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Frances Ginzer & Adrienne Pieczonka: Scaling Valhalla

Photos: Michael Cooper
Industry News

Bravo! and Canadian Opera Company to Launch Bathroom Divas
Bravo! and the Canadian Opera Company are teaming up with Kaleidoscope Entertainment in the reality-based TV craze by introducing Bathroom Divas, an opera version of the popular Canadian and American Idol shows. Until March 31, 2004, non-professional Canadian contestants 18 years or older, male and female, can enter by submitting a photo and a demo of three contrasting arias.

Judges Philip Boswell, Artistic Administrator of the COC, and Sandra Gavinchuk, Music Administrator at the COC, have actually been running the company’s Call for Bathroom Divas public auditions for the last three years.

The new incarnation will see about 30 finalists compete in late April. Throughout June, July and August, the chosen bathroom diva will go through an intense training process developed by the COC. The public will see the winner at the COC’s August Harbourfront concert. In September, Bravo! will telescast about six performers.

For more info visit www.bathroomdivas.com.

Ontario Youth Choir Cancelled
The 32nd Ontario Youth Choir summer program has been cancelled this year because of financial difficulties. Ontario Choirs, the youth program’s parent organization, has launched a drive to try to avert bankruptcy. In the past the youth program would welcome 40 talented singers between the ages of 16 and 22 from across Ontario to an intensive training session and concert tour at the end of each summer.

Telus Corp. President to Chair Royal Conservatory of Music Capital Campaign
TELUS Corporation president and CEO Darren Entwistle will chair the Royal Conservatory’s Capital Campaign, “Building National Dreams”; it represents the institution’s plan to raise $55 million to build new performance and learning facilities. Various governmental bodies have already contributed more than $20 million towards the project, which is slated to open in 2006. “Technologically sophisticated, the Performance and Learning Centre will become the heart of creative education in Canada, offering an even wider reach for the Conservatory’s impressive array of innovative programming initiatives,” announced the new chair on February 24. The Hon. Bob Rae, Chair of the Board of Directors of the RCM, mentioned that Entwistle’s leadership skills will greatly aid their fundraising campaign in the private sector.

Deborah Voigt Replaced at Royal Opera
News that the Royal Opera at Covent Garden has replaced soprano Deborah Voigt due to her size and weight has renewed debate on the power shift in opera: staging versus singing. On March 7, 2004, the London Daily Telegraph published an interview with Voigt under the headline “Royal Opera sacks diva who was ‘too fat for dress.’” Back in 2000, Voigt had been contracted to appear in the summer 2004 production of Richard Strauss’s Ariadne auf Naxos. In 2002, when the producers decided to set the opera in modern times and dress the heroine in a black evening gown, director Peter Katona decided Voigt did not fit the production’s concept. Royal Opera withdrew her contract and she went public in a February 2003 interview on Andante.com. Sadly, Ariadne is Voigt’s signature role, and she is considered one of the leading dramatic sopranos in the world. In recent years, her weight has fluctuated as she tried various diets. Following snippy comments from Katona on opera singers (“They say, ‘In order to be able to sing well I need to eat a lot’”) and amidst the large public and media outcry, Royal Opera has apologized and offered to hire Voigt in the future. Visit http://voigt.scena.org to read all the articles on the subject.

Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Fires Fischer-Dieskau
The last three months have been a tumultuous time for music lovers in Kitchener-Waterloo. In late November, the board of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony informed conductor Martin Fischer-Dieskau that he was relieved of his duties as artistic director two years before his contract formally expired, and just one year after the board had seemingly given the maestro a vote of confidence with a one-year extension to 2005. The root cause of the conflict revolves around a proposed tour by the orchestra to Germany in the 2004-05 season. In an interview on CBC Radio Two, KWSO’s Executive director Katherine Carleton explained that the board had decided in October that the orchestra did not have enough resources to embark on the trip. Afterwards Fischer-Dieskau approached the board with the assurance that he had found an anonymous donor to underwrite the tour. However, the conductor refused to reveal the name of the donor for the board to verify the validity of the pledge. Following a public outcry that included a call for changes to the organization’s governance, and a statement from the city’s mayor for mediation, the entire board resigned on February 15th. A new board was elected on March 15. Stay tuned.

Financial Results
• The Toronto Symphony Orchestra posted a surplus of $3,384 in 2002/03, the second surplus year in a row following near bankruptcy in 2001. An increase of $1 million in box office
revenues, half of which were single ticket sales, contributed to the positive results.
• A modest surplus of $24,000 shows the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra is moving in the right direction, but paying down the company’s large debt will require more work, ESO management announced at its annual general meeting.
• The Canadian Opera Company posted a surplus of $25,000 in year 2002/03.
• Thanks to a $100,000 gift from Dr. Stuart Davis, increased fundraising efforts and strong fiscal management, the Edmonton Opera announced net income for 2002/03 fiscal year of $371,640, thereby nearly eliminating their accumulated deficit.

CD News

Juno Awards Nominations Announced
The 33rd annual Juno Awards celebrating the Canadian recording industry has announced their nominees. 20 CDs are vying for one of 4 awards in classical music: Classical Album of the Year: Solo or Chamber Ensemble, Classical Album of the Year: Large Ensemble or Soloist(s) with Large Ensemble Accompaniment, Classical Album of the Year: Vocal or Choral Performance, Classical Composition of the Year. “The Canadian classical music industry is quite strong,” says David Feick of SRL. “17 of the 20 nominees are produced by Canadian labels.” The Junos (April 2 to 4) are organized by The Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences/L’académie canadienne des arts et des sciences de l’enregistrement (CARAS) and the ceremony will be telecast live on April 4 at 8 p.m. on CTV.

Readers of The Music Scene can participate in the Juno Awards through the La Scena Musicale Juno Public’s Choice. Visit http://junos2004.scena.org for the list of all nominees and to vote for your four favourite recordings. Entries containing all four winners will be eligible to win the grand prize of all 20 nominated CDs. Contest ends on April 4, 2004.

Naxos Canada Appoints Rick Dunlop VP Sales and Marketing
Downsizing at major labels is moving management talent to the smaller labels. October 16, 2003, was a dark day at Universal Music as the company chopped 1,350 jobs worldwide. Among the Canadian casualties was the VP of the Canadian classics and jazz division, Rick Dunlop, who had spent over 20 years with the company. In January 2004, Dunlop was appointed by Naxos of Canada to be its new VP of Sales and Marketing. The move is interesting as Naxos has been partly responsible for the major labels’ reduced market share, while Dunlop was involved in Universal’s Eloquence budget label that competed in price with Naxos.

In an early 2003 downsizing, Pierre Dionne, Director of Marketing for Universal Music in Quebec, was let go and subsequently landed at ATMA Classique.

Archambault Launches Music Download Service
The year 2003 ended with some positive news for the recording industry. Legal proceedings by the recording industry in the US have substantially reduced music piracy. Music download services, led by Apple’s $0.99 USD per song iTunes store (which has sold close to 20 million songs), have begun to gain market share, causing retailers such as Walmart to join the music download business.

On January 16, 2004, Groupe Archambault became the second Canadian and first French-language Canadian online music download operation by launching the bilingual site Archambaultzik.ca, selling song/track sets at $0.99 CAD. Unlike the first Canadian operation puretracks.com (which sells songs at $1.39 CAD), Archambaultzik.ca also includes classical tracks. In its first months of operation, the site will feature mostly local labels. In classical, only Analekta products are available. In full operation, the site will feature over 300,000 songs. Both Archambaultzik.ca and puretracks.com use Windows Media player and therefore are only available for Windows machines.

Spelling Mistake Cost Soprano US Visa
Most musicians traveling to the US encounter various inconveniences due to post 9/11 security measures: extra strings removed from violin cases, wind instruments refused cabin space and, at the very least, an interrogation at the check-in desk. The problem was worse for Bulgarian soprano Alexandrina Pendatchanska, who lost her contract with the Pittsburgh Opera because of bureaucratic complications that face foreign artists wishing to perform in the US. Because of spelling errors made by American Citizenship and Immigration Services, Pendatchanska did not receive her visa in time and was consequently unable to perform in the company’s production of Handel’s Julius Caesar. She was replaced by Korean Soprano Sujung Kim.

Pendatchanska’s situation highlights the difficulties faced by arts organizations in the US.
and the foreign performers whom they wish to hire. Visa applications can be submitted only six months before a performance, but backlogs make processing longer. Organizations can pay a $1,000 premium to expedite the processing of applications but many cannot afford the extra fee. “The cost can be prohibitive to a small arts organization,” says US Rep. Melissa Hart, who has attempted to help. The National Endowment for the Arts has set up a Web site with information about immigration and tax requirements: www.artistsfromabroad.org.

Fialkowska Beats Cancer
Montreal pianist Janina Fialkowska has made a miraculous return to health and performance after a battle with cancer. A rare form of the disease had robbed her of the use of her left arm and shoulder for the last two years. The 52-year-old pianist began by performing works for the right hand such as those by Paul Wittgenstein, and on February 26 her performance of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major with the Toronto Philharmonia under Kerry Stratton received a standing ovation.

The crowd at Toronto’s George Weston Recital Hall included friends and colleagues of Fialkowska who had flown from near and far to support the artist’s “debut.” It was “a musically satisfying performance,” said Toronto Star critic William Littler. “Virtually everything was there—the technical security, the poise, the sensitivity of touch, the grasp of the music’s structure and meaning. Yes, against all the medical odds, Janina Fialkowska had truly returned.”

Obituaries

Nikki Goldschmidt Passes Away
Nicholas Goldschmidt died on February 9 at his home in Toronto. He was 95. Since his arrival in Canada in 1946 to head the fledgling opera school of the Royal Conservatory of Music and help form the Canadian Opera Company, Goldschmidt had been one of the country’s most active cultural entrepreneurs.

Goldschmidt was at the helm of many Canadian musical events such as the Vancouver International Festival, the 1983 competition marking the Bach bicentennial, the Mozart International Competition and the Toronto International Choral Festival. Music Canada Musique 2000 was perhaps his most ambitious project. The year-long, $2.3 million festival held performances in every province and the Yukon. Fuelled by his love of classical music, in particular choral music and opera, he has been described as “a mixture of inexhaustible energy and outrageous nerve.”

Director Emeritus of the Victoria Conservatory Passes Away
The tribute to Robin Wood, pianist and teacher, posted on the Victoria Conservatory of Music’s Web site reports that Professor Wood was listening to a recording of the Conservatory’s gala concert when he died on February 28. This last act was an example of his devotion to the school he helped found. Born in Victoria, Prof. Wood was awarded a scholarship to study with Vivian Langrish at the Royal Academy of Music in London, England. In 1965, Wood left London and his flourishing European career with his wife, pianist Winifred Scott Wood, to help found the Victoria Conservatory of Music. Wood was a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Lieutenant-Governor of British Colombia, and both he and his wife were Honourary Life Members of the BC Registered Music Teachers’ Association, among a long list of honours and awards. “He made each of his students feel special, valued and worthy,” says one of his past students. “He unloosed the knots and drew out our finest musical selves. Dr. Wood was one of God’s greatest treasures and his laughter and spirit will alway linger in the halls of U Vic and the Victoria Conservatory.” To post a message or read the tributes to Prof. Wood please go to quokkasystems.com/rwscrapbook.

The Piano Lesson of the Future
Jean-Sébastien Gascon

Developing the musicians of the future has always hinged on the one-on-one relationship between student and teacher. Matching the right mentor to a particular student has often meant relocation, usually for the student. Present technology such as telephone and videoconferencing don’t allow a teacher to grasp the subtleties of a student’s performance, just as they prevent the teacher from communicating the nuances of his own playing to the pupil. Music Path, a new technology developed at Acadia University and unveiled on February 26, 2004, may just be the answer.

Lucas goes to his piano lesson
Twelve-year-old piano student Lucas Porter is one of Canada’s promising musicians. Twice a month he has private lessons with Marc Durand, one of the best piano teachers in the world. On February 26, 2004, Lucas made his way to Acadia University in Nova-Scotia for his lesson. It took him only ten minutes to get there but he couldn’t wait.

His teacher is 1700km away
“OK, Lucas, you can take out The Moonlight Sonata, third movement,” said Durand, who sat with a headset at a piano in Toronto at the Royal Conservatory of Music. In the auditorium, journalists and teachers also came to watch the long-distance private lesson. Lucas was beamed in on a large screen from more than two time zones away. As he played, the pedals and keys of the piano in Toronto magically reproduced his movements.

Durand and Porter were linked together by Music Path, a technology that synchronized the pianos in the two cities. When one played, the other instrument responded automatically as if the pianist were right there in the same room.

The lesson seemed a little strange at first, but it got better as Lucas’ nervousness at having an audience melted away. A real bond was created between the teacher and his pupil. Despite the piano and the televised image being out of sync, the 1700 km between the student and his teacher seemed to have disappeared. “This is a great breakthrough in communication
between teacher and student,” marvelled Oscar Peterson, also in the audience.

“I don’t think that you’re holding that note for long enough. It’s as if you are playing it while thinking about the notes coming up.” The piano began to play again.

The miracle behind this futuristic piano lesson is a modern electronic keyboard (Yamaha DC7APRO), a program (Music Path) based on MIDI technology, and a high-speed Internet connection (CANARIE). The team at Acadia University that developed Music Path has been working with a group from the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto to make music lessons accessible over long distances.

Though Lucas was shy at the press conference, he vigorously defended Music Path’s advantages; it’s a matter of studying with Marc Durand or not.

For Durand, “It’s a great tool, but it will never replace the real thing—sitting side by side with your student.” However, it does facilitate distance learning so that students can avoid difficult travelling schedules. Despite the great precision of the system, Durand doesn’t trust that it can translate all the subtleties of Lucas’ playing. “I have to compensate by developing new strategies like using the screen or asking him to repeat a passage. It requires a lot of attention.”

Physical abilities like follow-through and posture are the hardest to teach. In this case the camera must be used to its maximum potential. The acoustics of the rooms on either end must also be well matched to better judge the student’s playing. Without it, Marc Durand cannot tell how much pedal his student is using.

According to the developers of Music Path, these drawbacks will soon be solved. The hardware will be lighter and smaller, the camera will be more responsive to the needs of the teacher, and the sound and image will be better synchronized. ■

[translated by Anna Sampson]
A good bow can do wonders to improve the sound of a string instrument, whereas a badly made or unsuitable one is frustrating and counterproductive. Finding a suitable bow can seem like torture. If it is in your price range, it might not be quite right, and sometimes, the perfect bow can be too expensive.

"I bought the Dodd after half an hour. I played some Bach and that was it," says Montreal Symphony Orchestra cellist Gary Russell. "You have to be very lucky to find a bow that has all of the right qualities." Russell owns three bows: a John Q. Dodd bought from a dealer in Saskatoon, a Vuillaume and a bow by Montreal maker François Malo.

Russell tells his students when they are buying a bow to set a price range and work within it. Finding something in the right price range that matches the player’s instrument is the goal.

Perhaps the first thing a string player notices when he or she picks up a bow is its weight. Heavier bows require more effort, being harder to maneuver on string crossings and when changing directions. However, it is harder to play a sustained forte on a lighter bow. The location of the balance point or centre of mass (where it is possible to balance it on a finger) has a lot to do with how heavy a bow feels. If this point is farther towards the tip it will tend to feel heavier and vice-versa. Weight at the tip tends to tire the hand as it makes the bow harder to manipulate.

The flexibility and strength of the stick of the bow also affects the effort that goes into playing. A stiff bow makes it hard to “get into the string” and can feel as if it skates on the surface. More flexible bows tend to produce a rounder sound but can have a slower reaction time.

Finding the right bow is a very personal matter. Players usually rely on how it feels in the hand and the variations of sound it can produce. Russell talks about the variation of “dark” or “light” sound from one bow to the other. Ideally, the player should be able to produce a range of colours with relative physical ease.

Years of counseling clients and watching players make decisions have lent bow makers significant insight into the bow buying process. “They start the process here in my atelier,” says Montreal maker Thérèse Girard. “They try a lot of bows for about an hour and then take home one or two. I don’t think it’s possible for a musician to make their choice in an atelier. They need to feel comfortable.” François Malo says, “Usually when people try a bow they should aim for something that is comfortable to play, a bow that will match the instrument... A very good bow by Lamy might be very bad, useless on your instrument.”

Whether a bow is new or used makes no difference. The trick is to set a price and experiment until you find the right bow.

Pernambuco

Historically, most bows are made with pernambuco wood due to its combined strength and flexibility. Pernambuco is a derivative of the Pau-Brazil or *Caesalpina echinata* tree. Although other tropical woods such as snakewood, ironwood and brazilwood are popular for the performance of baroque music, pernambuco is still the most prized material for bows.

One of the main reasons, though not the only one, for the proliferation of bows made from new materials such as carbon fibre is the depletion of the stock of pernambuco. Although attempts to protect the rare wood have been recorded as early as 1605, notably the “Pernambuco Wood Proclamation” signed by Phillip II of Portugal, pernambuco is growing scarce.

Thomas Wilder, of Wilder and Davis Lutherie in Montreal, is at the head of a project to raise funds for the promotion of the preservation and sustainable use of pernambuco. The *PAU-Brazil Conservation Project* intends to donate the funds raised from the publication of a collaborative work on the repair, restoration and conservation of stringed instruments and their bows. For more information about the project please visit www.pau-brazil.com.

