTILA

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

1. TAN DUN
2. ITZHAK PERLMAN
3. EMANUEL AX
4. GABRIELA MONTERO



PHOTO: EMI Classics



PHOTO: Henry Fair



PHOTO: Nan Watanab



SOUTHERN ONTARIO INSTRUMENTAL PREVIEW

by L.H. TIFFANY HSIEH

The heavyweights are coming to Toronto in droves over the next couple of months and you won't have to look too hard for them if you can just get to Roy Thomson Hall, Koerner Hall or Glenn Gould Studio.

The Toronto Symphony Orchestra has a stunning line-up of great performers in May and June, starting with the modest American-Jewish pianist **Emanuel Ax** on May 11 and 12. Ax returns to Toronto with conductor Sir Andrew Davis in one of Mozart's most appealing and charming works, his Piano Concerto No. 17 in G Major, K. 453. The program opens with Mozart's Overture to *La clemenza di Tito*, K. 621 and concludes with Strauss' *Eine Alpensinfonie*, Op. 64 (*An Alpine Symphony*).

Also returning as a perennial favourite at the TSO is Ax's long-time friend and collaborator, violinist **Itzhak Perlman** on May 21. Perlman is back as both soloist and conductor for a one-night-only performance. For this special concert, the Israeli-American violin virtuoso has programmed three of Mozart's much-loved works, his Adagio in E Major for Violin and Orchestra, K. 261, Rondo in C Major for Violin and Orchestra, K. 373 and Symphony No. 25 in G Minor, K. 173dB. The concert will wrap up with Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, Op. 95, "From the New World".

Ever the dramatist, Chinese composer and conductor **Tan Dun** will bring two of his concertos to

town on May 26 and 28: *Water Concerto*, composed in 1998, and *Paper Concerto*, composed in 2003. Both concertos run about 30 minutes each and feature unusual solo instruments, ones that interact with water and ones that are made from paper, respectively. Percussionists enlisted for these two highly visual and entertaining performances are Wang Beibei, Cui Kun and Wang Juan. Aside from his own compositions, Dun will conduct the TSO in Spanish composer Manuel de Falla's "Ritual Fire Dance" from his ballet *El amor brujo*, composed in 1915, and Charles Ives' *The Unanswered Question*, composed in 1906.

After she turns 41 years old on May 10, the Venezuelan-American pianist **Gabriela Montero** will make her TSO debut on June 1 and 2. Known for her unique improvisational gifts, Montero will take on Rachmaninoff's showy Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43 with music director Peter Oundjian on the podium. The program will also feature TSO's very own principal clarinetist, Joaquín Valdepeñas, in Debussy's Première rhapsodie for Clarinet and Orchestra. That's not it for this exciting and jam-packed concert as you will also be treated to three symphonic poems of Messiaen's *Les offrandes oubliées*, Dukas' *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and Rachmaninoff's *The Isle of the Dead*. www.tso.ca

If you prefer live concerts in a more intimate setting, it's a keyboard wonderland over at Koerner Hall and who better to tackle Johannes Brahms than the city's own Anton Kuerti.

On April 30, the 72-year-old Kuerti will play Brahms' beloved Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor, Op. 15 with the Ontario Philharmonic, founded in Oshawa in 1957 and led by conductor Marco Parisotto. The other half of the program features Brahms' Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68.

Following pianists Stewart Goodyear, Simone Dinnerstein, Hélène Grimaud and Leon Fleisher,

Koerner Hall's Sunday afternoon piano series will come to an end with French pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard on May 1.

Aimard, who is named Instrumentalist of the Year by both the Royal Philharmonic Awards in London and Musical America, will present a mostly Liszt recital program of the composer's *La lugubre gondola*, S.200, No. 1, *Nuages gris*, S.199, *Unstern! Sinistre, disastro*, S.208 and the daunting Piano Sonata in B Minor, S.178. In between, the pianist will also perform Wagner's *Eine Sonate für das Album von Frau M.W.*, WWV 85, Berg's Piano Sonata in B Minor, Op. 1 and Scriabin's Piano Sonata No. 9 in F Major, Op. 68 "Black Mass". www.performance.rcmusic.ca

If you saw this Russian powerhouse at Roy Thomson Hall with Valery Gergiev and the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra last season, you won't want to miss pianist Denis Matsuev in his Toronto debut piano recital on May 12.

Presented by Show One Productions, Matsuev, 35, has been the artistic director of the Sergei Rachmaninoff Foundation since 2008 and has recorded Rachmaninoff's unknown works on the composer's piano at the Rachmaninoff house in Lucerne. In this special one-day-only recital, Matsuev has programmed Schubert's Sonata A minor, Op. 143, Beethoven's Sonata No. 23 "Appassionata", Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz* and Rachmaninoff's Sonata No. 2 (second edition). www.showoneproductions.ca

The Sinfonia Toronto has come a long way in recent years. Under the baton of conductor Nurhan Arman, the 13-piece virtuoso string orchestra joins Canadian pianist André Laplante in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 2 at CBC's Glenn Gould Studio on May 13. The concert will open with Albinoni's Adagio, include the premiere of Polish composer Norbert Palej's *Rorate Coeli* and conclude with the orchestral version of Schubert's Quartet in G minor. www.sinfoniatoronto.com

PHOTO: Akira Kin

TMS

INTO *the* WOODS

NEW PROGRAMS *at* LAKEFIELD MUSIC

by FJÓLA EVANS

Lake Field Music camp, nestled in the trees above Lake Katchewanooka in the picturesque Kawartha Lakes region of Ontario, is a camp like no other. During the month of August, the campus of Lake Field College School becomes overrun with music lovers, but this is not the typical scene of twelve-year-olds hacking away at their Suzuki method—Lake Field Music caters specifically to adult musicians. Running alongside CAMMAC (Canadian Amateur Musicians/Musiciens amateurs du Canada) and known as the CAMMAC Ontario Music Center for the past 33 years, the camp recently became independent and is presenting its first summer program as an independent body.

Like most music camps, Lake Field offers a wide variety of activities, including non-musical ones. Activities centred on the natural beauty of the region are very popular, as it is possible to enjoy a swim or canoe ride in Lake Katchewanooka, a hike, or a game of tennis on the campus grounds. But it is in its attention to musical programming where Lake Field Music really stands apart. The camp offers a wide array of classes for many levels of students. The programming focuses on two sessions in August, one jazz and one classical music session. The jazz session offers fifteen different courses including Intro to Jazz Improvisation, Jazz Choir (new in 2011), Instrumental Jazz Combo and Brass Technique, all designed to hone students' jazz and improv chops. Lake Field also provides a multitude of courses designed to expand the students' exposure to different musical genres. The jazz week presents a Klezmer class taught by Martin van de Ven where the students learn about the centuries-old musical tradition, and study and play in the nuanced style. There is



also plenty to choose from, with thirty courses offered by the Classical session. The range includes everything from full orchestra to playing handbells to Mastering Ornamentation in Baroque and Classical Music. The world music contingent is also represented here, with tabla player Ravi Naimpally teaching a course on Indian classical music where students learn how to play the tabla, the rhythmic cycle of beats that is integral to Indian Classical music. New classes this year were added to include a focus on courses where vocalists and instrumentalists perform together, such as Jazz Standards in the jazz week and Early Music Repertoire in the classical week.

In an effort to make the camp more appealing and accessible to beginner musicians, two new courses were added this year specifically geared towards the novice: Learn to Sing and Learn Guitar. The objective the camp envisions is to keep the camp accessible to students of different levels but also to make the camp available to entire families. According to camp president Andrew Wolf, "The goal is to facilitate amateur music-

making in a non-competitive and encouraging environment." If a more experienced musician attending the camp wants to bring their non-musician spouse, there are courses offered at a level for everyone! In addition, for the past six years, the camp has been offering classes to the children of participants. They hope to inspire in the children a life-long love of music, and encourage them to return to the camp as adults. Lake Field Music is a diverse musical summer learning experience open to all. In the words of Andrew Wolf, "The camp has always succeeded at accommodating beginner and advanced musicians without compromising each other's experience. Participants can come year after year and have a different experience depending on their changing abilities and interests. No auditions required, just play, sing, enjoy and be inspired!" **TMS**

Lake Field Music is running two sessions this summer: Jazz (July 31-August 7) and the Classical Music week (August 7-14). The deadline to apply for a bursary is May 31. www.lakefieldmusic.ca

Remembering SUMMER MUSIC CAMP

by SHANNON MERCER

I did many different kinds of summer camps growing up. Sometimes my focus was on instruments other than the voice such as violin, clarinet and percussion. Back then, I was interested and curious about all things musical. I think that curiosity helped me later on to get excited about orchestration and how the instruments weave and support the vocal line. My limited time playing the violin still influences how I think about breathing, phrasing and articulation.

When I got much older I took part in young artist training summer programs: Tanglewood in 2001, the Merola Opera Training Program affiliated with San Francisco Opera in 2002, and finally the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara in 2003.

I had wonderful experiences at all of these programs and worked with incredible coaches, teachers, conductors and colleagues. I was able to continue my growth as an artist while connecting with like-minded people and creating lasting friendships.

The main thing was learning that there were other kids at that young age who also had a passion for music. I remember the one headed up by Rod Elias, a well-known guitarist in the Ottawa area and across Canada, where I played several instruments, having much fun making music! **TMS**



PHOTO Helen Tansley

Read an interview with Shannon Mercer on page 10.