(If fear that pernambuco will become extinct is shared by others outside the musical community. Pernambuco wood extract is being tested for use in the treatment of cancerous tumours with encouraging results according to research done by Professor Angelo José Camarotti and Ivone Antônia de Souza of the Federal University of Pernambuco. The extract...
has proven to inhibit tumour growth, with success rates of up to 87.1%. The depletion of the sources seriously threatens the future of this promising therapy.

Carbon fibre and Yamaha
Though the basic construction of the bow has not changed dramatically for 250 years, the materials used in bow-making have widened to include composite materials. Carbon fibre bows are more durable than their pernambuco counterparts, which makes them attractive as second bows for professional players who need an alternative to their more temperamental and delicate wood bows. Unlike wood, carbon fibre does not react to changes in humidity and temperature, guaranteeing a more reliable response. They also tend to be competitively priced, which, combined with their durability, makes them an option for students.

Yamaha has just come out with a range of carbon fibre bows for cello and violin, priced from $550 to $4790. Renowned players such as the National Arts Centre Orchestra’s Director, violinist Pinkas Zukerman, have lent their names to Yamaha’s new product.

Saxophone: Selmer Gets Back to Its Roots
With its new “Référence” series, Selmer revisits the models that made the company famous. The Eb alto saxophone Mark VI has been revamped and is now labelled as the new “Référence” series Eb Saxophone. Also part of the series are two Bb tenors. Each of these tenor models possesses a unique quality of tone. The “Référence 36” has a rich, open colour in the footsteps of the “Balanced Action” manufactured from 1936 on. The more centred “Référence 54” incorporates the famous “Mark VI” design, which came out in 1954.

Kawai’s Variable Action Piano
Every piano has a different keyboard action and, accordingly, every musician has different preferences. In an attempt to appeal to a wide range of tastes, Kawai will come out with a variable action piano in the fall. A lever on the left side of the piano instantly alters the action by up to 40 grams. The Kawai VT-132 is a modified K60 model piano that is primarily aimed at the student market.

Kawai VT-132: $13,995
Cellist Anna Sampson has attended music programs throughout her childhood. From Montreal to Dublin, her experiences have influenced her life on a personal and professional level. Here are some of the highlights of her summer sessions.

Sweating, muscles burning, we made our way up the hill to la Salle Claude-Champagne every morning. Our equipment—violin-sized cello, adjustable bench, warm, soggy sandwiches, sheet music, music stand, and swimming equipment—hung from our shoulders and sides. It was the summer of 1990, significant only because it was my first time at summer music camp. My mother and I had enrolled in the Suzuki Institute Montreal, held at the music faculty of the Université de Montréal. I had started playing the cello earlier in the year and, equipped with no fewer than six variations on the theme Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, I was prepared to face my pint-sized peers.

I don't think my mother realized that the experience would become a ritual. For five years we ate different versions of those warm sandwich-es at various Suzuki Institutes. We met our friends and teachers on the grass of the Université de Montréal, Concordia and McGill, and even at the international conference in Dublin, Ireland. I remember the fun I had with the other kids in my group lessons. Families from all over the world congregated to play Twinkle en masse. Attending the institutes prevented me from losing all of the work I had done with my mother and teacher during the school year, sparing everyone's ears in the fall.

The last time I went to camp purely for pleasure was also the summer I decided to become a professional cellist. Point Counter Point, the camp I attended that year, is set in the beautiful Mount Washington Ski Resort, sitting high above the Comox valley. I was initiated for the first time into the pleasures and pains of travel with a cello, which I now associate with summer festivals. After four intense weeks of chamber music and lessons I returned home with a cello sporting more holes than necessary due to an accident on the last night. I also came into contact for the first time with young Canadian musicians whom I have since met at other music festivals through the years.

Some of those friends from Courtenay suffered alongside me during my session in the National Youth Orchestra of Canada in 1999. No cool mountain breezes were to be found in Kingston, Ontario in July and August. Our illustrious conductor, Mario Bernardi, showered us with sweat during the marathon rehearsal schedule and our calluses peeled under the intense humidity. But the heat aside, the National Youth Orchestra did a great job of preparing us for professional orchestral playing. We worked intensively and played with artists such as Ben Heppner and had a taste of what it was like to tour with a large ensemble.

I began my studies at McGill University in the fall of 1999, and finding the orchestral training during the year sufficient, I decided that I didn't require another summer with the NYOC. Besides, I had too much repertoire to learn for the next year, and the National Youth Orchestra schedule left little time for private practicing. That summer I had the great fortune of being a member of Janos Starker's class at the Orford Arts Centre in Quebec. Students came from all over the world to study with Starker, who is considered one of the great cello pedagogues. Fine playing and teaching emerged from behind the cloud produced by his chain smoking. We would take master classes for six hours and then most of us would scurry to our practice rooms for the rest of the day. Luckily, the camp is on a beautiful piece of land in the Eastern Townships, with woods surrounding the buildings and a lake close by. When we weren't practicing, we had the opportunity to hear wonderful concerts and wander into master classes given by other teachers.

A card labelled "artist" awaited me at the check-in desk of the Banff Arts Centre, Alberta, in the summer of 2002. This, along with the promise of unlimited access to a spectacular dessert table, gave me a small thrill. Because it runs all year round, the Banff Centre exudes a settled, organized air. Sculptors, painters, musicians, and a small army of teenage dancers mingled on campus with the deer and moose, which populate the grounds (all truly Canadian musicians perpetuate Canadian cultural stereotypes by telling stories about encounters with wildlife at Banff). As at Orford, the students at Banff came from everywhere to study with famous teachers. I shared a room with a violist from the Paris Conservatory and went to class with students from Juilliard and Yale.

Experiences of summer music camps exist as charmed periods in my life. Unworried by such pesky details as what to eat for dinner, I was allowed to practice and rehearse to my heart's content. Although master classes were stressful, the beauty of locations like Banff and Orford were inspiring, as was the contact with talented peers and teachers. The ritual my mother started has become one of the great pleasures of my life.

Anna Sampson
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One Extraordinary Moment After Another
CAMMAC: 50 Years and Counting

“ALL ART ENRICHES LIFE,” said 80-year-old Madeleine Little, co-founder of CAMMAC (Canadian Amateur Musicians / Musiciens amateurs canadiens). “And people have always had the fundamental need to make music.” A little over 50 years ago, while watching a 4-hour snowstorm in a northern retreat on a day between Christmas and New Year’s, Madeleine Little, husband George, brother-in-law Carl and his wife Frances hatched the idea of creating a place for people to make music in a relaxed and non-competitive atmosphere. Inspired by the principle that playing music in groups creates a bond between people that transcends age, language and cultural differences, the four finalized the idea of CAMMAC on the train ride back to Montreal.

With a growing membership of over 2000 members—30% of whom live outside Canada—and with its capital campaign well underway, the organization is poised to bring its vision to music lovers for another year.

In its first summer in 1953, CAMMAC served 26 people for 2 weeks of music making (choral singing, solfège, theory, and French and English classes) at Otter Lake in Huberdeau, Quebec. “We had no money and convinced the hotel there to give special prices at the end of August,” said Little. “We borrowed $200 to print brochures and mailed them to people we thought would be interested. Attendance doubled the next year and kept doubling every year. We then increased the activities to include chamber music, orchestra and folk dancing over a three-to-four-week period. A lot of volunteers helped and the organization was supported with gifts and interest-free loans. Now 1000 people come for the weekly programs over 2 months every summer.

“From the start, we believed that the camp should be bilingual, and that being an amateur musician does not mean you are inferior; the word amateur comes from ‘amore,’ which means ‘love.’ Maureen Forrester and Louis Quilico gave one of their first recitals there.”

The driving force of CAMMAC can be traced to the musical heritage of brothers George and Carl Little. “From early childhood days, music played an important role in the life of our family,” wrote Carl Little in the CAMMAC magazine. “A small den housed our modest upright piano, which was seldom silent during early morning and late afternoon hours. Life without music would have seemed strangely empty.” George and Madeleine have also successfully passed on their passion for music to their three daughters, two of whom are professional musicians (Margaret, cellist and viola da gamba player, and a founder of Les Voix humaines, and Elizabeth, CAMMAC’s current artistic director, a professor of music at CÉGEP Lionel-Groulx). “We always believed that the secret to a good life is to work at what you love,” said Madeleine.

“CAMMAC is family fare. There are activities for adults, adolescents and children. Now it’s not uncommon that there are four generations at the same time; children come back with their children.” It’s also not unheard of for romances to come out of CAMMAC: it’s there that Margaret Little met husband Réjean Poirier, Dean of the Faculty of Music at University of Montreal; and Isolde Lagacé, Director of the Montreal Music Conservatory, met husband Douglas MacNabney, Artistic Director of Domaine Forget.

There is something exhilarating about spending a week in the summer making music with passionate musicians of all ages in the woods-and-lake side setting. But CAMMAC’s regional branches provide opportunities beyond the summer months. The Montreal branch, for instance, organizes 6 sight readings a year (most recently the Bach Christmas Oratorio with Christopher Jackson), a 50-member orchestra that meets weekly, and an adolescent choir. Run by volunteers with a limited budget, these activities are not well publicized.

Help may come in the wake of the organization’s Special Project to rebuild its facilities. When the organization moved to its present location at Lake MacDonald, one hour’s drive from Montreal, the White Forest lodge was not winterized. After 43 years of use, the 93-year-old main Lodge needed to be upgraded. Rather than renovating, the organization has opted to rebuild a modern facility that will be accessible year-round. “George’s vision was to have a centre for all the arts, and we are now having sketching and dance,” said Madeleine. “Now with the reconstruction project, it will be closer to a reality.”

The project recently got a shot in the arm in September 2003 when then-Canadian Heritage Minister Sheila Copps announced a $250,000 grant toward the building of a 240-seat concert hall at Lake MacDonald on the site where concerts currently take place. The facility’s other features will include 60 bedrooms, a recording studio, 2 studios (one large and one medium), 2 small practice rooms and a cushioned floor for dance. The organization’s campaign is now in the final stretch: $2.7 million of the $4.1 million budget has been secured from the government, with the remaining to be raised from private sources. If all goes well, ground breaking is scheduled for September 2004. According to CAMMAC’s executive director Raymond Sealy, “Currently, many groups (youth orchestras, community choirs and specialized workshops) use the facilities in the fall and spring for weekend resorts and workshops. There has been a lot of demand for an arts centre that operates year round. We are open to many different possibilities.” With the new green building set to open in June 2005, CAMMAC’s next 50 years of motivating music making looks bright. ■
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Dates
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Public Concert: Yes

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Dates
Week 1: June 27 - July 4
Week 2: July 4 - 11
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Scholarships: Yes - apply to More Than
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Session 3: July 22 to 28
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Scholarships: Limited financial assist-
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What makes the camp special
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Dates
July 7 to 10
July 13 - 18
July 27 - 30
Deadline: Advance April 30
Public Concert: Yes
What makes the camp special
Our many courses, Music Theatre
Production Rudgreek, Teen Program,
Young Adult Program and enrichment
programs orchestra, reading, fiddling,
empowering performances, dance

CAMMAC Ontario Music Centre
Box 164, 34 Eglington Ave W
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ontario@cammac.ca

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trumpet; Dave McMurdo, trombone; Brian Dickinson, piano;
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April-May 2004
Where East Meets West: Contemporary Chinese Music

Since the early 1980s, Occidentals have discovered a China that is open and saturated with Western music, and China's highly talented musicians and composers are regularly heard in the West these days. The following article offers a brief history of the development of contemporary Chinese music in mainland China and Taiwan.

China
China's first contact with Western music dates back to 1601, when a visiting Italian Jesuit played a spinet. In the 17th century an Italian composer, sent by the Pope to work for the Chinese emperor, played several European instruments and could even use them as accompaniment while he sang Chinese songs. After this the emperor's court regularly heard Western instruments. By the end of the 19th century a form of notation based on European numbers had been developed for traditional instruments.

It was only in early 20th-century Shanghai that the business and intellectual classes could begin to learn Western music, thanks to the arrival of exiled Russian and Jewish musicians. It was also in this period that the first composers, in the Western sense, appeared. Before this the idea of individual musical creation had been nonexistent in China. When the Chinese Republic replaced the court in 1919, the government introduced the composition of European-style music.

The piano soon became a highly prized possession for both the bourgeoisie and the intellectual class. But after 1949 Mao Zedong's government felt that it represented the capitalist spirit and thus was an artefact worthy of condemnation. Despite the fact that it was prohibited, however, interest in the piano did not die out. In fact, the piano ultimately proved to be very useful to the government. From the beginning of the 20th century, Chinese rulers had considered music, especially choral music, to be an excellent way of rallying the masses—an idea based on one of the principles of Confucius. If the revolutionary government hoped to assemble people from the many ethnic groups—an idea based on one of the principles of Confucius. If the revolutionary government hoped to assemble people from the many ethnic groups existing in China, a national music needed a universal structure. For this reason, the equally tempered Western scale was adopted. The melodies collected by civil servants working for the ministry of music were rewritten on the piano. Almost all traditional instruments belonging to various ethnic groups were therefore modified to accommodate this scale and its chords, particularly after the 1950s. As an example, the manufacturing methods of the zheng (a table zither) and the pipa (a form of lute) were changed in order to compete with the intensity of sound produced by Western instruments.

Western style orchestras began to appear on the scene. But until the early 1980s, composers had to bow to revolutionary directives and take part in the creation of national music. Similarly, typical pentatonic melodies accompanied by a 19th-century European orchestration could be heard in Taiwan.

The Cultural Revolution led by Mao’s wife, Jiang Qing, constitutes one of the great upheavals in recent Chinese history. Jiang Qing’s aim was to create model works for theatrical music and arts. She enumerated 8, although in fact there were 18. All national music had to conform to these hybrid models, which were strongly influenced by Western music.

It was at the end of this so-called revolution in 1976 that Western music blossomed in China. Surprisingly, the model works were not put aside. They still influence many composers, even those who write popular music and rock.

Starting in the early 1980s, many of China's composers and musicians, including traditional musicians, were heard outside their country. Many of them emigrated to the West (to the US in particular), including musicians like the marvellous pipa player, Liu Fang, who now lives in Montreal. Among the best-known composers is Tan Dun (see article on page 19). The writing style of most contemporary Chinese composers can be described as hybrid, a fusion of traditional and Western music. Some, like Tan Dun, “recontextualize” these forms; others simply rearrange them. All work toward “modernization,” a term that hides what is in fact the Westernization of modern Chinese music.

Taiwan
Taiwan quickly adopted Western music after World War II, in large part as a way of distinguishing its policy from that of communist China. Once the island had established a capitalist economy, however, postwar music received little support from the Taiwanese government. In the 1950s and 1960s people began to take a greater interest in Western and Chinese music, to the detriment of the country's traditional music. It was only in the early 1970s, a time of growing economic success, that the government set up cultural policies designed to promote various forms of traditional Taiwanese music. The very popular Peking Opera took on a form more representative of Taiwanese culture, for example. Nevertheless, since the 1970s, with the exception of traditional music, Taiwan has not developed what we could call a true musical milieu such as those that exist in Europe or North America. New works are definitely not created in an encouraging social, political, and cultural environment.

The development of contemporary music in Taiwan can be divided into three major periods, although the line between them is rather blurred. Following World War II, composers mainly looked for a way to redefine traditional Chinese and Taiwanese music without establishing a distinct musical language. Composers of the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated a greater knowledge of Western music, and have remained the most avant-garde to this day. The third period began in the 1970s and continues up to the present. Composers who emerged in this period have a better knowledge of Western music but are very limited as to traditional music. However, because of an economic policy focused, for practical reasons, on the American model, we find that pop and rock receives more popular and government support. In order to survive, composers tend to write in a style based on 19th-century European orchestration. Avant-garde music is practically nonexistent.

In both Taiwan and mainland China, composing has been and still is largely influenced by cultural and economic government policies. But in Taiwan the business class and national leaders don't seem to understand the need to encourage the creation of new music.

[translated by Jane Brierley]
Chinese Composer Tan Dun Fuses Old and New
BRUNO DESCHÉNES

Tan Dun is without doubt the best known Chinese composer in the West. His popularity seems to owe as much to his participation in political and media-based projects as to his talent, the best example being his Symphony 1997, written for the handing over of Hong Kong to China in 1997.

Tan Dun's works from the 1980s have fused with the spirit of a counterculture like that of Toru Takemitsu or John Cage, which question the dominance of Western music. At that time, Tan Dun's composing changed considerably, and his style was to have a great influence on other Chinese composers.

He would allude to all sorts of other works, even falsifying some of them. The most important change in his writing was that he brought together stylistic and cultural elements from highly diverse sources in single works. In many of his subsequent compositions, he developed a more stripped-down and simpler style.

His opera Marco Polo, written between 1991 and 1995 and given its world premiere in 1996, is a very good example of a compositional style that resembles a sound mosaic more than anything else. He describes this work as "an opera within an opera." It incorporates musical themes borrowed from various cultures or other works, including Mahler's Song of the Earth and Shakespearean passages recited in the style of the Peking Opera.

Tan Dun's Symphony 1997 is also filled with very disparate musical references. For instance, there are the famous Chinese bells made over 2,400 years ago that produce two different sounds, passages from Beethoven's 9th Symphony, a melody from a Hong Kong street opera, and a quote from his Concerto for Cello. Oddly, he cites the Chinese air "Molihua" (jasmine flower) from Puccini's Turandot rather than the original, traditional melody.

Tan Dun cites, reproduces, and imitates other music in order to give these melodies a fresh context. He offers his audience musical mosaics of his own expression, which could be heard very clearly in his score for the film, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. [translated by Jane Brierley]

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Review

LAWRENCE LOCK

Franz Liszt: La campanella
Liebeslied Widmung; Liebestraum No. 3; Tarantella; Rigoletto Paraphrase; Piano Sonata in B minor; Yundi Li, piano

Deutsche Grammophon – 471 585-2, DDD – 58 min 38 s

★★★★☆ ★★★

To the Western world, Yundi Li may still be known as “the other Chinese pianist.” Though his international career has not yet developed to the same degree as Lang Lang’s, Li is already a matinee idol in Asia. Recorded when the pianist was only 20, this CD is Li’s second recording for the yellow label. DG instantly struck gold when it was launched in Hong Kong during Christmas of 2002. In fact, the Asia-bound package of the disc contains a bonus VCD that features a music video (to La campanella) starring the Warsaw Chopin Competition winner and the German supermodel Anja Meder. The production cost of this 5-minute MV was $248,700!

While grace and charm abound, Li’s Liszt is highly streamlined. Rough edges seem foreign to his interpretation. Notwithstanding some uneven cross-hand playing, Li excels in poetic restraint that belies his age. He displays sparkling agility, sensitive phrasing, and his trademark suavity. Aided by an inherently warm tone palette, his Widmung has a luminous cantabile quality to it. This is Chopinesque Liszt at its best. Those who frown on the idea of a youngster tackling the monumental Sonata need only be reminded of Busoni’s remark that a pianist should be ready to play it at 17. Li’s way with the sonata is not as big-boned as, say, that of Gilels or Nojima. Seasoned listeners may find depth of tone and a certain terseness wanting. This is playing that eschews high-octane drama.

Tchaikovsky, Mendelssohn: First piano concertos
Lang Lang, piano / Chicago Symphony Orchestra / Daniel Barenboim
Deutsche Grammophon 474 291-2, DDD, 59:23
(also available in SACD: 474 637-2)

★★★★★ ★★★

Wherever he plays, Lang Lang attracts crowds of rock concert magnitude. It is small wonder that DG currently advertises the young superstar pianist as the “future of classical music” when the industry is in distress. This latest release showcases his trademark qualities in varying degrees of success. Evident is his youthful exuberance. He surely has all the chops to iron out even the most fiendishly difficult passages he plays with wild abandon; however, he also occasionally allows himself to attack the keys with a bit too much strength (i.e. banging), resulting in a lack of well-cushioned, burnished tones. Listeners who come to the Tchaikovsky 1st with a classic rendition in mind—say, of Van Cliburn—may find Lang Lang’s harsh metallic tones somewhat off-putting.

Marred by Barenboim’s heavy-handed approach and listless tempo, the Tchaikovsky concerto emerges as a post-Wagnerian monolith, deprived of vitality and gusto. It makes Lang Lang (or is it the listener himself?) seem impatient to gain free rein by tearing into the tumultuous solo passages of the work. Surprisingly, the duration of each movement here is nearly identical to that of Victoria Postnikova and Gennadi Rozhdestvensky. Yet the Russian husband-and-wife team is able to instill a far greater sense of conviction and majesty into this warhorse of romantic concertos. This example just proves that slowness does not necessarily equate profundity. It is all a matter of synergy.

On the other hand, Mendelssohn fares much better under the eager fingers of the young Chinese pianist. His sparkling intensity at the keyboard, coupled with the burly sonorities from the orchestra, is just what this youthful concerto deserves. The recorded sound is excellent, albeit with an unrealistic balance favouring the piano. It also exhibits a close-miked quality that gives all sorts of breathing (from various soloists, mannered or otherwise) clearly audible.

the music scene
April-May 2004 19
The Rise of Asians in Classical Music

Seeing Asian musicians on the concert stage these days is not uncommon. What is striking is their level of recent success. The 64th Montreal Symphony Orchestra Competition last November was noteworthy not only because the winner was Ang Li, a Chinese-Canadian, but that overall, four of the six winners from the different age categories were Asian-Canadians.

Although Asians constitute only 5.8% of the Canadian population, they make up the largest group (43%) of the nation’s visible minorities. They are well represented across the country and excel in various fields, including science and engineering.

Outside the sciences, the number of Asians making a career in the classical music industry is becoming more notable, with the Chinese and Koreans leading the way. Korean-born violinist Young-Dae Park, a 25-year veteran of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO) and a violin coach for the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra (TSYO), recalls that when he studied at the Royal Conservatory of Music in the 1960s, there were only two other Asians in the entire school. In the Glenn Gould Professional School (GGPS) alone, there are currently 18 students from Asian countries, not counting Asian-Canadians. According to Jenny Regehr, a piano examiner for the Royal Conservatory of Music who is also on the faculty of the GGPS, more Asian students have been going through the exams over the last ten years. And there is no lack of Asian musicians playing in Canadian orchestras. Park notes that “over half of the string section in the TSYO now are Asians, of whom 80% are Koreans.”

The stereotype that Asians excel in the sciences rather than in the arts implies that Yo-Yo Ma, Midori and Sarah Chang are anomalies in the music world. The outcome of the recent 64th Montreal Symphony Orchestra Competition is just one example that refutes this conclusion. Other examples include the fact that top winners in the piano and violin categories for the latest Kiwanis Music Festival were predominantly Asian, and the last two gold medallists of the prestigious Honens International Calgary Piano Competition were Chinese. As well, TSYO concertmasters during the last five years have been Asian.

That Asians are increasingly excelling in the musical arena can partly be explained by culture. They are reputed for being academically inclined and possessing a strong work ethic with a high level of discipline that serves as a powerful driver for success. Parental influence is a key factor in nurturing this attitude towards progressiveness. Asian parents actively encourage their children to study music at an early age in order to enable them to become well rounded and disciplined. Because music lessons are expensive and considered a privilege reserved for the wealthy and cultured, Asian parents take their children’s music education very seriously. Consequently, they are more apt to accompany their children to lessons and push them to practice diligently at home. More ambitious parents may even tag child prodigy potential to their offspring, thanks to the example of high profile virtuosi like Midori. Sometimes, parents transfer their unfilled aspirations to their children. Such was the case for violinist Sydney Chun, one of the newer members of the TSO. Her mother played the piano in her native Korea, but regretted not pursuing it professionally. As a result, Chun feels that her mother greatly influenced her decision to become a professional musician. She also credits the growing number of successful Asian role models, in her case Kyung-Wha Chung, for further inspiring her to pursue a career in music.

Ironically, although Asian parents often enrol their children in music lessons, they tend to consider music an extracurricular activity rather than a possible career option. Whereas medicine, law and engineering are deemed respectable professions, a music degree is not regarded as “real education,” a perfect illustration of Asian pragmatism. “There is some degree of sexism,” notes Chun. “Asian parents will push their sons to become doctors and lawyers, but their daughters to become musicians.” Park shares the same observation, noting that there are far more female Asian players in orchestras than males.

Does being a visible minority in the music industry present unique challenges to Asians? Park and Chun, both seasoned musicians, say that they have never experienced discrimination because of their ethnic background. Amy Park (no relation to Young-Dae), a Korean-born student in the 11th grade and current concertmaster for the TSYO, hopes to pursue a music degree in performance. “Certainly there are many barriers (to pursuing music as a career), but they don’t have much to do with being Asian,” she says. But she does think that Asian parents instill in their children the idea that they have to push themselves harder because they belong to a minority group. Andrew Kwan, an artistic manager who represents several Asian players in his roster, comments, “The classical music market plays no favouritism to any culture,” affirming that Asians and non-Asians alike face the same challenges in trying to break into the industry. On the other
hand, some believe that being Asian actually has its advantages. Philip Chiu, a Chinese second-year performance piano student at the GGPS, says that “some teachers may think that Asians are better students because they practice more!” While Regehr hesitates to make such a generalization, she does observe that students from Asia usually have a tradition of respect for teachers and tend to follow their instructors’ advice more readily.

Stereotypes associated with Asian musicians remain. Undoubtedly, Asian players tend to favour the piano and the violin, the Chinese being considered the better pianists and the Koreans the better violinists, as exemplified by artists like Lang Lang and Sarah Chang, respectively. This generalization may be founded on the fact that the best-known classical music repertoire are written for the piano and violin, thereby attaching a “glamour factor” to these instruments. Also, for parents wanting their children to learn music at a young age, the piano and violin are more feasible; playing a brass instrument, for instance, would be more cumbersome for a small child to handle physically. It is therefore no coincidence that the Suzuki method was developed by a Japanese musician who originally conceived the method for the violin.

When considering the subject of Asians in the classical music scene, perhaps one of the most prevalent stereotypes is related to artistic ability. Just as Asians are thought more likely to excel in the sciences rather than in the arts, Asian musicians are more often acknowledged for technical merit instead of artistic expression. Overcoming this stereotype is likely one of the more formidable challenges for Asian musicians today.

With a growing concentration of Asians in major Canadian cities, and an increasing number choosing a career in music, one might expect a similar trend to be reflected among concertgoers. But this is not necessarily so, according to Liz Parker, Public Relations Manager at the TSO, herself half Japanese. “Certainly, concerts that feature Asian artists like Midori are very well attended by people from their ethnic groups, but the audience in general does not reflect the diversity of the population.” The TSO does not officially compile data on its subscribers and donors based on ethnicity, but it is “definitely aggressively going after the Asian market, particularly the Chinese and Koreans.” The TSO now features a Chinese-language Web site and telephone hotline. Concert ads are taken in Chinese and Korean newspapers and interviews are aired on Chinese radio and television. For the 2004–2005 season, plans are underway to create distinct programming and subscription offerings aimed at the Chinese community. Mike Forrester, vice-president of Marketing and Development, is tight-lipped about details but admits that tickets sell extremely well through the Chinese hotline. “I’m confident the marketing efforts are already working, and I’m very thrilled and optimistic that more Asian concertgoers will come on board.”

**Kent Nagano**

**Fresh Air in Montreal**

WAH KEUNG CHAN

On March 2, 2004, internationally acclaimed Japanese-American conductor Kent Nagano was named the new Artistic Director of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra (starting in 2006) replacing the departed Charles Dutoit. This major coup will maintain the MSO at the international level. *The Music Scene* met with the humble maestro.

**TMS: Tell us about your experience as an Asian in the classical music world.**

KN: I was personally very lucky in that I grew up in a musical household. A pianist and a cellist, my mother was a devout follower of musical trends, so we had music in the house. My sister and I both chose the professional musical pathway. My childhood teacher came from Munich and the instruction I had in those early years were very strongly tied to European traditions.

It is often a curiosity to see a long-haired Californian Japanese-American come and conduct European repertoire, especially this year when I had the great honour of opening the Mozart Wochen in Salzburg with the Vienna Philharmonic.

What is more interesting for me is to see how my relationship with Japan and Asia developed. I grew up in Berkeley, California, and I didn’t have direct contact with Japan until I was an adult. Most of my travels were oriented to the East Coast or to Europe. When I returned to Japan in my early 30s as an assistant to Maestro Osawa and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, it was a powerful moment for me personally. So many questions about my cultural past, my personality, my being, suddenly came into sharp focus. The nonverbal connection to the culture was very surprising. My wife is Japanese and our child’s first language is also Japanese.

**TMS: How has your Asian heritage influenced your performances?**

KN: Indirectly, it has had an enormous impact. Nature is one of the most important sources of inspiration of traditional composers of our great repertoire. The Japanese and Asian cultures have a very different idea of the relationship between nature and man. There is not nearly the great separation that there is in western literature and philosophies. To have a relationship with nature from both a Western and Eastern point of view is one example of the indirect influence on making music.

Since my wife comes from a conservative traditional Japanese family, the idea of heritage and the passing on of that tradition has had a strong impact on educating our own child. It has brought within me a huge concern and major preoccupation with musical education and making sure our cultural institutions today are protected for our children who will become the public and performers of tomorrow.

**TMS: Do you see a lot more Asian musicians now?**

KN: Throughout all of Asia have come tremendous schools of instrumentalists and now schools of vocal traditions. Koreans, Japanese, Chinese, there are many more opera singers than 30 years ago; today it has become much of an accepted norm to have Asian singers.

**TMS: Why do you think classical music is so popular in the East?**

KN: Part of it has to do with education. In Japan, the arts are heavily promoted, stressed and underlined within a young child’s education. Visits to the symphony orchestra are also considered very important for the completion of an education, cultural as well as scholastic education. I think as the world benefits from the advances of technology and communication, it allows more people in Asia to discover the wonders and riches of European and North American traditions. The enthusiasm that comes with any sort of discovery is always very special.

**TMS: How do you respond to people saying that Asians are very good technicians, but not as musical?**

KN: That is a risk in our very technically oriented world. It is a mistake to think that one can ever be perfect. We are human beings, are we not? Technical mastery is not making music, which is a deep spiritual and emotional human expression. And while a part of it can be natural talent, much of it is learned through the respect and research of our great repertoire traditions. This takes time and the investment of an enormous amount of energy to study properly and to continue to study. If one doesn’t make sure that a respect for tradition and style remains a priority then one can really leave oneself open to criticism for being just technically accomplished. And this is not just for Asians—it is a criticism we see internationally.
In this age of hyperbole, “wunderkind” is an overused word. Yet there is no denying that the musical world is full of them. If anyone qualifies for that elite group, pianist Lang Lang certainly does. Born in 1982, in Shenyang, China, Lang Lang was a serious piano student at three, won first prize in a local competition and made his “professional” debut at five, entered the prestigious Beijing Central Music Conservatory at nine, and won first prizes in young pianist competitions in Germany and Japan when he was all of fifteen. He graduated from the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, where he studied under Gary Graffman.

**In Full Flight**

His career breakthrough came in 1999, when he replaced an ailing André Watts at the Ravinia Festival. Critics and the public were falling over themselves with words of praise: "stunning," “brilliant,” “this is a talent in a million.” Since then, his career trajectory has been nothing short of meteoric. Now an exclusive Deutsche Grammophon artist, his debut recording of Tchaikovsky and Mendelssohn piano concerti has garnered much media attention. His Carnegie Hall recital debut last November was taped by DG for issue in March. The concert itself drew polarized opinions: some found him too flamboyant and eccentric for his own good, while others, arguably the majority in attendance, were dazzled and couldn't get enough. One thing is certain—his is a prodigious talent.

Behind that sweetly innocent face and archetypal politeness is a young man of strong ambition and steely determination, backed by stupendous talent and discipline. He also possesses a strong sense of self and an appreciation for excellence found only in those earmarked for greatness. Much has been written about how his parents, Guo-ren Lang and Xiulan Zhou, made sacrifices to nurture the artistic development of their only child, born during China’s one child policy. Before Lang Lang had his second birthday, his parents had spent half their yearly income—$300 USD—to purchase a piano. Strong discipline is part of growing up in many Chinese families, and Lang Lang recalled in a previous interview that he came from a stereotypical family, with a strict father and a kind mother. Guo-ren Lang quit his job and moved with his son to Beijing, twelve hours from their family home in Shenyang. His parents lived apart so he could attend the conservatory in Beijing. It was only when Lang Lang bought a house in downtown Philadelphia, after he became a star, that the family was reunited.

Only twenty-one, Lang Lang enjoys the high profile and media attention rarely accorded a classical artist, having appeared on Good Morning America and the Tonight Show with Jay Leno. He was named one of the “Top 20 Teens Who Will Change the World” in People magazine two years ago. His performing schedule is not for the faint of heart—2003 alone saw him play 150 concerts that took him to 3 continents. LSM caught up with him last Halloween, as he was spending a rare two days at home just before his recital at Pollack Hall in Montreal. He came across as well

**JOSEPH K. SO**
spoken and personable, full of energy and enthusiasm, his fluent but accented English peppered with the typical lingo of youth.

**TMS: Who do you admire as a pianist?**

**LL:** Vladimir Horowitz and Artur Rubenstein. They are totally different artists but both are great.

**TMS: I heard you have acquired a Steinway from Horowitz. Is that true?**

**LL:** Yes, I have two 9-ft grand pianos in my house. One is from Horowitz... not from him, but his piano (laughs). It was made in 1918, and the other one is brand new.

**TMS: Is that other piano also a Steinway?**

**LL:** Absolutely. I think Steinway is best. There is no way to beat Steinway!

**TMS: What sound do you look for in a piano?**

**LL:** A flexible sound. I like to make many colours in a piano. I like a big sound (in a piano) that can hold a lot of power, with a beautiful legato tone that is like singing. The piano should not sound like a percussion instrument. Basically a good piano is like a good player—it should produce a complete picture. Good in the big stuff but also in the delicate, small stuff. A good piano can make a huge contrast.

**TMS: What about Chinese musicians?**

**LL:** I love Tan Dun and Yo-Yo Ma. I am playing a solo piece by Tan Dun in a world premiere.

**TMS: What recording plans do you have?**

**LL:** My Carnegie Hall recital on November 7 will be issued on CD, DVD, and video documentary. It will have a Haydn sonata, Schumann's Abegg Variation, Schubert's Wanderer-Fantasie—basically German-Austrian repertoire in the first half. In the second half I have Tan Dun's Eight Memories in Watercolor—a world premiere. I will play a traditional Chinese piece, Competing Horses, with my father on erhu. Also a Chopin nocturne and Liszt's Don Giovanni transcriptions—the most difficult piece in the piano repertoire. It will be the biggest thing I have done so far.