2011 MUSIC CAMPS GUIDE

NEWFOUNDLAND

Vinland Music Camp

Box 40, Ladle Cove
www.soundbone.ca | from August 21 to 27, 2011

NOVA SCOTIA

Atlantic Jazz Festival Halifax, Creative Music Workshop

Box 33043, Halifax
www.jazzeast.com | from July 11 to 17, 2011

NEW BRUNSWICK

University of New Brunswick Music Camp

University of New Brunswick-Box 4400, Fredericton
www.unb.ca/cel/programs/creative/music/music-camp | from August 13 to 20, 2011

MONTREAL

Arti-Culture, camps multi-arts et spécialisés

2292, De Marbella, Laval
www.articulture.ca | from July 4 to August 26, 2011

Camp Amy Molson

5165 Sherbrooke St. W., suite 210, Montréal
www.campamymolson.com | from June 5 to August 18, 2011

Camp de Blues

400, de Maisonneuve West Blvd, Montreal
www.campdeblues.com | from April 30 to May 1, 2011

Camp de jour de l'École Nos Voix Nos Visages

2516, rue Sainte-Hélène, Longueuil
www.nosvoixnosvisages.org | from June 27 to August 19, 2011

Camp Livingstone

CP818, Magog
www.camplivingstone.ca | from July 3 to August 13, 2011

Camp musical d'été de Montréal (CME)

Université de Montréal, Faculté de Musique. École des jeunes CP6128 succ. centre-ville, Montréal
ecoledesjeunes.musique.umontreal.ca | from June 27 to July 22, 2011

Creative Video Day Camp

6405 de Terrebonne, Montréal (NDG)
collectivevision.ca | from July 5 to August 27, 2011

École d'été, Arts et métiers d'art de Mont-Laurier

CP 334, Mont-Laurier
www.lecoledete.com | from July 4 to 29, 2011

École de théâtre du vieux St-Eustache, camp de théâtre et d'impro

36, rue St-Eustache, St-Eustache
www.ecoledetheatreavse.com | from July 4 to 22, 2011

Institut Suzuki Montréal

Université Concordia, Montréal
www.suzukimontreal.org | from July 24 to 29, 2011

Lambda School of Music and Fine Arts

4989 boul des Sources, Pierrefonds

www.lambdaarts.ca | from June 1 to August 31, 2011

McGill Conservatory Day Camp

Strathcona Music Building, 555 Sherbrooke St. West, Montréal
www.mcgill.ca/conservatory-camp | from June 27 to August 19, 2011

Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal Day Camps

185 Ste-Catherine Ouest, Montréal
www.macm.org | from June 27 to August 12, 2011

Sunny Acres Day Camps

21275 Lakeshore Road, Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue
sunnyacresdaycamp.com | from June 27 to August 19, 2011

SuperCamp @ Vanier College

821 Ste-Croix Sports Complex, St-Laurent
www.vaniercollege.qc.ca/supercamp | from June 22 to August 14, 2011

Visual Arts Centre

350, avenue Victoria, Montréal
visualartscentre.ca | from June 27 to August 26, 2011

QUEBEC CITY

Camp d'été de l'École de danse de Québec

Centre de production artistique et culturelle Alyne-LeBel, Québec
www.ledq.qc.ca

QC ELSEWHERE

CAMMAC Lake MacDonald Music Centre

85 chemin Cammac, Harrington (près de Lachute)
www.cammac.ca | from June 26 to August 14, 2011

Camp chanson de Petite-Vallée

51, rue Principale, Petite-Vallée
www.festivalenchanson.com | from July 4 to August 21, 2011

Camp Musical d'Asbestos

C.P. 6, Asbestos
www.campmusicalinc.com | from June 5 to August 19, 2011

Camp musical de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue

8, rue Allard, Val-d'Or
www.campmusicalat.ca | from July 1 to August 13, 2011

Camp musical de l'Estrie

1370 Maurice-Duplessis, Sherbrooke

www.camuest.com | from August 1 to 13, 2011

Camp musical des Laurentides

60 place Mozart, St-Adolphe d'Howard
www.cmlaurentides.qc.ca | from June 26 to August 21, 2011

Camp musical du lac Matapédia (musique, danse, théâtre)

Case postale 62, Rimouski
www.camplacmatapedia.com | from June 26 to August 28, 2011

Camp musical du Saguenay Lac-St-Jean

1589, Route 169, Metabetchouan-Lac-à-la-Croix
www.campmusical-slsj.qc.ca | from June 16 to August 21, 2011

Camp musical Père Lindsay

C.P. 44, Joliette
www.campmusicalanaudiere.com | from June 26 to August 20, 2011



Camp Musical Saint-Alexandre

267 rang St-Gérard, St-Alexandre-de-Kamouraska
www.campmusical.com | from June 26 to August 21, 2011
418-495-2898 • info@campmusical.com
Camp: 26 juin au 21 août
Limite: 15 juin 2011
Coût: 400\$ - 1500\$
Bourses: sur demande
Langues: français

Disciplines: chant, piano, flûte à bec, trompette, trombone, cor français, cuivres, violon, alto, violoncelles, contrebasses, cordes, guitare, saxophone, clarinette, basson, hautbois, bois, percussions, orchestre, chorale, musique de chambre, théorie, comédie musicale, danse, régie sonore.

Camp musical Tutti

Bishop's University, Lennoxville
www.campmusicaltutti.com | from June 26 to July 3, 2011

CAMP NOMININGUE

Camp Nominique

1889, ch des Mésanges, Nominique
www.nominique.com | from July 2 to August 28, 2011



Domine Forget International Music and Dance Academy

5 rang St-Antoine, Saint-Irénée
www.domaineforget.com | from May 16 to September 5, 2011

418-452-8111 • admission@domaineforget.com

Limite: 15 mai 2011

Coût: 680\$ - 2440\$ selon le stage et la durée

Bourses: Oui

Langues: anglais, français

Disciplines: Chant, flûte, piano, trompette, trombone, cor français, cuivres, violon, alto, violoncelle, contrebasse, cordes, guitare, clarinette, basson, hautbois, bois, musique de chambre, musique nouvelle, jazz, jazz vocal, danse.

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Orford Arts Centre

3165 chemin du Parc, Orford
www.arts-orford.org | from June 10 to August 13, 2011

Université de Sherbrooke, École d'été de chant choral

2500 boul Université, Sherbrooke
www.usherbrooke.ca/musique | from June 25 to July 2, 2011

OTTAWA-GATINEAU

Camp musical Adagio

851-E, St-René O., Gatineau (Hull)
www.campmusicaladagio.com | from July 4 to 29, 2011

JazzWorks Summer Jazz Workshop

CAMMAC, MacDonald Lake
www.jazzworkscanada.com | from August 18 to 21, 2011

TORONTO

Bravo Academy for the Performing Arts

150 Laird Drive, Toronto
www.bravoacademy.ca | from July 1 to August 31, 2011

Camp Wahanowin, Creative Arts Programs

227 Eglinton Ave W, Toronto
www.wahanowin.com

Canadian Opera Company Summer Opera Camp

227 Front Street East, Toronto
www.coc.ca | from July 11 to 22, 2011

Canadian Opera Company, Summer Youth Intensive

227 Front Street East, Toronto
www.coc.ca | from July 4 to 8, 2011

Fern Hill Summer Camp

3300 Ninth Line Road, Oakville
www.fernhillsschool.com

Kingsway Conservatory Summer Camps

2848 Bloor St. W, Toronto
kingswayconservatory.ca

National Music Camp

227 Eglinton Ave. W, Toronto
www.nationalmusiccamp.com | from August 21 to September 4, 2011

No Strings Theatre, Summer Music Theatre for Teens

50 Ashburnham Rd, Toronto
www.nostrings theatre.com | from July 4 to 31, 2011

Ontario Youth Choir

A-1422 Bayview Avenue, Toronto
www.choirontario.org | from August 19 to 27, 2011

Royal Conservatory of Music

273 Bloor Street West, Toronto
www.rcmusic.ca

Southern Ontario Chamber Music Institute

268 Lakeshore Rd. East, Suite 512, Oakville
www.socmi.org | from July 31 to August 7, 2011

Summer Opera Lyric Theatre, Opera Workshop

947 Queen St. E., 2nd Floor, Toronto
www.solt.ca | from June 12 to August 8, 2011

Tafelmusik Baroque Summer Institute

427 Bloor Street West, Toronto
www.tafelmusik.org | from June 2 to 15, 2011

Theatre Ontario Summer Courses

Peterborough
theatreontario.org | from August 8 to 14, 2011

Toronto School for Strings, Summer Camps & Programs

85 Collier Street, Toronto
torontoschoolforstrings.com

Toronto School of Music Canada

5803 Yonge Street, North York
torontoschoolofmusic.com

Toronto Summer Music Academy & Festival

720 Bathurst Street, Suite 501, Toronto
www.torontosummernmusic.com | from July 17 to February 14, 2011

University of Toronto Faculty of Music Summer Programs

80 Queen's Park Circle, Toronto
www.utoronto.ca/music | from July 4 to February 10, 2011

Yamaha Music Camp

5075 Yonge St., 10th Floor, Toronto
yamahamusicschool.ca | from July 4 to 29, 2011

ONTARIO ELSEWHERE

Algoma Music Camp

Sault Ste-Marie
algomafallfestival.com | from July 17 to 30, 2011

Arts Integra Centre for Music and the Arts

132 Main Street, Unionville
www.artsintegra.com | from July 5 to 9, 2011

Canadian Operatic Arts Academy

Don Wright Faculty of Music, London
www.music.uwo.ca/coaa.html | from May 2 to 22, 2011

Elora Festival Kids' Camp

PO Box 370, Elora
www.elorafestival.com

Goderich Celtic College & Kids' Day Camp

Box 171, Goderich
www.celticfestival.ca/kids-day-camp.html | from August 1 to February 5, 2011