**TMS: How often do you give master classes?**

**LL:** I don't call these master classes—I call them chat sessions. In a master class you just sit there and play and talk about the music. I like to do a chat session, to introduce the reason we are doing these things, the kind of enjoyment we can get from music... that music can help us have a better life. I think that's more important than just sitting and talking about the notes. We need to open their minds beyond imagination, to the connection between the real world and the world of classical music. I do a lot of chat sessions now—at least once every two weeks. I really enjoy it and I think people get something from it.

**TMS: What do you think of Yundi Li's playing?**

**LL:** I admire him a lot, but I have never heard him play live or even on recordings, I am sorry to say. But I met him several times.

**TMS: Sometimes people say Asian musicians copy others and that they are not very original. What do you think?**

**LL:** Maybe. I know lots of Asians who start by practicing a lot, listening to CDs, and try to make sounds from the records. [They have] no personality. That's why critics say that. Some pianists like to copy—I don't think it is right. I never copy anyone; I believe in myself. If you copy someone, you think they are right and you are wrong—but maybe they are wrong. It's like doing a test and copying wrong answers from the next table. Musically you need to find your own way. If you see a great performance and you love it, it gives you energy. That's great. But you cannot do exactly what this other guy is doing. You have your own thoughts and your own understanding.

**TMS: Do you see yourself as having a role in promoting Chinese music in the West?**

**LL:** Absolutely! Since I am Chinese, I like to do that. That's why I play Tan Dun's music. In 2005, we are doing a world premiere of his piano concerto with the New York Philharmonic, conducted by Lorin Maazel.

**TMS: On the subject of Chinese musicians – have you ever heard pianist Fou T'song?**

**LL:** I never heard him perform live. I am very happy for him. His career is not big yet. I hope he will have a big career. We met once in Germany—he came to my recital, and we had a nice talk. If I don't see (someone) live, I cannot make any comment. I think it is still very rare to become famous. The world has so many pianists. I am very fortunate.

**TMS: Is classical music popular in China?**

**LL:** Very popular! It's unbelievable. Everywhere I go, the audience is so young. Afterwards at the signings or when I walk in the streets, they respond like I am a pop or movie star—it's really cool! Asian people are very musical. Western people think Asians are cold; they think we are very reserved. It's totally wrong! Actually we are very emotional.

**TMS: Do you have musical idols?**

**LL:** That's very hard... I admire sports athletes. I love Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods. I love the big sports guys. The great athletes—they look like artists when they play. They are creating art. The top player in each field is an artist.

**TMS: Are there Chinese athletes you admire?**

**LL:** Yes, I like the ping-pong players, the Olympic gold medallists (laughs)! They are the best in their field.

**TMS: Do you have a musical career?**

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**TMS: Why do you think there are so many good Asian musicians?**

**LL:** They are talented first of all; they work hard and have discipline. They want to do something good. Before, there weren't so many Asians studying classical music. Now it's more popular in Asia than in America.

**TMS: Sometimes people say Asian musicians copy others and that they are not very original. What do you think?**

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Sumi Jo: Devoted to Music

WAH KEUNG CHAN

In 1988, when Korean coloratura soprano Sumi Jo recorded Oscar with Herbert von Karajan in Verdi's Un ballo in maschera, she became the first Asian opera singer to make it big in the West. The 42-year-old has become a prolific recording artist and an inspiration for the new generation of Asian singers, her 2000 crossover album selling over 1 million copies.

TMS: Was there any pressure from your mother to be a singer, to excel in classical music?
SJ: Three or four times I tried to escape from home because it was very hard for me to play the piano 8 hours a day. I only understood all her effort and ambition when I went to Italy and I realized that even if you have talent, it's not enough; because to be a professional, a real musician, you have to spend a lot of time with yourself and with the scores. Now I thank my mother for teaching me that the music world is tough.

TMS: Tell us about your vocal training
SJ: I had several good Korean voice professors but I met my best teachers, like Elizabeth Schwartzkopf and Carlo Bergonzi, when I was in Europe. I learned a bit from each person (breathing, Italian repertoire, the bel canto, German lieder). You have to be smart enough to learn the best from each person. The most important experience for me was to work with great conductors like von Karajan, Maestro Solti, Lorin Maazel and Zubin Mehta. It's like working a whole year alone. The inspiration and preparation that they transfer to you is just incredible.

TMS: What exactly did you learn that made you better?
SJ: Our body is our instrument. Everybody has a different body and a different way to produce sound. I had to find a new method for myself—it took me at least 3 years to understand that. Before I went to Italy I was sort of a mezzo-soprano. My highest note was C and my repertoire was sort of lyric. I met a very good professor in Santa Cecilia Conservatory who was a coloratura soprano. I asked her how it was possible since I don't have any high notes and even she couldn't show me because she had no high notes. She was convinced that I could be Queen of the Night, sing the Tales of Hoffmann, all the coloratura repertoire. Slowly, I followed her instructions and practiced different ways of breathing but it took 3 years of hard work, studying books and observing other singers. One beautiful day in the morning I started practising Queen of the Night and sang an incredible high F perfectly. I finally understood how to use my body, how to breathe correctly to make these almost impossible sounds.

TMS: How did your Korean background influence your development as a classical musician and singer?
SJ: I was born in Seoul, Korea, and I went to Seoul National University for 2 years. In 1983 I left for Italy as it is the country of bel canto and opera. I also wanted to experience European culture.

My mother had wanted to be a singer, but in the 1950s the situation in Korea was not good for music. She always dreamt she would have a daughter who would become a singer. During her pregnancy she always listened to soprano arias and classical music, so it is so natural for me… When I was 4 years old I started piano lessons and continued until I was 18. I was singing when I was 5 or 6, but really started singing seriously when I was 11. I tried to imitate the voices of Callas and Joan Sutherland. My heart was full of music and my mother played classical music 24 hours. Lots of people say that when I sing they feel so good and happy.

TMS: You are the first Asian singer to have a major career. Do you have any advice for the next generation of Asian singers?
SJ: What happened to me can happen to anybody. If you are prepared, have talent, a good character, charisma, and are a good professional, there are lots of occasions to show your ability.

TMS: Tell us about your Toronto recital.
SJ: There will be songs and some opera. When I do a recital I like to show different styles, like a musical journey.
Neuroscience Working for Music

FOR 50 YEARS JEAN-PAUL DESPINS HAS TAUGHT MUSIC AND THE MEANS TO TRANSMIT IT TO GENERATIONS OF STUDENTS AT MONTREAL’S LE PLATEAU SCHOOL, UNIVERSITE LAVAL IN QUEBEC CITY, AND NOW AT UQAM (UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL). He is the embodiment of the ever-young professor: sparkling eyes, often teasing, communicative, and given to hearty laughter. One senses the fever to teach that continues to possess him, whether he’s convincing one person or a whole class of aspiring teachers—his mission being the need to rethink the basic premises of teaching music in elementary school. He’s extremely vocal about the problems he perceives in the educational system. For the last 20 years he has campaigned militantly to have neuroscience integrated into the teaching of music.

Emotion governs reason

Despins stresses the need to put emotion back into the vocabulary of musical education. “Teaching places too much emphasis on cognitive learning, without calling on emotion, despite the fact that we know emotion governs reason. People can’t learn on the basis of negative behaviour, and therefore of negative emotions. If I ask you to play a piano sonata movement that you’ve learned, you’ll play the one you like best. You’ve have forgotten the one you didn’t like. We have to throw off this constraint, this habit of intellectualizing everything without supplying any emotional input.”

Two major neuroscience specialists, Jean-Pierre Changeux and Antonio R. Damasio, are currently working on the question of the emotional input in cognitive learning. Changeux is a neurobiologist and chair of France’s National Consultative Committee on Ethics. He is also the author of Raison et plaisir. In his view, every brain is composed uniquely of cells and molecules. They constitute a complex network, with connecting points called axons that allow thought to form and information to circulate. At the same time, the brain supplies hypotheses and compensatory systems to validate this information. For example, if a child interprets information incorrectly, his parent (or teacher) praises him. This association resurfaces when the same type of reasoning recurs. Damasio heads the neurology department of the University of Iowa. In two of his books, Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain and Looking for Spinoza, he has stated that being rational doesn’t automatically imply cutting oneself off from emotions. The brain that thinks, calculates, and makes decisions is no different from the brain that laughs, cries, loves, and feels pleasure. Emotions aren’t a luxury; they are basic to all reasoning.

In Despins’ view, the teacher’s primary mission is to transmit these emotions. “Children are a little like animals. They understand the teacher through their eyes. If the teacher doesn’t transmit any emotion, the child will always have problems.” However, learning situations aren’t designed to suit all children. Teachers can help them learn, but mustn’t force them. This is where the ability to read behaviour comes in—to be able to anticipate a student’s reactions, rather than simply react to them.

Not everyone is equal in a learning situation

Sexual differences also affect learning. “You have to understand the biological basis,” explains Despins. “Everyone is equal, it is said, but this is false. You may be able to reach the same goal, but by different paths. Whether in French class, mathematics, or music, we see that boys learn differently, more three-dimensionally. These givens, although well established by researchers, are ignored in teaching music.” By insisting on teaching subjects that require fine motor skills, boys are pushed to the point of revolt, while girls don’t develop their spatial side. “When you unknowingly produce hypertrophy somewhere, you produce the opposite effect somewhere else.”

The sonar image is all-important

The study of various neurosciences has established that all musical learning requires the sonar image (the ability to imagine sounds) to be developed long before the motor image (the ability to imagine doing something). Professor Despins deplores the way children are often introduced to music through the recorder. “Right away an instrument is put into children’s hands, without knowing whether they can hear and judge correctly. In the 1960s crates filled with recorders were bought for schools. This ruined their musical ear. Today, thanks to foetal research, we know that really young children adapt very badly to high-pitched sounds and that the nervous system reacts better to low and medium frequencies. That’s why Professor Despins proposes a two-phase system of musical instruction. In phase one, children sing during the first two years while simultaneously studying movements based on the Dalcroze system of musical education. These two complementary aspects of learning are designed to enrich the sonar image while developing children’s sense of rhythm by using the whole body. It’s only in the second phase, with the sonar image well in place, that children begin to study with Orff instruments. This method is supported by the research of Alain Berthoz in France and France Simard at UQAM. Researchers have shown that learning takes place more quickly, whatever the instrument, when the child sings the melodies before playing them. “The ear sees more than the eye hears,” concludes Professor Despins.

Neuroscience is here to stay, he points out. “Comprehending the development of a child isn’t what it was in the 1980s, when people talked of left and right hemispheres of the brain, or of visuals and auditives. These ideas were poorly understood. They were used by people who didn’t know enough about neurology or used it to make money by publishing books riddled with mistakes.” All that needs to be done now is to lobby actively and continue to convince teachers, one by one. □

UQAM is now offering a master’s degree in musical neuropedagogy. Jean-Paul Despins is the author of Le cerveau et la musique (Editions Christian Bourgeois, 1986).

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To many opera lovers, Richard Wagner represents the pinnacle of the art form. The advanced harmonies, complex, multi-layered musical textures and rich symbolism in his operas remain fresh almost a century and a half after their creation. Perhaps no other composer generates as much passionate discussion and debate as Wagner. Although not backed up by any statistical survey known to this writer, it is said that more books, monographs and articles have been written on Wagner and his music than any other historical figure with the exception of Jesus Christ. New productions of his monumental Der Ring des Nibelungen appear with regularity, with many stylistically and interpretively far removed from Wagner's time. One remembers fondly the abstract, minimalistic Wieland Wagner Ring, so representative of post-WWII Bayreuth; or the vaguely postmodernist “Industrial Age” centennial Ring of Patrice Chéreau, once vilified but now considered a classic. Of more recent vintage is the high-tech Harry Kupfer Ring, “complete with lasers,” or the Seattle Opera’s “Green Ring,” so evocative of the Pacific Northwest landscape. Then there is the completely naturalistic Met Ring, reputed to be the most financially successful in history and remaining immensely popular with the conservative New York audience, or for that matter anyone with an aversion to “concept” productions.

A large part of the joy of Wagner is the voices. The Wagnerian singer is a special breed. The sheer volume of sound necessary to carry over a big orchestra can be daunting. Wagner himself was aware of this, covering the orchestra pit in his own theatre. Veterans of Bayreuth marvel at its wondrous acoustics—one can actually feel the orchestral sound through the stage floor. In the larger and often acoustically less friendly opera houses of North America, it is more of a struggle to be heard. It doesn't help if an overzealous conductor gets carried away and fails to rein in the orchestra, turning the proceedings into something of a competition. But the heroic requirements placed on Wagner singers should not mean volume at all costs. In fact, Wagner's orchestrations for the Walküre Brünnhilde and Isolde are scored lightly, making sure the singers are not swarmed and the text comes through. The late Herbert von Karajan was a master at this; perhaps more than any other conduc-
itor, he favoured relatively light-voiced singers in Wagner, holding down the orchestral sound in the process.

Then there is the simple matter of length: Act 1 of *Die Göttterdammerung* or Act 3 of *Die Meistersinger* is longer than any opera Puccini ever wrote. This prompted amusing quips like “Wagner could have used a good editor”—strictly sacrilegious, of course, to the Wagnerite, who would not want to miss a single bar of music. Unless one has the luxury of Bayreuth-length intermissions that last a full hour, vocal stamina, or simply physical endurance, length becomes a real issue. This undoubtedly prompted the great Birgit Nilsson to wryly remark that the most important requirement to sing Wagner was “a comfortable pair of shoes.”

On top of the musical challenges, good Wagnerians must make flesh and blood out of the highly nuanced, finely drawn characters, and bring out the poetry inherent in the text, which Wagner wrote himself. The upcoming *Die Walküre*, the first instalment of the COC’s 2006 Ring cycle, will star Frances Ginzer and Adrianne Pieczonka as Brünnhilde and Sieglinde respectively, two highly sought-after Canadian sopranos enjoying international careers. Interestingly, both rose to international prominence after having left Canada early in their careers to make their marks in the great opera houses of Europe. I spoke with them recently on the challenges of singing Wagner.

A native of Calgary, Frances Ginzer left Canada in 1983 to join the ensemble at Deutsche Oper am Rhein, and has since sung in such prestigious houses as Bayreuth, Covent Garden, and San Francisco. She began with the lighter, youthful Wagnerian roles such as Woglinde, Helmwige and Third Norn, moving on to the heavier Senta and Elizabeth. A veteran of Ring productions from San Francisco to Trieste, Italy, Ginzer is also a noted Isolde, considered by many the penultimate of Wagnerian heroines. “I feel like I have sung everything and the kitchen sink!” laughs Ginzer. Now a hochdramatischesoprano, Ginzer began her career singing lyric roles like Mimi, Violetta, Donna Anna, Constanze, even Lucia. But her voice was always big. “From a young age, anytime anyone mentioned that I might sing Wagner, I got so much comment and backlash from people that I went into the lyric repertoire,” Ginzer comments, reflecting on those early years. She admits that despite her big voice, it was probably right for her to sing the lyric repertoire at the time, although she can’t help but think of someone like Astrid Varnay, the legendary American soprano who triumphed as Brünnhilde at the tender age of 23. “I have a theory,” Ginzer continues. “I often think that even though you are wearing a shoe that is too big for you, sometimes that can be healthier than being forced into a shoe that is too small.” As to the oft-heard comment that Wagner is dangerous for vocal health, Ginzer believes that the key is a really solid technique. To be sure, Ginzer is not advocating anyone should take on Brünnhilde at 23, but she does feel that sometimes we tend to be too cautious with big voices.

Ginzer’s first encounter with Brünnhilde came while still a member of the ensemble at Deutsche Oper am Rhein. As luck would have it, she was asked to take over a performance of *Siegfried* on short notice, opposite Wolfgang Schmidt. After that initial success, the offer came quickly for *Die Walküre* in Trieste, Italy. “I learned it under a lot of duress; I had only three months’ notice! Ideally, for these huge roles you would like three or four years to prepare, but the problem is if you don’t jump at the opportunities, then when do you get your next chance?” Fortunately, Ginzer was under the tutelage of a top vocal advisor, Evelyn Dalberg, whose father was Frederik Dalberg, the youngest Hagen in Bayreuth history. Now with the experience of many Ring productions, Ginzer feels right at home as Brünnhilde. She finds the *Siegfried* Brünnhilde, with its high-lying, intense 30 minutes of singing particularly congenial. “On the other hand, I must tell you the *Walküre* Brünnhilde is the most challenging for me because it sits quite low. They say there really isn’t a singer who has mastered all of them perfectly; anybody singing the role will have problems with some portion of the Ring.” With Brünnhilde and Isolde in her repertoire, Ginzer is used to marathon evenings in the theatre. Does she consciously pace herself to get through these big numbers? “No, I don’t think of pulling back here, or giving a little more there — I don’t do that.” I quote John Tomlinson, the Bayreuth Wotan who said to me ‘One thing that is important is not to think about what you have to sing at the beginning of the opera to get through the evening, but to take it phrase by phrase.’ I have always found that to be good advice. Of course it has also been years of working on my technique and building up my physical endurance and stamina that helps me.” Ginzer finds Brünnhilde immensely rewarding as a character. Is there a particularly sublime moment in the role? “Oh, that’s really hard! She is such a multi-faceted character, like a prism. There are sublime moments in even the most intimate conversational passages with Wotan, or in the “Todesverkundigung” scene. It doesn’t have to be dramatic to be sublime.”