Guelph Youth Music Centre

75 Cardigan Street, Guelph
gymc.ca | from July 1 to August 31, 2011

Guitar Workshop Plus

PO Box 21207, Mississauga
www.guitarworkshopplus.com | from July 17 to 29, 2011

Huckleberry Music Camp

Muskoka
huckleberrymusiccamp.com | from July 2 to 9, 2011

Humber College Summer Jazz Workshop

3199 Lakeshore Blvd. W., Etobicoke
calendardb.humber.ca | from July 18 to 22, 2011

Interprovincial Music Camp

Camp Manitou, Parry Sound
www.interprovincialmusiccamp.ca | from August 20 to September 6, 2011

JVL Summer School for Performing Arts "Music in Summer" Festival 2011

79 Chagall Drive, Thornhill
www.musicinsummer.com | from July 7 to 17, 2011

Kincardine Summer Music Festival

Box 251, Kincardine
www.ksmf.ca | from July 31 to August 13, 2011

Lake Field Music (formerly CAM-MAC Ontario Music Centre)

Lakefield College School, Lakefield
lakefieldmusic.ca | from July 31 to August 14, 2011

Music at Port Milford

89 Colliers Road, Pleasantville
www.mpmc.org | from July 16 to August 13, 2011

Oakville Performing Arts Suzuki Day Camp

268 Lakeshore Road East-Suite 512, Oakville
www.oakvillesuzuki.org | from July 4 to 15, 2011

Ontario Mennonite Music Camp

Conrad Grabel College, Waterloo

www.grebel.uwaterloo.ca/ommc | from August 14 to 26, 2011

Southampton Summer Music

228 Edward Street, Southampton
www.summertime.com | from July 25 to 29, 2011

Southwestern Ontario Suzuki Institute

Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo
www.artset.net/sosi.html | from August 13 to 21, 2011

Summer Camp at Singing Brook Farm

R R 2, Ingersoll
singingbrookfarm.ca | from July 11 to August 19, 2011

SASKATCHEWAN

SOA Saito Conducting Workshop with Wayne Toews

1610 Morgan Ave, Saskatoon
www.conductorschool.com | from July 24 to 31, 2011

ALBERTA

Banff Centre for the Arts - Summer Music and Sound Programs

107 Tunnel Mountain Dr., box 1020, Banff, Banff
www.banffcentre.ab.ca/Music

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Comox Valley Youth Music Centre (CYMC) International Summer Youth Music School and Festival

580 Duncan Avenue, Courtenay
www.cymc.ca | from July 3 to 29, 2011

Langley Community Music School Suzuki Summer Workshop

4899 207th Street, Langley
www.langleymusic.com | from July 6 to August 10, 2011

Penticton Academy of Music Summer Programs

220 Manor Park Ave, Penticton
www.pentictonacademyofmusic.ca | from July 6 to 22, 2011

Pulse Creative and Innovative Chamber Music Program and Festival

4899 207th Street, Langley
www.langleymusic.com | from July 23 to 31, 2011

Victoria Conservatory of Music Summer Academies

900 Johnson Street, Victoria
www.vcm.bc.ca | from July 4 to August 6, 2011

EUROPE

Brasov International Opera Program

Brasov
ispbrasov20.wifeo.com | from July 1 to 15, 2011





THE NATIONAL THEATRE Munich, one of several venues playing host to the Munich Opera Festival, June 28 - July 31

PHOTO Wilfried Hosi

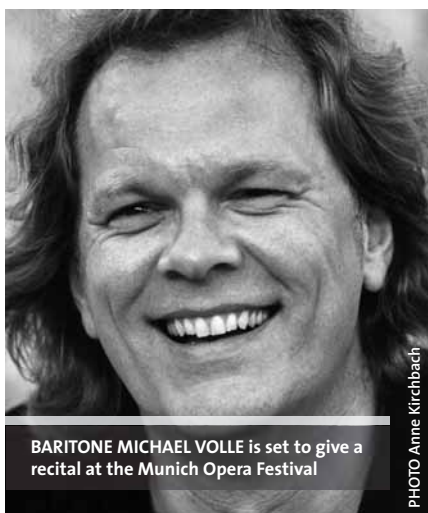
SONGS of SUMMER

INTERNATIONAL OPERA FESTIVAL PREVIEW

by JOSEPH K. SO

The weather is still cold outside, but there is nothing like planning a trip to the summer festivals to warm the hearts of Canadian opera fans. Since opera in Canada during the summer is virtually non-existent, we travel elsewhere. If time and money are not a concern, one can festival-hop to venues such as the Salzburger Osterfestspiele (April), Prague Spring Festival and Maggio Musicale Fiorentino (May), White Nights Festival in St. Petersburg, Holland Festival and Aix-en-Provence (June), Munich, Glyndebourne, Bregenz, Salzburg, Santa Fe, Glimmerglass, Bayreuth, Savonlinna, Verona, Torre del Lago, Orange, Aix-en-Provence, Macerata, Pesaro (July and August). Things quiet down in the Fall, but there's still the last weeks of the London Proms (Sept.) and Wexford in Ireland (Oct.). Below is a mini-preview of some of the great offerings this summer. With the high Canadian dollar, there is no better time for a visit.

Top on my personal list is the Munich Opera Festival (June 28 - July 31). There are many Canadians singing there this summer, including four in *Don Giovanni* (Gerald Finley, Erin Wall, Joseph Kaiser and Philip Ens). Fans of Adrianne Pieczonka can catch her in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Lohengrin*; and our own Ben Heppner will be there at the end of the festival for two performances of *Tristan und Isolde* opposite the fabulous Isolde of Nina Stemme. The great Soile Isokoski will give a *liederabend* of Grieg, Sibelius, Ives and Strauss in the intimate and truly exquisite Cuvillies-Theater.



BARITONE MICHAEL VOLLE is set to give a recital at the Munich Opera Festival

PHOTO Anne Kirchbach



BEL CANTO QUEEN EDITA GRUBEROVA will reprise her Lucrezia Borgia

PHOTO Christian Laimer

Other singers giving recitals include baritones Michael Volle and Christian Gerhaher, as well as tenor Pavol Breslik, all at the larger Prinzregententheater. But tenor Jonas Kaufmann, whose fame has reached rock-star status in Europe, will give one in the biggest theatre, the **National - theater**. And likely it will sell out, as his concert last summer was sold out in a matter of hours! Very special is the rare *Saint François D'Assise* by Olivier Messaien, and this is a great chance to hear Jonas Kaufmann as Florestan in *Fidelio*. COC Music Director Johannes Debus will be there for a single performance of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. Speaking of conductors, Canadian Yves Abel will conduct Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. Bel canto queen Edita Gruberova reprises her *Lucrezia Borgia*, and there will be two performances of the magnificent Jürgen Rose/Otto Schenk production of *Der Rosenkavalier* starring the incomparable Anja Harteros as the Marschallin. www.bayerische.staatsoper.de/866--~Staatsoper~bsa_aktuell~aktuelles.html

From Munich it's just a short hop to the Salzburg Festival (July 27 - Aug. 30), with its glitz and glamour, not to mention fabulous music. As usual, it will feature seven operas, with *Die Frau ohne Schatten* conducted by Christian Thielemann as the must-see. If you miss Gerald Finley's *Don Giovanni* in Munich, you can catch it in Salzburg, conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Other Canadians include Michèle Losier as Dora-bella in *Così fan tutte*, and John Relyea in the double-bill of *Le Rossignol* and *Iolanta*. Salzburg tickets and accommodations are expensive. www.salzburgerfestspiele.at/opera

It is the dream of every Wagner fan to "make a pilgrimage" to the Bayreuther Festspiele (July 25



FANS OF ADRIANNE PIECZONKA can catch her in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Lohengrin*

PHOTO Johannes Ifkovits

- Aug. 28). This is a Ring-less summer - just *Tannhäuser*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Lohengrin*, *Parsifal*, and *Tristan und Isolde*. Bayreuth productions are extremely avant-garde so be prepared! If you are one of the lucky ones with tickets in hand, enjoy the unforgettable experience; if you don't have tickets and hope to show up hoping for returns, my advice is - don't bother, as your chance of success is very slim. www.bayreuther-festspiele.de/english/programme_157.html

If Europe is too far for you, I can recommend Glimmerglass Opera (July 2 - Aug. 23) and Santa Fe Opera (July 2 - Aug. 27). Located in Cooperstown, New York, it is ideal for opera fans who are also into baseball—there are quite a few of us out there, believe it or not! If you are *not* a baseball fan, I would suggest that you avoid the Baseball Hall of Fame Weekend (July 22 - 24) as things get crazy in this small town. This season, the operas are *Carmen*, *Medea*, *Annie Get Your Gun* (!), and a double-bill of *A Blizzard in Marblehead Neck/Later the Same Evening*. Deborah Voigt, the Met's Brunnhilde, is adding Annie Oakley to go with her Minnie in *La fanciulla del West*. She has the dashing Rodney Gilfry as Frank Butler. Francesca Zambello directs. The double-bill of contemporary works is intriguing: *Blizzard* is based on an episode in the life of playwright Eugene O'Neill, and *Evening* is inspired by five paintings by Edward Hopper. Given the small town environment, booking accommodations in advance is a must. www.glimmerglass.org/season/season.html

Finally, a favorite summer destination is the Santa Fe Opera Festival. I have attended this venue almost annually for the last dozen years. The magnificent outdoor theatre with its superb acoustics set against the spectacular desert landscape of northern New Mexico is unforgettable. The five operas this summer are *Faust*, *La Bohème*, *Griselda*, *The Last Savage* and *Wozzeck*. Usually there are lots of Canadians singing there each summer, but this year it's just baritone Daniel Okulitch in the rarely seen *The Last Savage* by Giancarlo Menotti. The superb singer and actor, soprano Nicola Beller Carbone, Opera de Montreal's Salome, will sing Marie in *Wozzeck*. Highly recommended! **TMS**