In *Die Walküre*, Brünnhilde shares the spotlight with another pivotal personage, that of the mortal Sieglinde, sung by Canadian soprano Adrianne Pieczonka. Fresh from a triumphant Metropolitan Opera debut in February as Lisa in *Pique Dame* opposite Placido Domingo, Pieczonka has the ideal voice for the jugendlich-dramatisch roles in Wagner. Since her first Freia in a Vienna *Das Rheingold”—“a small but important role”—Pieczonka has gone on to great successes as Eva and Elsa, the latter something of a signature role, with which she made her American debut two seasons ago. “Elsa is the most thankful Wagner role I have sung so far. People say Elsa is dumb, but I love her! It’s such a wonderful, satisfying sing, and the music is so beautiful.” Another milestone will be her upcoming debut as Elizabeth in *Tannhäuser*. When she sings “Dich teure Halle” for the first time on stage next January, it will be the grand occasion of the reopening of the renovated La Scala. Absent from the operatic stages in Canada for the past ten years, her appearances here in recent seasons have been limited to a rapturously received cameo at the Millennium Opera Gala in Toronto, followed by a *Liederabend* and a *Four Last Songs* concert with the Toronto Symphony. Thoroughly Canadian at heart, Pieczonka looks forward to her home-coming as Sieglinde: “I have sung Acts 1 and 3 in concert, but never Act 2.” Toronto audiences will be fortunate to hear her first, since she is slated to sing it in a new Christian Thielemann Ring cycle in Bayreuth in 2006. “Sieglinde will be a challenge for me since the tessitura is so low. I have a good middle, but the best part of my voice is the high stuff. I can project the Sprechstimme, but I wouldn’t want to do it too often.” To keep the freshness and flexibility in her voice, Pieczonka is careful to balance Wagner roles with some Mozart, like the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, which she recently sang in Berlin with Daniel Barenboim, or a Munich Arabella, one of her favourite roles. A youthful-looking 40 (“I feel 22 of course!”) Pieczonka wants to keep singing the “girs” like Arabella and Eva as long as she can. She is slated to sing Eva in *Die Meistersinger* in...
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Selected Discography of Die Walküre

The most popular and accessible of the Ring tetralogy, Die Walküre, is well represented on audio and video. Here is an eclectic, highly personal and by no means exhaustive selection, roughly in chronological order, of recordings that are worth a listen. Of the many historical recordings—drawn mainly from broadcasts—two, both conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler, are of particular interest. The 1950 La Scala performance features the great Brünnhilde of Kirsten Flagstad caught in late prime. The other is a 1953 broadcast from Rome, originally issued on EMI Seraphim LPs in the 1970s, with a very youthful Wolfgang Windgassen as Siegmund. And I would be remiss in not mentioning a 1935 recording (Act 1 only) conducted by Bruno Walter with Lotte Lehmann (Sieglinde) and Lauritz Melchior (Siegfried). To many, this remains the crowning glory of all recorded versions. However, the dated sonics of these historical documents may be a deterrent to some.

Decca issued the first studio recording (1966) that formed part of a cycle, starring the incomparable Birgit Nilsson as Brünnhilde and the magnificent Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Sir Georg Solti. It was a great achievement then and its merit has withstood the test of time. Other recordings of that era include two featuring the great Siegmund of Jon Vickers, one as part of the complete Karajan Ring on DG (1966), the other a stand-alone recording under Erich Leinsdorf on RCA and now on Decca (1961). Vickers is excellent in both, but on balance the Karajan recording is more compelling for his conducting, for a beautifully sung if somewhat unconventional Brünnhilde (Régine Crespin) and a very light-voiced but luminous Sieglinde (Gundula Janowitz). For those interested in an English version, The Valkyrie on EMI, conducted by Sir Reginald Goodall with Rita Hunter as Brünnhilde is worth seeking out.

Originally mounted to celebrate the centenary of the Bayreuth Ring in 1976, the Chereau/Boulez cycle was taped live without an audience in 1980. It features the intense, if vocally uneven, Brünnhilde of Dame Gwyneth Jones. The best way to enjoy her is to see her, so by all means get the recently released DVD version on Philips, and experience what a compelling singing actor Jones is. Another major attraction of the video is the near-perfect Walsung twins of Peter Hofmann and Jeanine Altmeyer. Also worthy of mention is the magnificent black bass of Matti Salminen (Hunding). Boulez conducts a well-paced, taut performance, but without much fire.

For sheer visual beauty, one can’t beat the totally naturalistic Met version on DG (1988), with James Morris (Wotan) then at the peak of his powers, Jessye Norman a vocally resplendent Sieglinde, and the intensely moving Brünnhilde of Hildegard Behrens. James Levine conducts a highly Romantic, expansive performance. This very production is currently being revived as part of three complete cycles at the Met. Munich, as a farewell to the departing Zubin Mehta and Peter Jonas.

Though Brünnhilde is the central figure in any Ring Cycle, Sieglinde is decidedly not a seconda donna. Wagner wrote some of the most inspired love music for Sieglinde and Siegmund. Many celebrated singers, from Lotte Lehmann to Leonie Rysanek to Jessye Norman, have found this role congenial. “For me, she is the most sympathetic character in the opera and a wonderful part to play,” Pieczonka explains. “Whenever I see Die Walküre, my sympathy is with her. She is trapped in this bad marriage, but she is extremely strong, courageous and a risk taker. I look forward to exploring it with director Atom Egoyan.” Pieczonka also looks forward to singing the Bayreuth Sieglinde, and especially working with conductor Christian Thielemann. Pieczonka has the rare distinction of getting the engagement without auditioning on the Bayreuth stage. “I had a session with Thielemann in Berlin. He sat at the piano and I sang. But we did work together once before—I jumped in at the last minute to do Four Last Songs with him in London. It was fantastic, absolutely thrilling.” The director of the Bayreuth Ring will be Lars von Trier. She is excited about the prospect of working with the famous Danish filmmaker, but also a little apprehensive. “I am a little nervous about it—he really likes to make his women suffer… And I don’t think of Sieglinde as a victim. It will be very interesting!”

Another reward of singing Wagner for Pieczonka is the text. “I love the antiquated German words that Wagner made up, the rhyming—it may be old fashioned but I think it is so poetic. As Canadians, we don’t have a big Wagner tradition,” Pieczonka continues. “When I was starting out, I was sure I would never sing Wagner. But it is like a drug once it gets under your skin. I remember [as Freia] hearing the themes in the opening of Das Rheingold and somehow you can’t get enough of it—it just grips you. I am getting goosebumps as we speak; I adore the music now. I am really looking forward to this!”


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ONE SIMPLE QUESTION AND Atom Egoyan is off, spinning a fine
thread of remarkable eloquence littered with thoughtful
references to a wealth of European literature, history and
philosophy, and culminating 45 minutes later in one inspired
reflection: “I think Wagner’s Ring cycle is, essentially, about
the power of creativity.” As he prepares to direct Die Walküre,
the first installment in the Canadian Opera Company’s highly anticipated
Ring Cycle set to open in Toronto at the Hummingbird Centre for the Performing Arts on April 2, one can palpably sense that Egoyan is himself exploring the boundaries of his creative imagination and challenging his artistic collaborators.

Adapted by the composer from legends of Norse mythology, Richard Wagner’s epic Der Ring des Nibelungen spans 17 hours over 4 evenings, packed densely with musical and dramatic complexity. It tells the story of the god Wotan, his family of deities, his human offspring, and his mortal struggle with the Nibelung dwarf Alberich for possession of the ring of power forged from the gold of the Rhine river. To meet the exceptional challenge of the Ring Cycle, the COC has commissioned a different director for each of the four operas, unified by a single designer, Michael Levine. After Atom Egoyan’s Die Walküre, Francois Girard will direct Siegfried in 2005, Tim Albery, Götterdämmerung in winter 2006, and Michael Levine will himself direct the crowning prologue, Das Rheingold, as part of the complete cycle in 2006.

In Das Rheingold, the gods built a fortress home named Valhalla, paid for in gold stolen by Alberich from the Rhine. The trilogy of operas that follow recount Wotan’s obsessive attempts to recover the ring he was forced to surrender as part of this transaction. Die Walküre, the cycle’s second part, is the most dramatically self-contained of the four, often performed alone, and frequently excerpted for concert performances. “Beginning with Die Walküre is particular,” Egoyan explains, “because it is the first time in the cycle one meets human mortals. The gods must rely on the mortals to continue their race, they must buttress Valhalla with the souls of dead heroes; Wotan needs mortals to achieve his goal of recovering the ring!” Michael Levine explains, “The world in Die Walküre is a mess, literally. Hunding and Siegmund are men returning from war, while figuratively, the set is a kind of reflection of Wotan’s psychological state, out of which objects and symbols are conjured.” Egoyan describes how the gods will inhabit a pristine upper level while the humans dwell in an earthy pit “like a bomb crater” bored into the centre of Valhalla’s beautiful tiled floor.

“In many ways Atom is perfect for Walküre,” says Michael Levine, “because more than the other operas of the Ring, Walküre is about relationships, specifically family relationships, and their dysfunctions: husband-wife fighting, father-daughter issues, sibling incest. Atom is very good at telling stories of dysfunction.” Indeed, Egoyan has made his reputation as a film director by exploring the darker aspects of relationships and human psychology in prize-winning films such as Exotica and The Sweet Hereafter. “I have always been attracted to German opera,” explains Egoyan, who previously directed Richard Strauss’ Salome for the COC in 1996 and 2002, “because it explores psychic states in deep and powerful ways.” He notes how Wagner anticipates Freud, and how, “on a certain level, Die Walküre pits the love of power versus the power of love; but in both cases, the notion of love is itself distorted, corrupted. Self-delusion—a type of psychopathology—is an overwhelming issue in the piece.”

With keen interest in the psychological aspects of Wagner’s drama, Egoyan feels he has developed some staging ideas that “may surprise people familiar with the text, but will hopefully appear totally organic, even for those who have never seen the opera before.” For example, Egoyan argues, “I do not think we need to see Sieglinde pour poison into a chalice, as that becomes quite clear from what she says explicitly in the text. Why not, therefore, use the music to present some other part of the psychosexual triangle? Why not address some other issue that can elaborate the sense of urgency?” In another unconventional yet thought-provoking interpretation, Egoyan describes the long, beautiful Act II scene between Wotan and his wife Fricka, goddess of marriage, over the fate of his human children, who have consummated their love and eloped. “I do not see [Fricka] as a nagging housewife, but rather as a friend to Wotan. What she says is highly cogent.” The scene is staged with the figures of the sleeping Gibichungs (Sieg mund and Sieglinde) present on stage. “The singers
are very excited about this, because it gives a heightened urgency to
the struggle of the scene.”

Egoyan’s directing concept, to “elucidate the salient issues in
Wagner’s work,” is what he is seeking. “There is no composer who so
completely embraced all the philosophical and political ideas of
their time [as Wagner],” he says. “I want to encourage people to lis-
ten seriously to the moral and philosophical questions that are
raised in the text, and through our work, to reveal what Wagner’s
music and drama are touching upon.” Translating the composer’s
abstract, sophisticated philosophical ideas into a performative lan-
guage is extremely challenging, but, as the director observes,
Wagner’s motivic music and innovative dramaturgy already provide
the framework: “In Wagner, the orchestra plays counterpoint to the
melodic singing. This lends the music a symbolic richness that at
some level defies analysis. The key is to find visual and theatrical
motifs reflecting his musical world.”

“Wagner’s music is unique,” concurs Levine, “because it builds its
own collective memory within an audience. It is a world living with
memories. Through the motifs, we experience the drama as we experi-
ence memory; we hear the sounds of bygone characters and events and
feel them like spirits inside us. To a great extent then, what we hear
informs what appears, and the different ways in which the same object
can appear enhances its meaning.” Says Egoyan, “The challenge is to
achieve a sense of timelessness. That this story takes place here and
elsewhere, in the past and in the future.” To achieve this in terms of
design, Levine has tried to render objects meaningful yet also under-
standable. “I am not interested in the type of metaphor showing a jeal-
ous character dressed in green, but rather, in using recognizable objects
given symbolic properties through the audience’s consciousness.”

The audience’s consciousness is not only groomed by Wagner’s
music, but also by his remarkably advanced dramaturgy, particular-
ly in the use of flashbacks. Wagner uses retrospective narration—a
device regularly used in contemporary cinema—throughout the
Ring, “like the Greek chorus in ancient Tragedy, where a recapitula-
tion of what has happened before intensifies the conflict,” Egoyan
remarks. Despite his experience, and although Egoyan says that they
had early discussions to make extensive use of film and projection in
their setting of Die Walküre, he and Levine eventually found other
solutions to Wagner’s musical and narrative demands.

“The entire Ring is a cycle of construction, destruction and regen-
eration,” Egoyan says. “Wotan constructs Valhalla, but in building it,
he loses control.” The idea of construction—of Valhalla, of memory,
of mythology, of a production concept—comes up time and again in
conversation with Egoyan and Levine. Construction, the creative act
of building, based on a goal, idea or ideal. Egoyan concludes, “I think
Wagner’s Ring cycle is, essentially, about the power of creativity. The
question, however, is what happens once something is made? How
can we maintain creativity for today and for tomorrow?” The answer
likely resides in the conscientiousness of creative minds like Egoyan
and Levine engaging with towering works like Wagner’s Ring, contin-
uing to ask such questions of themselves and of us. Audiences have
much to look forward to.

Photo: Michael Cooper
The Asia File: New Sounds in Improvised Music in Vancouver

Asian faces are so integral a part of the human geography in Vancouver that one cannot but be aware of the lifestyles, rituals and expressions of the traditions stretching over the Pacific Rim. Therefore it comes as no surprise that the city is one of the most vibrant centers of Asian music in Canada, and that its music is crossing borders and attracting interest in the improvised music scene.

Emerging Asian voices, primarily those of expatriate musicians, are a striking feature of that scene in Vancouver. Active since 1989, the most noteworthy group is the Vancouver Chinese Music Ensemble, which interprets classical and popular Chinese music and creates some of its own in a fresh extension of traditions. Led by its artistic director, Ji Rong Huang, on the erhu (Chinese violin), the ensemble is made up of a changing roster of musicians. On its debut CD, Transplanted Purple Bamboo, the players included Yong Sun on dizi (Chinese flute), Vivian Xia on yangqin (Chinese hammered dulcimer), Zhi Min Yu on ruan (Chinese guitar), Ling Yang on pipa (Chinese lute), and Mei Han on zheng (Chinese zither).

While the Vancouver Chinese Music Ensemble plays primarily composed music, Mei Han, its zheng player, has found her way into creative, improvised music. With her husband Randy Raine-Reusch, a multi-instrumentalist, composer, performer and producer who has devoted a good part of his life to the practice of Asian music, Mei Han uses the zheng, liu chin, ruan, voice, and percussion in a group called Asza. The band also includes performers from Canada, Africa, and Brazil on instruments as varied as the kora, djembe, and Hawaiian guitar.

Mei Han is also a member of Crossing Borders, a new group project managed by Coat Cooke. Like the Vancouver Intercultural Orchestra, which performs composed music, Crossing Borders attempts to blend musical traditions, but does so in open, improvised forms. According to saxophonist Cooke (who is also the artistic director of the Now Orchestra, Vancouver’s improvising big band), “The group came out of an initiative to find players from different musical traditions who could improvise in their traditions, to see what could come of that.” Along with Han and Cooke, the other musicians are Joseph “Pepe” Danza from Uruguay, who studied oriental flute in Japan, Canadians D.B. Boyko, Ron Samworth, and Clyde Reed, and Asian-Canadians Masa Anzai, Lan Tung, an erhu player from The Orchid Ensemble (another traditional group with cross-cultural leanings), and Bic Hoang.

A founding member of the Khac Chi Ensemble, a group of conservatory-trained Vietnamese musicians, Bic Hoang is a newcomer to the creative and emotive music scene in Vancouver. She was most recently seen at the annual Time Flies festival of improvised music in February. Hoang, who has made Vancouver her home for the last 12 years, plays a number of Vietnamese instruments, among them the hypnotic dan bau, a one-stringed zither with something resembling a tremolo bar, and the ko ni, a kind of mouth fiddle that produces startling new sounds. Although she comes from a musical tradition that contained very little improvisation, Hoang did have some exposure to the practice. “I was lucky,” says Bic, “because in Vietnam I studied with an old Vietnamese musician who improvised. Every time he played the same songs, they were different.” Although she finds herself in improvisational settings that are new to her, she is adapting well. “I just listen and I play what I hear will sound right, depending on what’s happening at the moment. Doing this I feel fresh and when I return to my ensemble, I have a new perspective.”

Another expatriate whose activity and presence give this music a living edge is the shakuhachi master Takeo Yamashiro, whose poetic playing on the large bamboo flute is haunting, moving, and inspiring. Technically, the breathing, attacks and out-of-tempo extemporizing on “standards” of the repertoire of this meditative practice are reminiscent of the use of breath in African-American wind players like Bubber Miley, Ben Webster and Miles Davis. There is also Bonnie Soon of Uzume Taiko, a group that renders the Japanese Taiko drum repertoire in a contemporary approach. One of their discs includes the shakuhachi of Takeo Yamashiro as well as Michael O’Neill on highland pipes and Peggy Lee on cello.

Diane Kadota, who is responsible for the Powell Street Festival—an annual celebration of Asian arts and culture—manages some of these artists. She wears a number of hats and serves as a conduit and bridge for things going on in the various communities (Asian, jazz, creative music). A Canadian of Japanese descent, Kadota is very much attuned to the scene and has made a difference in the city’s arts community as a catalyst for musical experimentation. “When the traditional meets the avant garde, this provides a resistance to the Kodak view of culture,” says Kadota. For her, as for many Asian-North American artists, working with Asian traditions with a view to expanding them and keeping them alive takes on a political meaning, as these artists are also defining themselves in their own terms rather than fitting into cultural stereotypes. For Kadota, the street festival is a means to bring artists and activists together to celebrate the traditions that are part of the immigrant communities of BC’s lower mainland.

The meeting of Canadian (hyphenated or not) and...
Asian musicians has evolved into a distinct entity. Raine-Reusch, who began working in this vein long before the large waves of immigration that brought the present flock of Asian musicians to Vancouver, is happy about the state of affairs. “There are many more musicians, more openness than when I started. Most of the music is very contemporary, nowhere near the traditional approach. This music is now a distinct voice.”

A last note: There are a number of prominent Asian-Canadian musicians in improvised music in Vancouver who have little or no connection to their distant origins. These include drummer Berni Arai (a bandleader and drummer who performs and records extensively in the Vancouver scene, leading and co-leading ensembles such as Wabi, Ugetsu, To Be Ornette To Be) and pianist Sharon Minemoto, whom John Orysik of the Coastal Jazz and Blues Society describes as a “straight-ahead, very strong two-fisted piano player.” There is also cellist Peggy Lee. When asked for her thoughts on Asian-Canadian music, the classically trained improvising cellist replied, “I don’t really feel that I qualify,” and while she doesn’t think that the experiments always have noteworthy results, she does dabble in the hybrid possibilities of the meeting of musical cultures: “What attracts me is the possibility of mixing and discovering.”

Jazz CD Reviews

**Jimmy Lyons – The Box set**

Ayer Records 36-040

*The Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD* says, “If Charlie Parker had a true heir... it was Jimmy Lyons.” Indeed, no one ever explored Bird’s way of making music as deeply as Lyons did. In fact, this sadly neglected saxophonist’s music allowed Parker’s gestures to live as pure sound and thereby transcend their original bop contexts. If anyone were to doubt this, they should think about the fact that Jimmy Lyons was Cecil Taylor’s alto player from the early 1960s until his death in 1986 at age 53.

“Heritage” is the key word when thinking about this box set. Since it was recorded at two important and now long gone venues of the New York loft scene (Studio Rivbea and Soundscape), this set is also an invaluable history of the music happening from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s.

More than six hours of music are included in this little beige box, as well as a 60-page-plus booklet full of information on the individual sessions and the artist’s career. Overall, there is a wide range of music to be heard here. On the one hand, there is a fairly straight ahead sounding quartet date with trumpeter Raphé Malik (here playing with a strong sense of rhythm and lyricism), bassist Hayes Burnett and drummer Sidney Smart; in contrast, there is a long solo improvisation in which the saxophonist works over a set of themes and developments in a brilliant way, revealing not only the core of his thinking but the whole range of his musical creativity.

There are a few surprises, too. For instance, there is a lengthy interview in which Lyons talks about his beginnings and musical evolution, as well as his association with Cecil Taylor. Also of note are the outstanding improvisations by bassooneer Karen Borca, Lyons’ wife at the time.

Free jazz it is, there’s no mistaking that; yet it can be easily embraced by anyone willing to discover and explore music that is intense, powerful, charming and fascinating, while free of any pretensions.

This remarkable box set comes with a pretty hefty price tag, but this can be avoided by ordering it online, either from Verge Distributors in Canada (vergemusic.com) or Cadence in the US (cadencebuilding.com). The label’s Web site is also worth a look for info on this and other interesting releases, at www.ayler.com.

**Cristian Hâché**

Cecil Taylor & Italian Instabile Orchestra

The Owner of the River Bank

Enja/Justin Time JENJ 3317-2

On March 15 of this year, the now legendary free jazz maestro Cecil Taylor turned 75. Three and a half years before, he was invited to join the Italian Instabile Orchestra for two concerts in Noci, a town in the southern part of Italy that stages a contemporary jazz festival. At 18 strong, this orchestra was comprised of the elite of the country’s improvised music scene, the best known being the reedist Gianluigi Trovesi. In a little over an hour of uninterrupted music making, the band and its guest went through a series of climaxes and releases, none of which had to do with the traditional weaving of individual solos between written heads.

Of course, anyone knowledgeable of Taylor’s music would know this, but for the unaware, this is a pretty intense session, even if the maestro has hit higher peaks (e.g. *Alms Tiegarten* of 1988 on the FMP label, which has yet to be rivalled). What we have here is a band best known for its mix of free blowing and Italian sing-song melodies that puts the latter aside for the former. True, there are collective powerplays that occur, but there are also several less frantic moments (including a remarkably tranquil piano solo at mid point) and some discernable thematic statements that act more like signposts than soloing vehicles.

Listeners may be disappointed by the fade-out ending, but this can be avoided by watching the last of four video excerpts included on this side. There are also a picture gallery and a PDF file of the original liner notes in Italian. While important for what it documents, it is less of a milestone for Taylor than it is for the orchestra. **Marc Chénard**
Reviews

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★★★★★★ A MUST!
★★★★★☆ EXCELLENT
★★★★☆☆ VERY GOOD
★★★☆☆☆ GOOD
★★☆☆☆☆ SO- SO
★☆☆☆☆☆ MEDIocre
$ < 10 $
$ $ 10–15 $
$ $$$ 15–20 $
$ $$$$ > 20 $

REVIEWS

JKS Joseph K. So
PA Philip Anson
PMB Pierre Marc Bellemare
WSH W.S. Habington

VOCAL

Opera Arias

Arias from Idomeneo, Don Giovanni, Manon, Benvenuto Cellini, Lucia, Sonnambula, Faust, Rusalka, Bohème, Anna Netrebko, soprano

Wiener Philharmoniker;

Gianandrea Noseda, conductor

Deutsche Grammophon 474 240 2 (62 min 59 s)

★★★★★★★★$ It’s not often you find someone in opera with the face and body of a supermodel who can also sing. The new Russian soprano, Anna Netrebko—already La Netrebko to fans and profiled as the “Wild Child of Opera” by The New York Times—returns to the Erato label after a brief separation, with the Gates of Justice. This new album features cabaret songs by 14 composers from the well-known (Schumann and Schoenberg) to the obscure (Dostal and Mackeben).

Unlike other opera singers who sing this repertoire in an overblown style, Netrebko keeps it intimate, with no attempt to “project.” Her stylish vocalization with its clear diction is intimate, capturing the irony and world-weariness inherent in these songs, One could almost smell the cigarette smoke in a dimly lit bar, in the small hours of the evening where these songs get sung. Particularly fine are “Give me the man” (Hajos), “Leben ohne Liebe” (Spoliansky), and “Diese Frau wird erst schön durch die Liebe” (Mackeben), helped in no small way by the evocative piano of Robert Kortgada. His solo work in “Illusion” (Grothe) is outstanding. The selections by Schumann (“Du bist wie eine Blume”), Zeltschlich (“Heilige Nacht”), and Schoenberg (“Galathea”) are more problematic. When under pressure at the top, the tone can turn unsteady and Netrebko battles to rein in her vibrato. Even these vocal imperfections give the songs character and a certain bittersweet quality. A satisfying disc for devotees of the German cabaret genre. JKS

Susan Graham at Carnegie Hall

Susan Graham, mezzo; Malcolm Martineau, piano

Erato 2564 602952 (74 min 30 s)

★★★★★☆ $5 American mezzo Graham returns to the Erato label after a brief separation, with this live recording taped at Carnegie Hall April 14, 2003, which I attended (reviewed here: http://www.scena.org/columns/anson/030414-PA-susangraham.html).

The program opens with a lively and sympathetic traversal of Brahms’s eight Zigeunermélodies, Op. 105. The first four songs were warm-ups, and with Brauner Bursche she got the hang of Brahms’s hearty humour. Debussy’s Proses Lyriques were handled suavely and with excellent diction and feeling for French mélodie. Unexpected discovery: they were easier to savour on disc than live. Graham treated Berg’s Seven Early Songs, with velvet gloves, perhaps too gently. These expressionist Lieder can bear more interpretive edginess.

I am no fan of chatty French patter songs such as Poulenç’s “Avant le cinema” and 1904. Preferable are Poulenç’s atmospheric “Carte Postale,” and two arias by André Messager, “Vois, tu, je m’en veux” and the humorous “J’ai deux amants.” The encores are most beguiling, especially Mahler’s “Liebst du um Schönheit” and Reynaldo Hahn’s “A Chloris” (which should compel you to buy Graham’s Hahn album on Sony).

There is a smattering of audience noise (laughter, applause, coughing). On this disc, the Carnegie Hall acoustic is crisply dry. In a perfect world, singers of Graham’s delicacy would not perform in a place as big as Carnegie Hall, where colors and dynamic nuances are lost. Nevertheless, this album can be recommended as a welcome memento of a charming evening. PA

Dave Brubeck

The Gates of Justice

The Dave Brubeck Trio; Kevin Deas, baritone; Cantor Alberto Mizrahi, tenor; Baltimore Choral Arts Society; Russell Gloyd, conductor.

Naxos American Classics 8593414 (50 min 13 s)

★★★★★★ $10 Dave Brubeck describes himself as a “composer who plays piano.” In either capacity, he possesses the extraordinary ability to make music sound absolutely right. This recording of his oratorio, The Gates of Justice, demonstrates his phenomenal talent at the service of doing the right thing. A veteran of WWII, Brubeck was dismayed to see the civil rights alliance of American Jews and Blacks disintegrate into mutual antagonism during the late 1960s. The Gates of Justice was his response. The composer’s aim of reconciliation between two strong cultures should be kept in mind when listening. It makes the transitions between classical and traditional vocal lines and sudden outbursts of jazz riffs and even rock-derived music seem quite natural. With the participation of his wife, Iola, Brubeck adapted the text from the Hebrew Bible, the Union Prayer Book, and the words of Martin Luther King Jr. and Hillel. The work is given a definitive performance here with deeply moving results. One suspects that Brubeck’s composition teacher, Darius Milhaud, would have approved warmly.

This rendering of the work of a righteous Gentle is one of the most important issues to date in the Milken Archive of Jewish American Music. WSH

ORCHESTRAL

Schumann

Symphonies N° 1 – 4

Staatskapelle Berlin / Daniel Barenboim

Teldec 56461179-2 (2 CDs - 139 min 53 s)

★★★★★☆ $5 Daniel Barenboim directs a Schumann cycle of
soaring excitement and apt sensitivity. It is the finest that we have had in the digital era since Giuseppe Sinopoli’s recording from Dresden made a decade ago (DG 439 923-2—not currently available). Like Sinopoli, Barenboim enjoys and exploits the advantage of a traditional German orchestra (isolated for decades behind barbed wire). He treats the First Spring Symphony as an agile and genial curtain-raiser. His way with the remainder of the cycle is rather more like a face-off with the symphonic legacy of Beethoven—and Schumann comes away sounding very good indeed (this, from one who is adamant in admiration of Barenboim’s Beethoven symphony cycle, also on Teldec). The occasional Furtwängler-style skid-turn transition only adds to the interest. The recording is detailed enough to pick up episodes of the conductor’s occasional heavy breathing and the odd involuntary exhalation.

The set was sponsored by the Raúl González-Salas Foundation and is offered at a bargain price. Recommended to novice Schumann collectors as well as fans of Barenboim. WSH

**Shostakovich & Shchedrin**

**Shchedrin: Piano Concerto No 2**

Marc-André Hamelin, piano; Mark O’Keefe, trumpet. BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra / Andrew Litton Hyperion SACD67425 - Hybrid SACD (63 min 13 s)

Last summer we were favoured with a good set of the Shostakovich piano concertos from Ingrid Jacoby and the RPO conducted by Sir Charles Mackerrras (with a useful coupling in the form of Galina Ustvolskaya’s Concerto for Piano, Timpani and Strings; Dutton CD 4804 - also a Hybrid SACD). This year, Canadian Marc-André Hamelin convincingly demonstrates the difference between merely good and truly great in capturing the highly individual sonorities that Shostakovich devised in the First Concerto, while never neglecting its deft satirical gestures. Hamelin must have been the sort of pianist that the composer had in mind to exploit the keyboard extremities of No 2. Shostakovich’s penchant for doubling melodic lines in both hands two or three octaves apart is made to sound easy. Hamelin’s consummate understanding of the works and his unmatched technical virtuosity are enough to make the disc an instant primary recommendation.

The Second Piano Concerto by Rodion Shchedrin (b. 1932) is a worthy companion to the Shostakovich pairing. Shchedrin is a master of effect and a cunning orchestrator. The concerto is an intense example of Soviet modernism. It contains a cornucopia of ideas from twelve-tone tinkering to a swerve through Oscar Peterson territory. This is the only available recording of the work, and Hamelin gives us a value-added performance.

The BBC Scottish Symphony responds energetically to Andrew Litton’s direction. The sound is outstanding in conventional CD playback and awesome in SACD surround-sound.

**Bruckner**

**Symphony No 9 (with completion of finale)**

New Philharmonic Orchestra of Westphalia, Johannes Wildner, conductor

Naxos 8555933-34. (2 CDs - 82 min 43 s)

★★★★☆☆☆ $★★★★☆★★★★☆$ $★★★★☆★★★★☆$ $★★★★☆★★★★☆$

The mighty torso of Bruckner’s Ninth has come to be accepted as complete unto itself. The third movement, adagio, is widely regarded as a fitting valedictory to the composer’s life and works. And yet Bruckner conceived of the symphony in four movements, and more of the music for the concluding Misterioso, nicht schnell survived than was generally supposed. The remnants amounted to most of a penultimate score. Years of research by John A. Phillips, Nicola Samale, Giuseppe Mazzuca and Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs yielded a sanctioned performing edition in 1991.

There are two simple rules to ensure comprehensive appreciation of this performance: (1) put aside the booklet notes on the enabling phonies, there is no short-cut available. Naxos deserves credit for bringing us a value-added performance. WSH

**Beethoven / Sibelius**

**George Tintner Memorial Edition, Vol. 6**

Symphony Nova Scotia, Georg Tintner, conductor

Naxos – 8557238 (79 min 19 s)

★★★★★☆ $★★★★☆★★★★☆$ $★★★★☆★★★★☆$ $★★★★☆★★★★☆$ $★★★★☆★★★★☆$

Volume 6 in the 12-disc Tintner Memorial Edition is a remarkable centerpiece. These live recordings from Halifax are, musically and spiritually, the twin peaks of achievement in a very fine series. The collaboration between Maestro Tintner and Symphony Nova Scotia in the Eroica could be described as the fulfillment of a concept of genuine nobility. The symphony is given an echt Wien reading, which extends to a timing of 54:22. A survey of recordings made in the past 25 years reveals that only Leonard Bernstein (DG) and Daniel Barenboim (Teldec) have dared to perform the Third in its full dimensions. Yet, with Tintner directing, the music has power to spare. Exposition repeats are scrupulously observed and the account never drags its anchor. A distinguished performance and a deeply moving listening experience.

The Sibelius 7 is especially notable for two reasons. It marks the first occasion in the Edition that Maestro Tintner ventures outside the core repertory of his native Vienna. He displays his versatility with the composer’s valedictory symphony and the SNS play magnificently. It is also significant that the performance was recorded in the last year of the conductor’s life. Taken as a whole, the combination of works and the intervention of fate illustrate the searing intensity of one man’s dedication to making music and the heartrending realization that he could not live without it. A disc of rare emotional engagement. WSH

**MAHLER**

**Symphony No. 4**

Karina Gauvin, soprano; Orchestre Métropolitain du Grand Montréal, dir. Yannick Nézet-Séguin ATMA ACD 2 2306 (60 m 3 s)

★★★★☆★★★★☆$★★★★☆★★★★☆$

This Mahler Fourth is Nézet-Séguin's second CD on ATMA. Arguably the most uncomplicated and joyous of the Mahler symphonies, there is no shortage of excellent recordings, but this new release compares well to the best modern versions. Nézet-Séguin certainly possesses the right instincts for Mahler. There is nothing generic about his conducting, which has plenty of character and bite, but never at the expense of poetry. In sum, a highly Romanticized—perhaps even schmaltzy—approach that recalls Bernstein. The tempo is well-conceived, allowing the music to breathe, but always mindful of the overall architecture. The last movement with soprano solo set to text from Des Knaben Wunderhorn is one continuous lyrical outpouring, evocative of nature and the wonderment of youth. The voice should have an almost child-like, innocent quality, without excessive vibrato. Karina Gauvin is almost ideal, singing with sweetness and purity of tone. Nézet-Séguin coaxes wonderful sounds from the Orchestre Métropolitain du Grand Montréal. The recording is wonderfully clear, with impressively wide-ranging dynamics. The booklet contains song texts in German, French and English, plus profiles of the conductor, orchestra, and soloist, but the essay on the work itself is much too brief. A winner. JKS
Handley and the BBC Phil in a neat green slimline box from Chandos. Considering the preceding six discs of Bax by Lloyd-Jones, his 7th is consistently fine and a fitting termination for a project that evolved over a period of five years. The playing of the RSNO is robust and fully in character with the music—as it has been throughout the extended recording sessions.

It is plain that Vernon Handley set out to preserve on disc the finest-ever British (perhaps in his case, Anglo-Celtic) performances of the Bax Seven. He has succeeded brilliantly. The set is absolutely first class. But after extended comparative listening the very odd idea began to form that Lloyd-Jones has actually proved that Bax can travel farther than the white cliffs of Dover. Somehow, rich Slavic sonorities in the music and sinewy strands of Debussy seem to emerge more readily. No exaggerated claims are made to this effect by the conductor, but the impression remains that Naxos have hoisted Bax onto an international platform.