2011 SUMMER INTERNATIONAL FESTIVALS GUIDE

AUSTRALIA

BRISBANE FESTIVAL

Brisbane, September 3 to 24,
brisbanefestival.com.au

AUSTRIA

1ST WORLD CHOIR CHAMPIONSHIPS FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

Graz, July 10 to 17, graz2011.interkultur.com

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF MUSICAL STUDIES

Graz, July 4 to August 14, aimsgraz.com

BREGENZER FESTIVAL

Bregenz, July 20 to August 21,
bregenzerfestspiele.com

GRAFENEGG MUSIC FESTIVAL

Grafenegg, August 19 to September 7,
grafenegg.at

INNSBRUCK FESTIVAL OF EARLY MUSIC

Innsbruck, August 10 to 28, altemusik.at

INT. ANTON BRUCKNER CHOIR COMPETITION AND FESTIVAL

Linz, June 1 to 5, interkultur.com

SALZBURG FESTIVAL

Salzburg, July 27 to August 30,
salzburgfestival.com

WIENER FESTWOCHE

Vienna, May 13 to June 19, festwochen.at

BELGIUM

QUEEN ELISABETH COMPETITION- INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Brussels, May 5 to 21, cmireb.be

CROATIA

DUBROVNIK SUMMER FESTIVAL

Dubrovnik, July 10 to Aug. 25,
dubrovnik-festival.hr

CZECH REPUBLIC

PRAGUE SPRING INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Prague, May 12 to June 4, festival.cz

DENMARK

CARL NIELSEN INTERNATIONAL MUSIC COMPETITION AND FESTIVAL

Odense, May 31 to June 9,
nielsen.odensesymfoni.dk

FINLAND

HELSINKI FESTIVAL

Helsinki, Aug. 19 to Sept. 4, helsinkifestival.fi

ORIVESI SUMMER FESTIVALS

Orivesi, June 4 to August 13, orivedensuvi.fi

SAVONLINNA OPERA FESTIVAL

Savonlinna, July 1 to 27, operafestival.fi

SYSMA SUMMER SOUNDS

Sysma, July 2 to 9, sysmansuvisoitto.com

FRANCE

31ÈME FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE PIANO DE LA ROQUE D'ANTHERON

La Roque d'Anthéron, July 22 to August 20,
festival-piano.com

ACADÉMIE-FESTIVAL DES ARCS

Les Arcs, July 17 to August 5,
festivaldesarcs.com

BESANCON INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Besançon, Sept. 16 to Oct. 1,
festival-besancon.com

CHORÉGIES D'ORANGE

Orange Cedux, July 9 to Aug 2, choregies.com

FESTIVAL D'AIX-EN-PROVENCE

Aix-en-Provence, July 5 to 25,
festival-aix.com

FESTIVAL D'AUVERS-SUR-OISE

Auvers-sur-Oise, June 4 to July 7,
festival-auvers.com

FESTIVAL DE MUSIQUE DE STRASBOURG

Strasbourg, June 7 to 24,
festival-strasbourg.com

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE COLMAR

Colmar, July 1 to 14, festival-colmar.com

FESTIVAL MILLE ET UNE NOTES

Limousin, July 17 to August 11,
festival1001notes.com

FESTIVAL MUSIQUE SUR CIEL

Cordes sur Ciel, July 17 to 29,
festivalmusiquesurciel.fr

LES NUITS PIANISTIQUES

Lignane Puyciard, August 2 to September 3,
lesnuitspianistiques.com

PLACIDO DOMINGO'S OPERALIA

Paris, July 18 to 24, operalia.org

GERMANY

BAYREUTH PIANO FESTIVAL (LISZT CELEBRATIONS)

Bayreuth, July 3 to 30, steingraeber.de

BAYREUTHER FESTSPIELE

Bayreuth, July 25 to August 28,
bayreuther-festspiele.de

BEETHOVENFEST BONN

Bonn, Sept. 9 to Oct. 9, beethovenfest.de

EUROPEAN MEDIA ART FESTIVAL

Osnabrück, April 27 to May 1, emaf.de

GERMAN PROTESTANT KIRCHENTAG

Dresden, June 1 to 5, musikfestspiele.com

GÖTTINGEN INTERNATIONAL HANDEL FESTIVAL

Göttingen, Lower Saxony, June 3 to 14,
haendel-festspiele.de

INT. JOHANNES BRAHMS CHOIR FESTIVAL AND COMPETITION

Weingerode, July 6 to 10, interkultur.com

MORITZBURG FESTIVAL

Dresden, August 7 to 27,
moritzburgfestival.de

MUNICH OPERA FESTIVAL

Munich, June 25 to July 31, staatsoper.de

MUSIKFEST BERLIN

Berlin, Sept. 2 to 20, berlinerfestspiele.de

SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN MUSIK FESTIVAL

Schleswig-Holstein, July 9 to Aug 28, shmf.de

GREECE

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF THE AEGEAN

Hermoupolis, Syros, July 12 to 25,
festivaloftheaegean.com

IRELAND

WEST CORK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Bantry, June 24 to July 2, westcorkmusic.ie

ITALY

9TH VENEZIA IN MUSICA, CHOIR COMPETITION AND FESTIVAL

Venezia, April 27 to May 1, interkultur.com

FESTIVAL DEI 2 MONDI

Spoleto, June 24 to July 10,
festivaldispoleto.com

FESTIVAL PUCCINI

Torre del Lago, July 22 to August 27,
puccinifestival.it

HIGHSCORE FESTIVAL

Pavia, July 6 to 18, highscorefestival.com

IN... CANTO SUL GARDA INT. CHOIR COMPETITION & FESTIVAL

Riva del Garda, October 13 to 17,
interkultur.com

MAGGIO MUSICALE FESTIVAL

Florence, April 28 to June 23,
maggiofiorentino.com

MUSICASACRA A ROMA

Rome, June 2 to 6, interkultur.com

RAVENNA FESTIVAL

Ravenna, June 7 to July 9, ravennafestival.org

ROSSINI OPERA FESTIVAL

Pesaro, Aug. 10 to 23, rossinioperafestival.it

JAPAN

PACIFIC MUSIC FESTIVAL SAPPORO

Sapporo, July 9 to August 4, pmf.or.jp

NETHERLANDS

HOLLAND FESTIVAL

Amsterdam, June 1 to 26, hollandfestival.nl

NORWAY

BERGEN INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Bergen, May 25 to June 8, fib.no

RUSSIA

STARS OF THE WHITE NIGHTS FESTIVAL

St Petersburg, May 23 to July 24,
mariinsky.ru/en

SPAIN

INT. CHOIR COMPETITION & FESTIVAL MALTA

Malta, November 3 to 7, interkultur.com

SWITZERLAND

LUCERNE FESTIVAL IN SUMMER

Lucerne, Aug. 10 to Sept. 18,
lucernefestival.ch

VERBIER FESTIVAL

Verbier, July 15 to 31, verbierfestival.com

ZURICH FESTIVAL

Zurich, June 17 to July 10,
zuercher-festspiele.ch

TURKEY

38TH INTERNATIONAL ISTANBUL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Istanbul, June 4 to 29, iksv.org

UK

ALDEBURGH FESTIVAL

Suffolk, June 10 to 26, aldeburgh.co.uk

BATH INTERN. MUSIC FEST

Bath, May 25 to 5, bathmusicfest.org.uk

BBC PROMS

London, July 15 to September 10,
bbc.co.uk/proms

BRIGHTON FESTIVAL

Brighton, May 7 to 29, brightonfestival.org

EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Edinburgh, Aug. 12 to Sept. 4, eif.co.uk

GLYNDEBOURNE FESTIVAL OPERA

East Sussex, May 21 to August 28,
glyndebourne.com

HENLEY FESTIVAL

Henley-on-Thames, July 6 to 10,
henley-festival.co.uk

LAKE DISTRICT SUMMER MUSIC INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Kendal, July 29 to August 14, ldsfm.org.uk

LLANGOLLEN INTERNATIONAL MUSICAL EISTEDDFOD

Llangollen, July 4 to 10,
international-eisteddfod.co.uk

LUFTHANSA FESTIVAL OF BAROQUE MUSIC

London, May 13 to 21, lufthansafestival.org.uk

OPERA HOLLAND PARK

London, June 7 to August 13,
operahollandpark.com

ST. MAGNUS INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Kirkwall, Orkney Islands, June 17 to 23,
stmagnusfestival.com

THREE CHOIRS FESTIVAL

Gloucester, August 6 to 13, 3choirs.org

WELSH PROMS

Cardiff, July 8 to 16, welshproms.co.uk

YORK EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

York, July 8 to 16, ncem.co.uk/yemf.shtml

USA

ANCHORAGE FESTIVAL OF MUSIC

Anchorage, AK, August 22 to 22,
anchoragefestivalmusic.com

JUNEAU JAZZ & CLASSICS

Juneau, AK, May 6 to 21, jazzandclassics.org

SITKA SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Sitka, AK, June 3 to 24, sitkamusicfestival.org

SEDONA BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

Sedona, AZ, May 8, chambermusicssedona.org

MUSIC ACADEMY OF THE WEST SUMMER FESTIVAL

Santa Barbara, CA, June 20 to August 13,
musicacademy.org

MUSIC IN THE VINEYARDS : NAPA VALLEY CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Napa, CA, August 3 to 21,
musicinthevineyards.org

NAPA VALLEY FESTIVAL DEL SOLE

Napa Valley, CA, July 15 to 24,
festivaldelsole.org

SUMMER MUSIC WEST

San Francisco, CA, June 20 to August 5,
sfcm.edu/summer

SUMMERFEST 2011

San Diego, CA, August 3 to 26, ljms.org

TEMECULA VALLEY INTERNATIONAL FILM AND MUSIC FESTIVAL

Temecula, CA, September 14 to 18, tviff.com

ASPEN MUSIC FESTIVAL

Aspen, CO, June 29 to August 21,
aspenmusicfestival.com

BRAVO! VAIL VALLEY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Vail, CO, June 26 to Aug. 3,
vailmusicfestival.org

CENTRAL CITY OPERA

Denver, CO, June 25 to August 7,
centralcityopera.org

COLORADO MUSIC FESTIVAL

Boulder, CO, June 25 to August 5,
coloradomusicfest.org

CRESTED BUTTE MUSIC FESTIVAL

Crested Butte, CO, July 3 to 12,
crestedbuttemusicfestival.com

ROCKY RIDGE MUSIC CENTER

Estes Park, CO, June 8 to August 21,
rockyridge.org

STRINGS IN THE MOUNTAINS

Steamboat Springs, CO, June 28 to August 27,
stringsmusicfestival.com

THE QUARTET PROGRAM AT U COLORADO BOULDER

Boulder, CO, July 3 to 31,
quartetprogram.com

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Norfolk, CT, July 8 to August 13,
yale.edu/norfolk

AMELIA ISLAND CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Fernandina Beach, FL, May 20 to June 19,
aicmf.com

SARASOTA MUSIC FESTIVAL

Sarasota, FL, May 29 to June 19,
sarasotaorchestra.org

ASTON MAGNA FESTIVAL

Great Barrington, MA, June 16 to July 9,
astonmagna.org

BANG ON A CAN SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVAL

North Adams, MA, July 11 to 31,
bangonacan.org

BERKSHIRE CHORAL FESTIVAL

Sheffield, MA, July 15 to September 18,
chorus.org

BOSTON EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Boston, MA, June 12 to 19, bemf.org

The largest Early Music festival in North America, BEMF features a fully staged operatic centerpiece—Steffani's "Niobe, Regina di Tebe" with soprano Amanda Forsythe and countertenor Philippe Jaroussky—alongside a week of concerts of Mediaeval, Renaissance, and Baroque music, the world-famous Exhibition of instrument makers, publishers, and other professionals, and more.

ROCKPORT CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Rockport, MA, June 9 to July 17, rcmf.org

TANGLEWOOD MUSIC FESTIVAL

Lenox, MA, June 25 to September 4, bso.org

CHESAPEAKE CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Eastern, MD, May 30 to June 13,
chesapeakechambermusic.com/festival

BOWDOIN INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Brunswick, ME, June 25 to August 6,
summermusic.org

INTERNATIONAL MUSICAL ARTS INSTITUTE/FESTIVAL

Fryeburg, ME, July 7 to 16, imaifestival.org

KNEISEL HALL CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Blue Hill, ME, June 24 to August 28,
kneisel.org

PORTLAND CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Portland, ME, August 11 to 20, pcmf.org

PORTLAND STRING QUARTET WORKSHOP AT ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE

Standish, ME, July 17 to 31,
portlandstringquartet.org/workshop.htm

SALT BAY CHAMBERFEST

Damariscotta, ME, August 16 to 26,
saltbaychamberfest.org

INTERLOCHEN SUMMER ARTS FESTIVAL

Interlochen, MI, April 14 to May 23,
interlochen.org

KANSAS CITY STRING QUARTET PROGRAM

Kansas City, MO, July 22 to 30,
kcstringquartet.org

SUMMERFEST CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Kansas City, MO, July 9 to 31,
summerfestkc.org

BREVARD MUSIC CENTER SUMMER INSTITUTE & FESTIVAL

Brevard, NC, June 24 to August 7,
brevardmusic.org

HIGHLANDS-CASHIERS CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Highlands, NC, August 8 to 14,
h-cmusicfestival.org

DAKOTA CHAMBER MUSIC

Minot, ND, June 6 to 12, luminustrio.com

WATERVILLE VALLEY MUSIC CENTER SUMMER CAMP CONCERTS

Waterville Valley, NH, July 24 to August 7,
wvmusiccenter.org

CAPE MAY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Cape May, NJ, May 26 to June 15,
capemaymac.org

RARITAN RIVER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Oldwick, NJ, May 7 to 28,
raritanrivermusic.org

CHAMBER MUSIC ALBUQUERQUE

Albuquerque, NM, June 12 to 19, cma-abq.org

MUSIC ANGEL FIRE

Angel Fire, NM, August 19 to September 4,
musicfromangelfire.org

SANTA FE CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Santa Fe, NM, July 17 to August 22,
santafechambermusic.com

SANTA FE OPERA

Santa Fe, NM, July 1 to August 27,
santafeopera.org

TAOS SCHOOL OF MUSIC SUMMER CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Taos, NM, June 19 to August 7,
taosschoolofmusic.com

THE AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL CHORAL FESTIVAL - RENO-TAHOE 2011

Reno-Tahoe, NV, May 4 to 8,
renochoralfestival.com

BARD MUSIC FESTIVAL

Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, August 12 to 21,
fishercenter.bard.edu/bmf

BRIDGEHAMPTON CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Bridgehampton, NY, July 28 to August 21,
bcmf.org

CARAMOOR INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Caramoor, NY, July 28 to August 21,
caramoor.org

CHAUTAUQUA INSTITUTION

Chautauqua, NY, June 25 to August 28,
ciweb.org

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA

Cooperstown, NY, July 2 to August 23,
glimmerglass.org

GREAT SOUTH BAY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Port Jefferson, NY, July 15 to 17,
greatsouthbaymusicfestival.com

JUNE IN BUFFALO

Buffalo, NY, June 6 to 12,
music.buffalo.edu/juneinbuffalo

LUZERNE CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Lake Luzerne, NY, July 3 to August 22,
luzernemusic.org

MUSIC SALEM

Cambridge, NY, June 5 to August 14,
musicfromsaalem.org

SARATOGA CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Saratoga Springs, NY, July 26 to August 14,
spac.org

THE QUARTET PROGRAM AT SUNY FREDONIA

Fredonia, NY, June 12 to July 31,
quartetprogram.com

THE SKANEATELES FESTIVAL

Skaneateles, NY, August 8 to September 3,
skanfest.org

WINDHAM CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Windham, NY, May 28 to September 3,
windhammusic.com



OREGON BACH FESTIVAL

Eugene, OR, June 23 to July 10,
oregonbachfestival.com

Helmuth Rilling, artistic director; guests Yo-Yo Ma, Marin Alsop, Jeffrey Kahane, Matthew Halls, Monica Huggett, pianist Shai Wosner, soprano Tamara Wilson. Works include Brahms: Requiem, Bach: Magnificat, Beethoven: No. 9, Golijov: Azul, Bach and Britten: Cello Suites, Purcell: Dido and Aeneas, and Handel, Purcell, Britten odes to St. Cecilia.

MUSIC AT GRETNA

Mt. Gretna, PA, August 4 to September 4,
gretnamusic.org

KINGSTON CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Kingston, RI, July 20 to 31,
kingstonchambermusic.org

SPOLETO FESTIVAL USA

Charleston, SC, May 27 to June 12,
spoletousa.org

AMERICAN FESTIVAL FOR THE ARTS

Houston, TX, June 20 to July 22, afatexas.net

AUSTIN CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL & WORKSHOP

Austin, TX, July 6 to 23,
austinchambermusic.org

MIMIR CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Fort Worth, TX, July 4 to 15, mimirfestival.org

ROUND TOP FESTIVAL INSTITUTE

Round Top, TX, June 5 to July 17,
festivalhill.org

VICTORIA BACH FESTIVAL

Victoria, TX, June 7 to 11,
victoriabachfestival.org

MOAB MUSIC FESTIVAL

Moab, UT, September 1 to 12,
moabmusicfest.org

UTAH FESTIVAL OPERA

Logan, UT, July 6 to August 6, ufoc.org

ASH LAWN OPERA FESTIVAL

Charlottesville, VA, July 15 to August 7,
ashlawnopera.org

GREEN MOUNTAIN OPERA FESTIVAL

Waitsfield & Barre, VT, May 28 to June 19,
greenmountainoperafestival.com

KILLINGTON MUSIC FESTIVAL

Rutland, VT, June 19 to July 29,
killingtonmusicfestival.org

MANCHESTER MUSIC FESTIVAL CONCERT SERIES

Manchester, VT, July 7 to August 18,
mmfvt.org

MARLBORO MUSIC FESTIVAL

Marlboro, VT, July 16 to August 14,
marlboromusic.org

ROCHESTER CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

Rochester, VT, April 16 to 16,
rochesterchambermusic.org

VERMONT FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

Mad River Valley, VT, August 1 to September 5,
vermontartfest.com

VERMONT MOZART FESTIVAL

Burlington, VT, July 17 to August 7,
vtmozart.com

YELLOW BARN MUSIC SCHOOL AND FESTIVAL

Putney, VT, July 3 to August 7, yellowbarn.org

SUMMER FESTIVAL AT OVERLAKE SCHOOL

Redmond, WA, July 5 to August 12,
seattlechambermusic.org/index.html

BACH DANCING & DYNAMITE SOCIETY CHAMBER FESTIVAL

Madison, WI, June 10 to 26,
bachdancinganddynamite.org

GREEN LAKE FESTIVAL OF MUSIC

Green Lake, WI, June 8 to July 24,
greenlakefestival.org

MIDWEST YOUNG ARTISTS SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Kenosha, WI, June 20 to July 23,
mya.org/summer

MUSIC BY THE LAKE

Williams Bay, WI, July 2 to August 13,
musicbythelake.com

TOKEN CREEK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Madison, WI, August 24 to September 4,
tokencreekfestival.org

REVIEW POLICY: While we try to review as many products as possible, we are unable to cover every new release. More reviews can be viewed on our website at scena.org