And what is this music really like? Modifiers such as brazen romantic and raw emotion are all very well, but how might Bax fare against more illustrious contemporaries on the European symphonic horizon? Alignment with two other seven-symphony men might provide useful orientation. Sir Arnold Bax was well within the same realm of creative endeavour as Jean Sibelius but could not match the Finnish master in terms of development span. With Serge Prokofiev, it is a bit different—any one of Bax's symphonies is superior to Prokofiev's stage-inspired works (Nos 2, 3 and 4). So much for the inconsistency of British conventional wisdom on the quality of Bax's music.

The Handley set includes an interview disc with the conductor, while Lloyd-Jones offers a fine selection of the composer's emotive tone poems as couplings in his seven-disc collection. An unequivocal verdict? General collectors who have patiently assembled the Naxos cycle can rest content. British music enthusiasts will certainly need Handley as well.

Chamber Works

R. Mathieu

Chamber Works

Quintette pour piano et quatuor à cordes, Trio pour piano, violon et violoncelle, Trois Preludes, Sonate pour piano. Réjean Coallier, piano; Quatuor Claudel

The chamber works exhibit musicianship of a rare, elevated character. The mixture of youth and experience creates a unique dynamic that suggests that the players forgot about the microphones in their absorbing task. Certainly, the exquisitely articulated dissonant element in K. 516 implies an element of telepathy at work between Zukerman, Linnebach, Marks, Deacon and Forsyth. And the Clarinet Quintet with Kimball Sykes in no less fine.

A distinguished addition to the NACO discography. WSH
chamber works by Rodolphe Mathieu. It is also good timing; Alain Lefèvre’s advocacy on disc (Analekta AN 2 9814, reviewed in the November LSM) of Mathieu’s son and student, André’s Concerto de Québec has created interest in the latter’s compositions. As a composer, Rodolphe Mathieu (1890–1962) was influenced from an early age by the works of Alexander Scriabin. During the 1920s he studied composition with Vincent d’Indy and orchestration with Louis Aubert. Although Parisian inspiration is very evident in his music, he retained an energetic pulse from his Quebec roots (try the thrusting scherzo of the Quintette for an example of canadien high spirits). He could also communicate deeply moving introspection. This is strikingly evident in the 33 minute Trio which forms the centrepiece of the collection. Mathieu senior is a composer worth getting to know in these persuasive performances from Coallier and the dedicated, articulate Quatuor Claudel. WSH

Couperin
Pièces de Clavecin
Blandine Verlet, harpsichord
Naive/Astèrê E 3003 (2CDs : 138 min)

This harpsichordist Blandine Verlet is an interesting interpreter with an adventurous approach to the baroque keyboard masterpieces of Bach, Scarlatti, Rameau and others. This 2-disc compilation of 45 selections from François Couperin’s Quatre Livres de clavecin is full of delicious, spirited and insightful playing. Though recorded from 1976–1981, in 3 different venues, and on 4 different instruments, the quality of both playing and sound recording (often by Radio France) is uniformly high. This set loses one star for lack of program notes, which are not to be found on the Naive web site, despite promises on the packaging. Nevertheless, the “Tête-à-tête” series’ 2-for-1 pricing makes this a desirable bargain. PA

James Ehnes & Eduard Laurel
Romantic Pieces. Works for violin and piano
d by Dvořák, Janácek & Smetana
Analekta FL 23191 (63 min 23 s)

Perhaps urbane brings marvelously to any hour but seems to enter another realm of perfection in the remains of the day. As the last rays of sunlight slant into the listening room, Ehnes and Laurel transport us magically to the natural splendor of Bohemia with their accounts of Smetana (From the Homeland) and Dvořák (Romantic Pieces, Op 75, and Sonatina, Op 100 B183). For the Smetana pieces, the duo dusted off the score after discovering, by chance, the 1917 Barvitius “critical edition” on a visit to Prague. A conflation of ideas produced, in the words of James Ehnes, “a slightly more virtuosic ending, and the added harmonic richness of the original.” This music, and the Dvořák selections, are vivid but devoid of pretension. In the wrong hands, performances could easily descend into kitsch but Ehnes charts a clear course through the delights of Bohemia. For the Janácek Sonata, we enter the somewhat more rugged terrain of Moravia. Its constant oscillation between rhapsodic and meditative moods recalls the music of the tragic conclusion of the composer’s opera, Kata Kabanova.

No higher praise could be offered than to state that this release is of the same rare quality as the superlative Kreisler album (FL 23159) from the same artists. Texan Eduard Laurel’s piano accompaniment is outstanding and he generously surrenders the keyboard to Ehnes for a sensitive reading of Dvořák’s Humoresque No 8, which concludes the disc.

In these days of industry turmoil, it is reassuring that the emergence of a virtuoso violinist from rural Manitoba can be showcased by a domestic record label of insight and integrity. As further proof of Analekta’s devotion to the finest Canadian musical talent, this release includes a bonus disc of highlights from their violins, there is ample reason to believe this virtually-historic Figaro. Certainly, from the stage and the pit, the production is vitally infused with vividly-hued magic. Karl Böhm’s gentle alchemy produces a perfect balance between words and music. His unique relationship with the VPO has rarely been revealed to better advantage. And what an orchestra! With old guard musicians such as Willi Boskovsky and Otto Strasser rapidly bowing their violins, there is ample reason to believe that Figaro has been embedded in the ensemble’s collective DNA since the great 1906 Vienna revival directed by Gustav Mahler.

On the boards, Ingvar Wixell’s Count is the blustering paradigm of middle-age lechery. No less convincing is Walter Berry in the title role with the most natural of quicksilver emotional transitions between mirth and outrage. The remainder of the international cast is first-rate, but special mention must be made of the young Edith Mathis as one of the greatest Cherubinos of all time.

This is a presentation to cherish, with a fine booklet note by Gottfried Kraus and a decent synopsis of the action. Technically backward it may be, but assuredly of better quality than the original mid-1960s ORF telecast. Enthusiastically recommended. WSH

DVD

MOZART: Le nozze di Figaro


TDK – DVUS-CLOPNDF – 2 DVDs (180 min) B&W

4:3 picture, Sound 1.0

★★★★★☆ $$$

Direct from the stage of the 1966 Salzburg Festival’s Kleines Festspielhaus, this set is a marvelous souvenir of a glorious bygone age of opera performance. In black and white and antique sound, an active imagination and nostalgic instinct are definite assets to fully enjoy this virtually-historic Figaro. Certainly, from the stage the pit, the production is vitally infused with vividly-hued magic. Karl Böhm’s gentle alchemy produces a perfect balance between words and music. His unique relationship with the VPO has rarely been revealed to better advantage. And what an orchestra! With old guard musicians such as Willi Boskovsky and Otto Strasser rapidly bowing their violins, there is ample reason to believe that Figaro has been embedded in the ensemble’s collective DNA since the great 1906 Vienna revival directed by Gustav Mahler.

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This DVD, filmed at the Opéra de Paris (Bastille) in June 2001 as a co-production with French television, represents a contemporary audience's ideal Manon. The raison d'être and selling point is American soprano Renée Fleming in the title role. Unfortunately, when the camera zooms in, there is no mistaking the 42-year old American for a teen-age French nymph. As for characterization, I prefer Manons who are fun-loving and basically innocent, at least at the start. Alas, Fleming's Manon is a cunning tart from the get-go, half-Lolita, half Mae West. In the Cours-la-Reine scene, her "Profitons" aria sounds like the advice of an old auntie, not the effusion of a "jeune fille en fleur" actually enjoying her existence. On the bright side, the ballet is a splendidly costumed and bewigged evocation of Louis XIV's courtly pageants.

Marcelo Alvarez is a chubby, smooth-voiced Des Grieux who seems uncomfortable in his peruke and breeches. Jean-Luc Chaignaud is a strong, serviceable Lescaut. The veteran Michel Senechal is a funny, decrepit Guillot de Mor tetfontaine. The 1997 Defo production serves its purpose, with space-defining minimal elements of stage furniture and splendiferous period costumes. Conducting by Jesús López-Cobos is fine, despite gum-chewing musicians in the pit. Audio and video capture and editing by François Roussillion are excellent. Fleming fans and anyone not obsessed by historical recordings and authentic style will be happy with this quality product. PA

Verdi: Otello

Placido Domingo: Otello, Leo Nucci: Iago, Barbara Frittoli: Desdemona, Cesare Catani: Cassio, Antonello Ceron: Rodrigo, Rossana Rinaldi: Emilia, G. Battista Parodi: Ludovico, Cesare Lana: Montano, Orchestra & Chorus of Teatro all Scala, Riccardo Muti, conductor. Stage Director: Graham Vick, Video Director: Carlo Battistoni

TDK DVUS-OPOTEL (140 min) Sound: 2.0 & 5.1

It must be said at the outset that, with this live Scala performance of December 2001, Placido Domingo set the seal on his reputation as the finest Otello of our age. It has been almost a decade since he gave us the benchmark portrayal on CD from Paris (DG 439 805-2). If his voice appears any less secure, it is more than amply compensated for by his magnificent stage presence. After this staging, he retired from the role, and thus this Otello is an essential acquisition for Domingo's devoted admirers. But more than this, it satisfies on every level: emotionally, visually, musically and with its spectacular sound quality.

Leo Nucci gives the performance of his life, manifesting Iago as the personification of evil. He is also in fine voice and deploys formidable dramatic skills as the protagonist of the tragedy. Between the veterans stand a marvelously fresh Desdemona played by Barbara Frittoli, and Cassio, whose role is very naturally assumed by Cesare Catani. There is no weak link in the supporting cast. Director Graham Vick creates a very internal and intimate interpretation of the opera and the stage set by Ezio Frigerio supports this concept. The traditional costumes designed by Franca Squarciapino contribute much to the production's visual impact.

DVD has been kind to Riccardo Muti. His filmed performances of Falstaff and Tosca (also from TDK) were exceptionally fine. With Otello, he again displays consummate understanding of the score and the remarkable ability to accompany singers and anticipate their breathing patterns. This production is another well-deserved triumph for Muti. WSH
In truth, some of this book’s contents—made up of anecdotes, bons mots, quotations and various extracts from other books—are less humorous than they are food for thought. When Tony Randall, the actor and opera buff extraordinaire, defines opera as “supertheatre,” saying, “We have no acting to compare with operatic acting when it’s great,” it’s not funny; rather it is true, even profound. Having said that, however, there is still more than enough genuinely humorous stuff in this book to justify its purchase ($16.95 CAD). Take, for instance, an anecdote about Mario Del Monaco. One night at the Met, preparing to make his entrance as Otello, the “divo” suddenly decided to remove his shirt in order to show off his magnificent physique. For this reason he appeared in front of the audience shirtless and made-up in black face, but, of course, only above the neck. “That was, without doubt, the single biggest laugh I have ever heard in a theatre,” comments Randall. If you enjoy this kind of humour, you can’t go wrong in buying this or any other title from the same “quotable” series. These books are like boxes of chocolate: in moderation, they should provide enjoyment for a very long time. PMB

Mendelssohn: A Life in Music
R. Larry Todd
Oxford University Press, 683 pages

In his preface of eleven pages, R. Larry Todd delves into the various misfortunes which befell the music of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy since his untimely death in 1847. It was assailed from such diverse quarters as Richard Wagner, G.B. Shaw and the National Socialist German Workers’ Party. Despite the latter’s harebrained campaign to eliminate every trace of the composer, the music always came back. Its standing in the repertory is surely now secure, but Todd proceeds from the (valid) assumption that there is a great deal that we need to know about Mendelssohn. He has thus succeeded in producing a comprehensive and very readable biography. Like Mozart, Felix Mendelssohn was a genuine child prodigy. Todd provides a very good account of the boy’s early musical education with Carl Friedrich Zelter. The juvenile compositions are subjected to serious analysis and, as throughout the book, generous musical examples are provided. From the earliest sonata through to the oratorio, Elijah, Todd is judicious in appraising the music without getting bogged down in the process. It is really surprising to discover how much Mendelssohn actually composed.

Unlike Mozart, Mendelssohn came from a secure and affluent family and received a broad education in the home that encouraged him to indulge passions for the classics and visual arts. Todd offers us a portrait of a well-rounded individual who just happened to converse with Goethe as a youth. The book contradicts the notion that a creative genius must also be a temperamental neurotic.

The author is adept at depicting the times and places of Mendelssohn’s life. The German lands in the first half of the 19th Century were riven by assorted unrest, and Todd provides useful encapsulations of events and their impact. Mendelssohn’s conducting career, the enormous contribution he made to reviving the works of J.S. Bach, and his associations with every significant musical name of the era all make for fascinating reading. On finishing this volume, the realization strikes home that Mendelssohn was far more than a great composer. He was the essential musician of the day. WSH
MARCH

23 8pm. GS. $25. Oratorio at GGS. Jennifer Dale, actor; Andrew Burashko, music dir.; Cindy Busby, director. 872-2262.


27 8pm. Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St. $35-65. Les Violons du Roy; Bernard Labadie, dir.; La Chapelle de Montréal; Daniel David; Benjamin Butterfield, alto. 366-7773, 872-4255.

27 8pm. TCA GWRH. $25-75. Toronto Early Music. Campion; Christopher Antcliffe, oboe; Jethro Ambrose, harpsichord; Jonathan Hodgson, vielle; Charles Rollin, guitar. 872-2262.

28 8pm. TCA GWRH. $38-55. Toronto Sinfonia. Michael LaBarbera, music dir.; Giuseppe Ciardiello, tenor; Samuel Sokol, piano. 872-2262.

28 8pm. TSO. $31-84. Pops Series. S.O.; Peter Oundjian, cond.; Gil Shaham, violin. 31/4, 12/5, 17/18, 23/30, 1/2/3.

28 8pm. TSO. $32-98. Masterworks Series. TSO; Andris Nelsons, cond.; Antonia Blasi, soprano; Stéphane Degout, tenor. 872-2262.

APRIL

1 8pm. GS. $10-15. French Connection. Royal Conservatory Orchestra; Colin Mettler, cond.; Daniel Broome, tenor; Alfredo Quinonez, baritone; Calvin Luoni, orchestra. Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Ligeti. 361-5555.


2 8pm. Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St. $35-65. Les Violons du Roy; Bernard Labadie, dir.; La Chapelle de Montréal; Daniel David; Benjamin Butterfield, alto. 366-7773, 872-4255.

3 8pm. TCA GWRH. $25-75. Toronto Early Music. Campion; Christopher Antcliffe, oboe; Jethro Ambrose, harpsichord; Jonathan Hodgson, vielle; Charles Rollin, guitar. 872-2262.

7 8pm. TSO. $32-98. Masterworks Series. TSO; Andris Nelsons, cond.; Antonia Blasi, soprano; Stéphane Degout, tenor. 872-2262.

7 8pm. TSO. $31-84. Pops Series. S.O.; Peter Oundjian, cond.; Gil Shaham, violin. 31/4, 12/5, 17/18, 23/30, 1/2/3.


17 8pm. TCA GWRH. $38-55. Toronto Sinfonia. Michael LaBarbera, music dir.; Giuseppe Ciardiello, tenor; Samuel Sokol, piano. 872-2262.
Southern Ontario Highlights

By Anna Sampson

New Music Weekend
The Ontario chapter of the Canadian Music Centre will present the third session of its Professional Reading Project on April 4. The program includes works by Deirdre Piper, Tony K.T. Leung and Kee Yong Kam, all fellows of the Centre. This performance by the Esprit Orchestra takes place at The Jane Mallett Theatre of the St Lawrence Centre for the Arts. Admission is free. (416) 961-6601 x207

The Professional Reading Project is part of the Esprit Orchestra’s New Wave Composer’s Festival on the weekend of the 3rd and 4th. The festival includes performances, debates, screenings and celebrations of Canada’s composers. (416) 815-7887

Annette-Barbara Vogel Violin Recital
The end of the concert season at the Faculty of Music of the University of Western Ontario will feature an afternoon recital by new faculty member violinist Annette-Barbara Vogel in Kuster Hall on Sunday, April 4, with pianist Ronald Turini. Vogel records for the Harmonia Mundi and Cybele labels. www.music.uwo.ca (519) 661-3767

“Life and Death” With the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir
Attending Toronto Mendelssohn Choir’s concert on April 7 is a matter of “Life and Death.” The choir will present a program that features Canadian composer Ruth Watson Henderson’s From Darkness to Light and Brahms’ Ein Deutsches Requiem. Noel Edison will direct the choir and orchestra as well as the two soloists, baritone James Westman and the very busy soprano Karina Gauvin. (416) 598-0422 x 24

Ehnes and Lortie Play Beethoven
The recital by Canadian super duo James Ehnes and Louis Lortie at the George Weston Recital Hall on April 13 should not be missed.