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A MUST!
EXCELLENT
VERY GOOD
GOOD
SO-SO
MEDIOCRE

REVIEWERS

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

VOCAL MUSIC

Diva/Divo: Opera Arias

Joyce DiDonato, mezzo-soprano; Orchestre et Chœur de l'Opéra de Lyon/Kazushi Ono

Virgin Classics 50999 641986 0 6 (80 min 41 s)

★★★★★☆☆

In the interesting essay by Joyce DiDonato that opens the accompanying booklet, she expresses her gratitude for being blessed with slightly longer vocal cords that made her a mezzo. Her legions of fans are sure to agree. Her bright, creamy tone, marvelous coloratura – with a stunning trill – and exceptional musicality make her ideal in works that range from the Baroque to the twentieth century. As the title suggests, DiDonato explores her extensive skirt and trouser roles in this very generous disc of over 80 minutes. Whether it is Susanna or Cherubino, Cinderella or Prince Charming, DiDonato sings everything with resplendent tone and dramatic acuity. Her range is impressive, from soprano highs – Vitellia in *La clemenza di Tito* – to the low mezzo territory of Marguerite in *La Damnation de Faust* and Romeo in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. Whether high or low, the tone is always even and lustrous. Even in the liberal use of chest voice in the Bellini opera, it is always used with taste and no sign of strain. Japanese maestro Kazushi Ono proves a sensitive musician. Several selections enlist the services of other singers – no great voices here but all competent and up to the task. It's good to have the Composer's Aria from *Ariadne auf Naxos* here, a role she has sung very few times. It shows the mezzo to be a formidable Straussian. It makes one long for her Octavian, a role she recently sang in Madrid and will sing again in La Scala in October. The booklet has trilingual text, essays by the singer and music critic Roger Pines but no artist bios. Highly recommended.

JKS



Handel: "Cleopatra" - Giulio Cesare Opera Arias

Natalie Dessay, soprano; Le Concert d'Astrée/Emmanuelle Haïm
Virgin Classics 5099990787225

★★★★☆☆

A bit breathless to start, Dessay does not quite out vamp Elizabeth Taylor with the asp, but there are enough hot moments to rumple your baroque collar and Emmanuelle Haïm's crisp harpsichord direction never lets the action flag.



NL

Richard Strauss: "Poesie" Orchestral Songs

Diana Damrau, soprano; Münchner Philharmoniker/Christian Thielemann

Virgin Classics 50999 628664 0 8 (71 min 9 s)

★★★★★☆☆

German soprano Diana Damrau is considered by many to be the outstanding coloratura of the 21st century, following in the footsteps of the great Edita Gruberova (80s) and Natalie Dessay (90s). Like the other ladies, Damrau combines a silvery, flexible high soprano with stunning technique and innate musicality, not to mention abundant stage allure. Here she is in an all-Strauss program, accompanied by none other than Christian Thielemann and the Munich Philharmonic – talk about luxury casting! In a generous program of 22 Strauss songs lasting over 70 minutes, Damrau sings with lovely tone, crystal clear diction (except perhaps in the stratosphere), great expression, and most of all with the exquisite lightness that is her trademark. The disc is full of magical moments, but the best are when she sings very softly, gently caressing the phrases as in "Waldseligkeit" and "Morgen." When ecstatic exuberance is called for, as in "Cäcilie" and "Zueignung," the voice goes into overdrive and the vibrato becomes more pronounced but never unpleasant. She is well supported by the great Christian Thielemann. Under his direction, the orchestral sound is like the smoothest dark chocolate – delectably sumptuous, with just the most gorgeous string solos! Thielemann's tempi tend to be on the slow side, allowing the music to breathe but the musical lines are always taut and alive. If I were to quibble, the songs are arranged in a seemingly random fashion with no rhyme or reason. The booklet has a nice essay on Strauss's orchestral songs, text and translations, a photo each of the soprano and the conductor, and a tiny essay by Damrau dedicating the disc to her parents. This is a beautiful disc that stacks up well against the many wonderful Strauss discs already in the catalogue.

JKS



Rossini: Opera Arias

Julia Lezhneva, soprano; Warsaw Chamber Opera Choir; Sinfonia Varsovia/Marc Minkowski

Naïve V 5221 (58 min)

★★★★☆☆

I think I have found a cure for my generalised Rossini

aversion, my tendency to dismiss him as a master trill-maker with little to offer the intellect or the emotions. The cure is called Julia Lezhneva and the seven arias she dispenses on this modest disc have hardly been off my playing deck all week.

Lezhnova, new to me, comes from a Russian family of geophysicists and has been finishing her studies in Cardiff with tenor Dennis O'Neill. She won the first Paris International Opera Competition six months ago, does not yet have a working website and, on her debut disc at 21, seems to be heading for the stratosphere.

The first thing that strikes me about her fireworks is the complete lack of fuss. "Tanti affetti" from *La Donna del lago* is delivered with a rare integrity that makes the glitter part of the general texture rather than an applause magnet. The voice sounds mature and fully formed. Often as not in the *Cenerentola* arias one is reminded more of Mozart style than Italian excess. Marc Minkowski directs the Sinfonia Varsovia with a very light touch and the choir of Warsaw Chamber Opera do the necessary. But it's Lezhneva that keeps the ear glued to the speakers, demanding more. She'll go far.

NL



INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Bach: A Strange Beauty

Simone Dinnerstein/Kammerorchester Staatskapelle Berlin
Sony 88697 81742 2 (57 min 42 s)

★★★★★☆☆

Called "a throwback to such high priestesses of music as Wanda Landowska and Myra Hess" by *Slate* magazine, the New York-based pianist Simone Dinnerstein has developed an international following on the strength of her debut recording of Bach's Goldberg Variations, which caused a sensation in 2007 (it ranked #1 on the Billboard Classical Chart in its first week of sales). For her first outing as a Sony artist, she presents another Bach disc. Calling her approach a throwback to an earlier era of Bach playing only tells part of the story, for Ms. Dinnerstein is clearly an artist of her time. The performances on this disc are more of a restoration of a certain expressive vocabulary which was once mainstream but has been displaced by the period-performance aesthetic. Dinnerstein chooses to record an all-Bach album, including three 19th and 20th century transcriptions on a modern concert grand. Nonetheless, these are staggering performances, full of intelligence, tenderness, and commitment. The awareness of performance practice and conscious rejection of many of its sacred values are meaningless when you listen to an album this transcendently beautiful,



and compellingly interesting. Simone Dinnerstein plays Bach as naturally as breathing. This is a great album. **PP**

Bach: Six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello, BWV 1007-1012

Josephine van Lie, cello
Vanlier2010-01 (3 h 43 min 52 s)

★★★★☆

This disc comes with a twist: The first and fourth suite are performed on a cello with a modern setup, the third, on a carbon-fibre instrument, while the second suite is played on a baroque cello, and the sixth on a five-string piccolo cello. The fifth suite is recorded three times, using the baroque, the contemporary, and the carbon-fibre instruments. This four-disc set comes with liner notes about the differences between the instruments, an interview with van Lie, even a graph showing an analysis of the harmonic spectrums of the instruments. All of this seems gimmicky, yet it is understandable when one considers the daunting task of trying to make a splash with yet another recording of the Suites. The verdict? The playing throughout is spacious and free, the preludes are imaginative, and the dances are idiomatic. What is interesting is that despite the intent to highlight the differences between the instruments, what comes across most is the stylistic consistency of the recording as a whole. This is not the recording you want as your reference for this music, but if you love the cello suites, this one is recommended. **PP**



Beethoven: Gods, Heroes, and Men - The Creatures of Prometheus/Symphony No. 3 "Eroica"

Orchestre symphonique de Montréal/Kent Nagano
Analekta AN2 9838 (73 min 51 s)

★★★★☆

The album includes some explanatory notes by conductor Kent Nagano. Nagano's writing style tends to the formal and prolix but he makes some interesting points nonetheless. He sees the Prometheus myth as symbolic of the entire European Enlightenment period. Prometheus is the new self-creating man beholden neither to gods nor kings. Napoleon was the Prometheus incarnate of the time and Beethoven – at least until Napoleon declared himself emperor – greatly admired this man who would remake the world. The Promethean Spirit was, for Beethoven, a hope. But for us today, according to Nagano, it is "a warning, or perhaps even a curse."

The CD begins with five excerpts from Beethoven's *The Creatures of Prometheus* ballet score. Apart from the overture, they are fragments and only occasionally compelling, but Nagano and the OSM play them with tremendous energy and attention to detail. Nagano is known to be very interested in historically informed performance practice and there is certainly plenty of evidence of it in this *Eroica*. Tempi are quick in accordance with Beethoven's metronome markings, vibrato is used sparingly, and the timpanist uses hard sticks. In addition, Nagano's phrasing often involves swelling up



and then falling away, as compared to the more sustained phrasing customary in music of the romantic era. There are plenty of examples in the first movement, and then again in the horn trio in the Scherzo. To my ears, this historically informed approach to phrasing and dynamics verges on affectation when it is used so often. On the other hand, there is no denying that Nagano has gone over the score with infinite care and made decisions about the shape of every phrase and the length of every note. But in being meticulous he has not ignored the big picture. This performance is consistently engrossing and often exciting.

The recording team deserves a lot of credit too for achieving such an optimum balance between clarity and reverberation. It is a triumph for Nagano, the OSM and Analekta. **PER**

Franck: Symphonie en ré mineur / Schmitt: La Tragédie de Salomé

Orchestre Métropolitain/Yannick Nézet-Séguin

ATMA ACD2 2647 (70 min 58 s)

★★★★☆

The first piece on the programme here is *La Tragédie de Salomé* by Florent Schmitt (1870-1958). This rarely recorded composition originated as a ballet score for 20 musicians. Schmitt reduced its duration and arranged it for full orchestra in 1911. This performance reveals it to be a full blooded Romantic fireworks display. Under Nézet-Séguin's inspired direction, the orchestra is in spectacular form. This *Salomé* is worth getting to know.



In the booklet note, Robert Rival states that Franck's Symphony in D minor is the most frequently performed French symphony with the exception of Berlioz's *Fantastique*. Most of the great conductors of the 20th century could not resist recording it. This account is very timely because the absolute gold standard of the digital era, with Charles Dutoit conducting the OSM (Decca -1991), is currently absent from the catalogue. The newcomer is a most acceptable replacement. Nézet-Séguin is more forceful than Dutoit but no less lyrical in the slow-burn passages. Again, the orchestra (deservedly listed by name in the booklet) responds magnificently. The results are thrilling. **WSH**

Holst: The Planets/Beni Mora/Japanese Suite

BBC Philharmonic/Sir Andrew Davis

Chandos CHSA 5086 (78 min 24 s)

★★★★☆

New recordings of *The Planets* are not news but this one is exceptional. First of all, the sound is spectacularly good. This is rather important for a work with such a wide dynamic range and so many subtle and original instrumental colourings. And Andrew Davis leads a performance which is precise and attentive to the smallest detail. Holst calls for a huge orchestra including organ in this piece, but Davis makes sure that we hear everything. Tempos seem just right for every movement. Amazing how everything falls into place when conductors find the right tempo!



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Just as interesting on this CD are the filler items: two lesser-known Holst orchestral works. *Beni Mora* was inspired by a trip to Algeria and it is comprised of three vaguely North African dances. *The Japanese Suite* has little discernible Japanese content but was composed for a Japanese dancer. Like *Beni Mora* it has highly evocative colours and rhythms.

The BBC Philharmonic, based in Manchester, is generally considered a notch or two below the London-based BBC Symphony. But on this recording its playing is absolutely first-rate. **PER**

John Adams Portrait

Angèle Dubeau, violon; Louise Bessette, piano; La Pietà

Analekta AN 2 8732 (60 min 36 s)

★★★★☆

John Adams goes all huffy nowadays when anyone refers to him as a minimalist, distancing himself from his roots in a movement that made melody permissible, often to the point of nausea.

The three pieces on this disc, played with great zest by Angèle Dubeau's Quebec ensemble La Pietà, demonstrate the strength of those roots. *Shaker Loops* for string septet was made in 1978 out of fragments of a previous string quartet, itself founded on Steve Reich's use of melodic loops of differing length. The language here may belong to Reich but the syntax is uniquely Adams, a relentless pulsing that offers no promise of eventual resolution. You take the ride at your own risk.


Both other pieces here date from the early 1990s,



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Ottawa

Always Singing PHILIPPE SLY

as told to CRYSTAL CHAN

In March, at 22, Philippe Sly became one of five winners of the 2011 Metropolitan Opera's National Council Auditions, which heard a total of 1,500 singers. Sly has received many offers but plans to continue his studies with the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio. A native of Ottawa, his father is an anglophone while his mother is from La Tuque, a little town in Northern Quebec which he calls "my other hometown"; his self-proclaimed cultural heritage is "all French-Canadian." He shares his story.

“When I grew up there was an elderly neighbour living right beside us named Muriel Racine. As soon as I started walking, she would have me come for tea almost everyday. She would sing to me and I would sing back. It was quite formal. I was wired, hyper as a child; she funneled that energy into singing. My parents brought me to see an operetta that the Opera Lyra Boys Choir put on, and it was the first time I stood still; I was awestruck for the entire concert. I told my parents: 'That's what I want to do.' At seven, I auditioned and joined that choir, started taking voice lessons. I haven't looked back since.

My voice changed later than most boys. I thought I'd be a countertenor, as I maintained a very high falsetto for a long time. It was only later when I started auditioning for university in Grade 12 that I realized baritone would be the only way for me. My voice coach, Laurence Ewashko (a teacher at the University of Ottawa), was the one who really gave me a lot of direction through that change. I've been singing as a bass-baritone for only five years.

I came to McGill specifically to study with [Sanford Sylvan]. I had a great audition at McGill and I realized there was someone on the panel that I didn't know, and he was going to be a new teacher the next year. So Michael McMahon—the best coach in this country, really—told me I should schedule a lesson. Afterward, I immediately knew that this was the teacher I wanted.

At McGill, solidifying the voice took a long time. At the beginning, it was a hard and arduous process. There are different kinds of baritones, and because I am so young they didn't know how to classify my voice: I have a big voice and I can sing lower repertoire—bass-baritone—but I can access the higher repertoire too. The idea in classical music that you can only sing certain roles is really not useful. So they just wanted me to sing what sounded most beautiful. People seem to want me to sing Handel and Wagner—which are completely contrasting. As a young man your voice changes over a long period of time; it settles much later than for women. [Sylvan] helped me sing with ease beautifully and allowed me to find my voice instead of

trying to contrive it. A good teacher allows you to just discover what your natural voice is instead of trying to impose a sound quality, intensity, or aesthetic that people want.

I was warned very early on that there's no use in emulating anybody, because you're never going to be able to imitate their sound quality exactly. But Bryn Terfel was a great influence on me. He's so musical and he has a voice set close to mine. Canadian-wise, I find Gerald Finley a supreme artist. Gerald and I were in the same church choir in Ottawa, St. Matthew's, and we both have an affiliation with the Brian Law Opera Competition.

I've been fortunate to sing some really exciting roles at McGill: Nick Shadow in *The Rake's Progress*—I realized that I'm not going to find much that matches up [to that]—and Marcello from *La Bohème*, one of the best baritone roles that Puccini wrote. [The

**“I WANT TO BE ABLE TO
CREATE, NO MATTER WHAT
MEDIUM IT IS.”**

two roles each have] a different fach; I am a bass-baritone with a dark core to my sound but an extension that's quite intense, so my voice is going in a direction where it might be able to sing Puccini, Verdi, and Wagner in the future. My dream role is Don Giovanni, a character that I can't wait to sink my teeth into. Don Giovanni is a constant struggle for every baritone to try and figure out.

I'm also a big admirer of new opera and I want to take part in the creative process. I also love discovering roles in operas that haven't been performed in the last century; there is so much out there. I know my career will rest very much in Mozart, baroque and new opera, with baroque music being the closest thing to my heart.

Playing jazz trombone in high school was very influential to me because learning how to improvise is quintessential to my musicality. Onstage things never go as planned. Your reaction to what's going on has to be successful. If you plan out everything then you won't give yourself the chance to be moved, inspired, react and communicate in a way that's direct. Jazz gave me that concept. That's something that there's not enough of in opera today: the idea of improvisation and reaction.

A singer can't practice as much as an instrumentalist can. My instrument is part of my body and can only sustain so much at a time. Half an hour of straight singing is very taxing. In a three-hour opera, you're not singing through that whole three hours non-stop. As a singer you can practice—full singing—maybe an hour a day. The rest is memorization, poetry and verse analysis. To learn the music you can say the words in rhythm and learn the notes on the piano.

No matter what I'm doing I want to be dealing with the stage. I would be more than willing to be part of traditional theatre and musical theatre. I know that during and after having my career as an opera singer, directing is something I'm sure I'll be a part of. I want to be able to create, no matter what medium it is.

THE MET

It was my first time in New York. I became very close friends with one of the other winners, Ryan Speedo Green. My highlights included attending the performances and working with the orchestra and the conductor. I felt like I was just rehearsing here at McGill.

I wasn't nervous during the performances, but I was nervous as soon as it ended. I remember my last aria at the finals: right after I finished the last note there was a silence. Then somebody led the applause, shouting 'bravo.' Then I began to shake. I bowed and walking back to my dressing room, I was weeping—I hadn't realized it. I had so much pent-up nervousness that it was just being released after that moment was over.

Remember Muriel? She had passed away, but her son happened to be in New York and came to see the finals and visited me afterward. It meant a lot to me. Muriel was at my beginning, and it's like she was also there when my career was launched. It was almost prophetic."

TMS

» With the Ottawa Choral Society, May 1; Soloist in *Dover Beach* by Samuel Barber, Dominion-Chalmers United Church, Ottawa www.ottawachoralsociety.com

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when Adams was struggling with his eclectic violin concerto. *Road Movies* for violin and piano manages to be repetitive without ever becoming hypnotic so effectively does the composer shift the landscape with new features. *John's Book of Alleged Dances* is plain old mischief—six itchy riffs for string quartet in which the tune is forever challenged by pizzicato clicks of what might be a defective metronome. The album is original and Dubeau's sense of fun is infectious and the sound immediate.

NL

Mahler: Symphony No. 2

Stephania Woytowicz, soprano; Anny Delorie, contralto; Cologne Radio Chorus; Cologne Radio Symphony Orchestra/William Steinberg

Recorded in Cologne 10 September 1965

ICA Classics ICAC 5001 (79 min 38 s)

★★★★☆

The history of Mahler performance should take note of the pioneering conductors who embraced the music before it was firmly rooted in the orchestral repertory. After the composer's associates: Walter, Klemperer and Fried came conductors such as Carl Schuricht, Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt and Hermann Scherchen in Germany, John Barbirolli and Charles Groves in the UK, and European conductors established in America, notably Eugene Ormandy, Fritz Reiner and Erich Leinsdorf. To these must be added William (formerly Hans Wilhelm) Steinberg on the strength of this superb interpretation of Symphony No. 2. The launch of ICA Classics happily coincides with the second Mahler anniversary year and this is an important Mahler recording.

Steinberg (1899-1978), a student of Hermann Abendroth, was engaged as an assistant to Otto Klemperer at the Cologne Opera. He fled Germany in 1933. During 24 seasons with the Pittsburgh SO, he also worked as music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the London Philharmonic. His recorded legacy is not widely available and many collectors will be making Steinberg's acquaintance for the first time with this release. It is a tremendous performance delivered with distinguished authority. The Cologne RSO's knowledge of Mahler must have been scant in 1965 but Steinberg inspires them to play as well as any orchestra could. The same could be said for the vocal soloists and chorus. No Mahlerian should be without this disc.

WSH

Mahler: Symphony No. 8

Julia Varady, soprano (Magna Peccatrix); Jane Eaglen, soprano (Una Peonitium); Susan Bullock, soprano (Mater Gloriosa); Trudeliene Schmidt, alto (Mulier Samaritana); Jadwiga Rappé, (Maria Aegyptiaca); Kenneth Rigel, tenor (Doctor Marianus); Eike Wilm Schulte, baritone (Pater Ecsaticus); Hans Sotin, bass (Pater Profundis); Eton College Boys' Choir; London Symphony Chorus; London Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir/Klaus Tennstedt

Recorded in concert by the BBC, Royal Festival Hall, London, 27 January 1991

LPO-0052 (87 min 22 s)

★★★★☆

It is worth remembering that Klaus Tennstedt's 1986 studio recording of Mahler's Eighth was a league leader for more than a decade. Like other LPO Mahler concert relays under this uniquely gifted conductor, here is a recording which might just become a benchmark for discriminating collectors. The performance had already been issued to wide critical acclaim on an EMI DVD in 2006. Tennstedt had a special understanding of this sprawling score, and his ability to communicate through sheer nervous energy to the massed performers was unparalleled.

A comparative version was released simultaneously by Oehms Classics. Bertrand de Billy leads the Austrian Radio SO Vienna in a strong performance. It might seem better without competition from the LPO archive. De Billy is more operatic in his approach, in the Solti manner. But listen to the build-up of congestion at critical points. The newcomer just cannot match Tennstedt's mastery of balancing voices and orchestra and instruments and sections within the orchestra. In a live concert situation, Klaus Tennstedt appears to be invincible.

WSH

Tchaikovsky: Orchestral Works (Symphony No. 4 - Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture)

Russian National Orchestra/Mikhail Pletnev

PentaTone Classics PTC 5186 384 (Hybrid SACD - 60 min 19 s)

★★★★☆

Mikhail Pletnev and the Russian National Orchestra previously recorded a cycle of the Tchaikovsky symphonies for DG in 1996. This release is the first in a new traversal of the symphonies. Pletnev has not significantly changed his approach to the Fourth. He maintains the character of classical refinement. This goes against the grain of dramatic emphasis and contrast found in the interpretations of Evgeny Mravinsky and subsequent vigorous followers. Never mind; Pletnev's method is probably closer to what the composer had in mind and would certainly please the Fourth's dedicatee, Nadezhda von Meck (and Tchaikovsky's patroness in 1878, when the score was completed). An exquisitely played account, this recording trumps the DG issue (now boxed up in a collector's bargain box) with state of the art super audio sound.

This conductor has never been reticent in performing Tchaikovsky's overtures and symphonic poems, and this recording of *Romeo and Juliet* is no exception. Again, the quality of PentaTone's sound makes this the one to have in either super audio or conventional playback.

WSH

Ferenc Fricsay conducts Béla Bartók

Violin Concerto (No. 2); Two Portraits; Cantata Profana; Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta; Dance Suite; Divertimento; Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra; Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 3

Helmut Krebs, tenor; Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, baritone; Tibor Varga, violin; Géza Anda, Louis Kentner, Andor Foldes, piano; RIAS-Kammerchor; Chor der St. Hedwigskathedrale; RIAS Symphony Orchestra/Ferenc Fricsay Audite 21.407 (213 min 42 s)

★★★★☆

RIAS were the call letters for Radio in the American Sector. The station was second only to the Berlin airlift in sustaining morale within the siege lines of the occupation zones held by the western allies during the early years of the Cold War. Audite struck pure gold with the RIAS master tapes of concert broadcasts. In 2009, this connection yielded a 12-disc box of Wilhelm Furtwängler conducting his key repertoire with the BPO. At the end of 2010, a box of five CDs featured Hans Knappertsbusch with the same orchestra recorded during the period 1950-52. These collections were greeted with enthusiasm by collectors of vintage recordings and the present set is, if anything, even more desirable.

Ferenc Fricsay (1914-1963) was decisive in establishing the RIAS SO as its music director between 1948 and 1954 (and from 1959). Audite are compiling a Fricsay edition which has reached a dozen discs. Those albums attest to the fact that he could conduct anything well. And in the music of his native Hungary, Fricsay's interpretations offered unique insight and sparkling wit. Here he is abetted by like-minded Magyar collaborators Vargas, Kentner and Foldes, musicians who grew up with the emergence of Bartók as a major 20th century composer. And like the conductor, these artists had been disinherited in their homeland by 1950-53, when the concert and studio recordings were made, but, by God, they still owned Béla Bartók. Audite deserves credit for preserving these outstanding performances for posterity. Audio quality is superb given the 60-year-old mono master tapes+. The set is enriched by a splendid booklet note by Wolfgang Rathert. **WSH**

DVD & BLU-RAY

Beethoven: Missa solemnis

Krassimira Stoyanova, soprano; Elina Garanča, mezzo-soprano; Michael Schade, tenor; Franz-Josef Selig, baritone; Staatsoperchor Dresden; Staatskapelle Dresden/Christian Thielemann

C Major 705504 (Blu-ray – 90 min)

★★★★☆

The picture quality here is remarkable. In contrast to the conventional DVD versions (also from C Major) of his contemporaneous Vienna Beethoven symphony

cycle, Blu-ray takes ten years and twenty pounds off Maestro Thielemann. Perhaps the dark suit helps. For this is very much a buttoned-up occasion: the memorial concert to commemorate the destruction of Dresden on the night of 13 February 1945 by RAF Bomber Command and in recognition of the 1985 re-opening of the opera house, which was destroyed in the raids. Mikhail Gorbachev is among the dignitaries in attendance. Thielemann's podium manner is also suitably restrained – far less corybantic than his physically enthusiastic direction of the VPO. The performance itself is marvellous. The Staatskapelle is in rapturous form, the soloists, including our own Michael Schade, are superb and the chorus spellbinding. This account trumps the EuroArts DVD of *Missa Solemnis* conducted by Fabio Luisi in November 2005 in honour of the restoration of Dresden's magnificent Frauenkirche, which had also been destroyed by the bombing. The city has good reason to remember the catastrophic action of the last weeks of the war. Thielemann's performance offers a soothing measure of consolation and faith. Preserved for posterity, it may never be surpassed in the audio-visual medium. He is planning to perform Verdi's Requiem and the War Requiem by Benjamin Britten for future Dresden memorial concerts. **WSH**

Mahler: Symphony No. 9

Staatskapelle Berlin/Daniel Barenboim

C Major DVD 703708 (101 min)

★★★★☆

Barenboim has been General Music Director of the German State Opera Berlin since 1992. When the opera orchestra gives concerts, it is called the Staatskapelle Berlin. Barenboim was chosen to be Chief Conductor for Life of this orchestra in 2000. It may not be the equal of the Berlin Philharmonic but it is a world class ensemble.

Pierre Boulez and Barenboim have been friends and collaborators for many years, and for the Mahler celebrations in 2010-2011 they decided to collaborate on presenting all nine completed Mahler symphonies in Berlin, Vienna and New York with the Staatskapelle. This DVD includes a "bonus" in which



the two musicians discuss Mahler together. The performance of the Ninth Symphony conducted by Barenboim was recorded live in Berlin in April, 2009.

Barenboim's approach to Mahler is very much based on the printed score. He does not personalize the music in the Bernstein manner. And yet there is intensity when it is required. I was especially struck by the third movement, "Rondo. Burleske." Barenboim's basic tempo is very fast, leaving him nowhere to go when Mahler asks for an even faster tempo at the end of the movement. Or at least so I thought. But Barenboim and his players pull it off with some thrilling playing. Special kudos are in order for the principal horn, viola and cello players in this fine performance. **PER**

Richard Strauss: Elektra

Irène Theorin (Elektra), Waltraud Meier (Klytämnestra), Eva-Maria Westbroek (Chrysothemis), Robert Gambill (Aegisth), René Pape (Orest), Wiener Staatsoperchor, Wiener Philharmoniker/Daniele Gatti

Stage Director: Nikolaus Lenhoff

Arthaus Musik 101560 (Blu-ray – 109 min)

★★★★☆

Hugo von Hofmannsthal's libretto, after Sophocles, for *Elektra* inspired Richard Strauss to extend the boundaries of opera even beyond what was achieved with *Salome*. In its wake, Strauss never returned to the epoch-making leading edge of music drama. His remaining stage works were immersed in conventional idioms. This opera is Strauss at his innovative, creative peak and, more than one hundred years after its first performance, *Elektra* continues to represent something daring to audiences. This very successful production is one of the best for the small screen. Despite a well-known plot, Nikolaus Lenhoff manages to generate stomach-churning tension in the tale of betrayal, obsession, madness and matricide without an axe in sight. In terms of musical quality it is comparable to a performance given at Baden-Baden in February 2010, conducted by Christian Thielemann with Linda Watson in the title role (Opus Arte). The latter was let down by the tired conceptual setting of the late Herbert Wernicke. The Salzburg staging blazes with dramatic genius. Irène Theorin gives the best depiction of the title character since Hildegard Behrens at the Met in 1994 (Met/Decca). There is not one weak link in the cast. Those seeking a new and dynamic version of this opera should not hesitate. **WSH**



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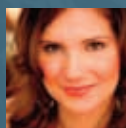
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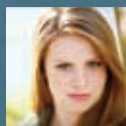
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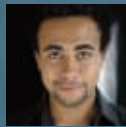
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