They will present an all-Beethoven evening of sonata and solo repertoire. This isn’t the first time Ehnes and Lortie have collaborated; for a preview of their musicianship check out their recordings of Faure quintets. 872-1111, 250-3708

Dvořák “OnStage” at Glenn Gould Studio
The Gryphon Trio will perform on April 13 as part of a Dvořák Celebration at the Glenn Gould Studio. The concert, an installment of the On Stage series, features the Canadian Chamber Ensemble, soprano Frédérique Vézina and conductor Martin Fischer-Dieskau. www.glenn Gouldstudio.cbc.ca (416) 205-5555

Tokyo String Quartet Visits Music Toronto
The Tokyo String Quartet will play a program of Mozart, Zemlinsky and Beethoven in the Music Toronto Series on April 15. “Not merely in balance, but in intimacy, in phrasing, and that kind of breathing together that the best quartets achieve, their playing had all the marks of greatness,” says the Washington Post. First violinist Martin Beaver isn’t a stranger to Toronto audiences—before joining the quartet in 2002, he was a member of the Toronto String Quartet and the artistic advisor for strings at Toronto Music. The concert will be held in the Jane Mallett Theatre of the St Lawrence Centre for the Arts. See www.music-toronto.com (416) 366-7723

Violin April and the TSO
The Toronto Symphony Orchestra will feature two extremely talented young violinists at the end of April. Canadian Violinist Karen Gomyo joins conductor Ruskin Gamba for an evening of Spanish music on the 17th. Gomyo was the youngest artist ever to win the Young Artists International Auditions in New York. Since then she has performed widely and received rave reviews. On the 21st Hilary Hahn will perform Spohr’s Concerto and Chaussson’s Poème in a mixed program featuring Haydn and Shostakovitch symphonies. Hahn’s recordings of the Stravinsky and Brahms violin concertos won her a Grammy in 2001. She keeps regular journal entries about her adventures on tour at www.hilaryhahn.com (418) 598-3375

Soundstreams...
Music Beyond Boundaries
Soundstreams Canada, a series devoted to contemporary Canadian creation in music and music theatre, will present a concert on April 22 at the Glenn Gould Studio. The title of the program, “Freddy’s Tune,” is an affectionate tribute to Frederick the Great of Prussia, who was a great musical patron. In the footsteps of JS Bach, who presented the king with “The Musical Offering,” Canadian composers will create new works based on aspects of this piece. Also coming up as a part of Soundstreams’ 21st season are revivals of Harry Somer’s Death of Enkidu and The Merman of Orford from May 26-29, and “The Fool” paired with Viktor Ullman’s The Emperor of Atlantis from June 2-4. These pieces are presented in collaboration with Dance Theatre David Earl and the Pierrot Ensemble at the St Lawrence Centre for the Arts. www.soundstreams.ca (416) 366-7723, 1-800-708-6754

Orchestra London Plays Romantic Favorites
Orchestra London will present two programs of romantic favourites in the coming months. On April 21 and 22, soloist Marcy Rosen will embody the “Spirit of the Cello,” playing Dvořák’s Concerto under conductor Simon Streatfeld. Vancouver’s John Kimura Parker teams up with conductor Timothy Vernon for a concert of “Russian Masters” on May 19 and 20. On the program are Rachmaninoff’s Variations on a Theme of Paganini and Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 5. www.orchestralondon.ca (519) 679-8778

Opera Atelier
Opera Atelier will be joined by the Tafelmusik Chamber Choir and orchestra in Lully’s Opera Perséée, April 23-May 2. “Returning due to overwhelming demand, this brilliant extravaganza of baroque opera and ballet from the court of the Sun King was heralded by the Toronto Star as ‘the Canadian operatic event of the year 2000,’” gapes the Tafelmusik Web site. 416-872-5555

Opera Ontario Presents Otello
For what promises to be a dramatic evening check out Opera Ontario’s production of Verdi’s Otello. The company will be performing with the Hamilton Symphony in Hamilton on April 24, 29, May 1 and in Kitchener – Waterloo on May 7. www.operaontario.com (905) 327-7627

Guelph Springs Festival
Between April 30 and May 16, Guelph will be taken over by the 37th annual Guelph Spring Festival. Canadian pianist Angela Hewitt will perform in the opening night gala at the River Run Centre, one of seven venues hosting
28 8pm, Kipling Collegiate, The Westway between Kipling and Avington.15-20, Rivers of Empire.
Darducz: Beethoven: Symphony No. 39. [369-560]
29 8pm. SLCMA JMT. $35-75. Toronto Operetta Theatre.
30 2pm, SLCA JMT. $35-75. Toronto Operetta Theatre.
1 24 1:30pm. LansingUC. $20. Toronto Early Music.
1 2:30pm. University of Toronto Faculty of Music, Walter Hall, 80 Queen's Park. $40. Toronto All-Star Big Band.
1 24 3pm. Ste-Anne-des-Pins Church, 14 Beech, PO Box 77. $12-17. Huntington Choral Society.
1 24 8pm. First United Church, 16 William St., Sudbury. $10-12. Huntington Concert Series.
1 3pm. SLCA JMT. $35-75. Toronto Operetta Theatre.
2 3pm. SLCA JMT. $35-75. Toronto Operetta Theatre.
2 8pm. Grace Church on the Hill, 300 Lonsdale Rd. $40. Aldeburgh Connection.
2 8pm. McMaster University, School of the Arts, University Chapel.
2 8pm. Grace Church on the Hill, 300 Lonsdale Rd. $40. Aldeburgh Connection.
2 8pm. McMaster University, School of the Arts, University Chapel.
2 8pm. McMaster University, School of the Arts, University Chapel.
2 3pm. Rutgers University, Hamilton. $12-17.
2 3pm. McMaster University, School of the Arts, University Chapel.
2 8pm. McMaster University, School of the Arts, University Chapel.
26 7:30pm. St John The Evangelist Anglican Church, 23 Walter St. K, $5-10. People of the Word.
26 8pm. Saint Anne-Des-Pints Church, 4 Beech, Sudbury. $10-12. Houston Concert Series.
26 8pm. TRCA. $15-25. Toronto Masterworks Series.
27 2pm. SLCMA JMT. $35-75. Toronto Operetta Theatre.
27 8pm. RTH. $32-98. Masterworks Series.
27 8pm. RTH. $31-61. Casual Concert Series.
27 8pm. RTH. $32-98. Masterworks Series.
27 3:30pm. TrinStP. $20-59. Tafelmusik Baroque Ensemble.
27 8pm. Grace Church on the Hill, 300 Lonsdale Rd. $10-20. Nuvo: Orpheus Choir of Toronto, Robert Kerr, cond.; Robert Commons, dir.; Tafelmusik Baroque Ensemble; Paul一首, soprano; David Renz, baritone; Toronto music students, visuals and costumes, highlighting the life of Edward Johnson (1878-1959), from his years in Guelph, his interpolateing career and his tenure as manager of the Metropo-
27 8pm. Capitol Theatre, 14 Queen St., Port Hope. Concerts Via Salzburg Motion.
27 8pm. City of Hamilton, 515, $15. Children's Arts and Crafts Sale.
27 8pm. Grace Church on the Hill, 300 Lonsdale Rd. $40. Aldeburgh Connection.
28 8pm. McMaster University, School of the Arts, University Chapel.
28 8pm. McMaster University, School of the Arts, University Chapel.
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29 8pm. McMaster University, School of the Arts, University Chapel.
events. Other artists on the program include
the young cellist Denise Djokic, the Gryphon
Trios, the renaissance vocal ensemble Cantus
Firmus and the Canadian Wind Soloists. The
festival’s music competition from the 5th to
the 9th includes a series of master classes for
cello, piano, organ and voice. The theme of this
year’s festival “Love and Laughter” is brought
to the fore in the one-act comic operas The
Telephone and Three’s Company by Gian Carlo
Menotti, scheduled for the last weekend.
Tickets cost between $5 and $35. For info see
www.guelphspringfestival.org (519) 821-3210

HRU PLUMMER AND TSO
Who better to narrate a program titled “Music
for Kings” than renowned Shakespearian actor
Christopher Plummer? A career spanning more
than 50 years in classical theatre, including
stints as Henry the 5th and Richard the 3rd, have
certainly prepared him for performances on
May 5 and 6 with the TSO, Toronto Children’s
Choir and the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir led
by conductor Michael Lankester. On the
program are “regal” works by Handel and Walton.
www.tso.ca 598-3375, 872-4255

POEMS BY KIDS
A program of new music can be heard at the
Oriana Singers’ concert dedicated to choral
performances of poems written by children. The
poems were drawn from an anthology put
together by the Toronto District School board
in 2003 entitled “Urban Voices” and will feature
13 world premieres including settings by Ruth
Watson Henderson, Donald Paturquin and
Imant Raminsh. The Women’s choir, conducted
by William Brown, is in its 32nd year and has won numerous prizes in Canada and
abroad. “Children’s Voices” will be held on
May 8 at Grace Church on-the-Hill. For information see www.orianasingers.on.ca (416)
9230-3120

THE WINNIPEG SCENE
By Andrew Thompson
The 2003-2004 musical season in Winnipeg
has been characterized by quiet successes and
some careful planning for the future. Despite
the standard financial worries that always dog
classical organizations, Winnipeggers have
seen some bright spots in their long winter.

The flagship Winnipeg Symphony
Orchestra has finally managed to hire an
Executive Director. Paul Inksinger, former
director of the Thunder Bay Symphony
Orchestra, will take the reins on May 1, and it
is hoped that his past successes will continue
with this larger organization.

Of course, the WSO’s Centara New Music
Festival was another highlight of the year, with
Augusta Read Thomas making an appearance
as the festival’s Composer-in-Residence. Audiences for this celebration have been
remarkably constant over the years, consider-
ing that other concerts of new music over the
rest of the season rarely manage such impres-
sive attendance numbers.

The Manitoba Chamber Orchestra’s special
concert for the season brought soprano
Measha Brueggergosman back to Winnipeg.
Her Gershwin and Copland were breathtaking,
but it was, as always, her astonishing take
on spirituals that brought the house down.
While she was in Manitoba, she recorded a
compact disc for CBC and we have it on good
authority that purchasers of this upcoming
recording who are looking for a spiritual or
two will not be disappointed. This show was a
little detour in her career; she is currently con-
centrating on her studies and it appears on
the concert stage.

The recital that everyone was talking about
came courtesy of Virtuosi Concerts last
September. Violinist Yi-Jia Susanne Hou’s per-
formance of Ravel, Chausson and Debussy
was nothing short of brilliant, and her pairing
with James Parker was ideal. Impresario Harry
Strub, the man behind the Virtuosi series, con-
tinues to do a fine job in seeking out artists
who are on the brink of meteoric internation-
al careers. Based on Hou’s Winnipeg concert,
she should soon be taking the world by storm.

WSO AND MAHLER
The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra (204-949-
3999) is going big on April 16. In conductor
Andrey Boreyko’s final concert of the season, he is leading his forces in Mahler’s
3rd symphony. Along with acclaimed mezzo
soprano Susan Platts, 140 choristers will be
joining the orchestra on stage. So far in Bo-
reyko’s tenure with the WSO, he has proved to
be an incredibly original voice. Not only do
the musicians and audiences love him, but his
musical vision has begun to change the sound
of the orchestra. His illuminating performances reveal a mature artist who is sure to burst on
the international scene.

JANINA FIALKOWSKA RETURNS
The recital series put on by Virtuosi Concerts
(204-786-9000) will have a seasonal highpoint
on April 3, with the arrival of pianist Janina
Fi alkowska. As has been extensively report-
ed, Fialkowska has been through a debilitating battle to regain the use of her left arm after the

removal of a tumour that had wrapped itself
around one of her arm muscles. In the past few months, she has resumed her
two-handed concert career (after some
acclaimed right-hand performances of left-
hand piano literature) and for this recital she
is bringing Grieg, Schubert, Szymanowski,
and her beloved Chopin to the table.

MILICENT SCARLETT
The venerable Women’s Musical Club of
Winnipeg (204-989-6030), which was
incorporated 93 years ago, is bringing back
its 1990 scholarship winner, soprano Milli-
cent Scarlett, on April 25 for a solo recital. Since
receiving the WMC’s highest honour 14 years
ago, Scarlett has gone on to win the Luciano
Pavarotti International Competition and contin-
ues to have a successful and active singing career.

CAV AND PAG
Also on the operatic front, on April 24, 27
and 30, Manitoba Opera (204-957-7842) will
present its final show of the season. It will be the genre’s most famous double bill;
Cavalleria Rusticana and I Pagliacci, directed
by Michael Cavanagh, with Ward Holmquist,
artistic director of the Lyric Opera of Kansas
City, conducting. Tenor Jeffrey Springer is
pulling double duty as Mascagni’s Turiddu
and Leoncavallo’s Canio, while baritone
Gordon Hawkins handles the roles of both Alfio
and Tonio. Mezzo Jean Stilwell, justifiably
famous for her remarkable Carmen, returns to
Winnipeg as Santuzza, and Christiane Riel,
whose Cio Cio San brought the house down
several years ago, is poised to portray Nedda.

MANITOBA CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Finally, the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra
(204-783-7377) will continue its tradition of
innovative programming on April 28. Music Director
Roy Goodman will be
joined by mezzo-soprano Rosemarie van der
Hooft in Bach’s Cantata BWV 54 for alto and
strings. The innovation becomes apparent
with the remainder of the repertoire: Britten,
Bridge, Vasks, and Canadian James Rolfe com-

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May 1, 2004, 8 p.m.

The CBC Concert
Lorne Watson Recital Hall, Brandon University
(204) 728-8212

Jonathan Oldengarm, organist. Discussion on organ improvisation. 7:30-9:30 p.m., 727-202-4084

2 p.m., St. George's Anglican Church, 99 Woolwich St., Guelph. 3:00-3:15 p.m.

麝香猫, 平心而论，与琴和弦的交流：传说与琴弦的交流。519-763-9021 (11am)

8 p.m., Mormon Tabernacle, 209 North Center Street, Salt Lake City, Utah. 901-537-6664 (11am)

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8 p.m., Mormon Tabernacle, 209 North Center Street, Salt Lake City, Utah. 901-537-6664 (11am)
The Edmonton Scene

By Gordon Morash

In 2003, the Edmonton classical season was marked by both an ending and a beginning. March saw beloved mezzo-soprano Catherine Robbin conclude her Edmonton performing career with Berlioz’ *Romeo et Juliette*. Later that same month, Isabel Bayrakdarian, a soprano with her future assuredly ahead of her, held a highly regarded recital at the Francis Winspear Centre for Music.

The months that followed would mark several anniversaries (I Coristis’ 10th, the Wednesday at Noon downtown music series’ 25th, and Edmonton Opera’s 40th) and premieres. Among the latter was a well-received performance at the end of November of the German-text Bach *Weihnachtsoratorium*, in itself the beginning and ending as it represented The Richard Eaton Singers’ first move away from its festive-season tradition of Handel’s *Messiah* in 27 years.

Many of the year’s successes, in fact, were wrapped inside the Winspear in 2004. Christopher Herrick recorded the 10th disc in his *Organ Fireworks* series on the Davis Concert Organ, and returned in January to launch it in grand fashion with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and performances of organ symphonies by Alexandre Guilmant and Joseph Jongen. Another keyboard-with-ESO performance in January was also a top-drawer concert, as Edmonton-raised pianist Angela Cheng performed Mozart’s *Piano Concerto No. 25 in E-flat Major*.

Winspear is home to Pro Coro Canada, which at the end of January gave audiences a sneak preview of a tour program that would wow listeners in Toronto in February, not just for its skill of execution, but for its sense of humour as well. On that January program were a trio of Alberta cowboy songs penned by the choir’s Trent Worthington entitled *The Alberta Homestead*, *Flunky Jim*, and the quintessential choral Western, *Blood on the Saddle*.

The Winspear is one among several locations in which Edmonton Opera will perform for the 2004/05 season, as its home stage, the Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, undergoes a refit to celebrate the province’s centenary in 2005. Much attention was drawn to *Madama Butterfly*, a chestnut that nevertheless had a resonance for opera goers as it was the first professional opera performed in Edmonton back in 1963.

For a quintet of notable concerts on the immediate horizon, there remain yet more anniversaries and premieres.

**Bach’s St John Passion**

University of Alberta choral conducting doctoral candidate John Brough offers perhaps the most intriguing of upcoming concerts with Bach’s *St John Passion* on Palm Sunday (or Passion Sunday in the Anglican calendar), with soprano Jolaine Kerley, bass Paul Grindlay, tenors Timothy Shantz and Robb King, and countertenor Andrew Pickett.

In the past 15 years, the *St John Passion* has been performed in Edmonton only twice. Also unusual are the forces combining to perform the work; the 24-voice Scona Chamber Choir contains members of the University of Alberta Madrigal Singers, Pro Coro Canada and Ensemble de la Rue. Members of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, Alberta Baroque Ensemble and the University Symphony Orchestra comprise the 18-piece Scona Chamber Orchestra. *April 4, Holy Trinity Anglican Church, 780-436-3452*.

**Passion & Resurrection**

As an intriguing counterpoint to the *St John Passion*, Pro Coro Canada will present its traditional Good Friday concert featuring a performance of Ivan Moody’s *Passion & Resurrection*, marking the first Edmonton performance of the work. A student of John Taverner, Moody employs Orthodox traditions in his choral music. There is some crossover with personnel here, with soprano Jolaine Kerley as The Mother of God, tenor Timothy Shantz as The Evangelist, and bass Paul Grindlay as Jesus. *April 9, Francis Winspear Centre for Music, 780-429-1414*.

**Vaughan Williams’ A Sea Symphony**

On April 17, The Richard Eaton Singers perform the Edmonton premiere of Ralph Vaughan Williams’ *A Sea Symphony*, and the second of four Canadian premieres of Christos Hatzis’ *Sepulcher of Life* with English, Latin and Greek texts from the Greek Orthodox liturgy and by the composer. The piece, commissioned by RES, the Vancouver Bach Choir, the Ottawa Choral Society and the St Lawrence Choir, will have its first performance on March 28 in Vancouver in a joint concert with RES and VBC. In April, VBC travels to Edmonton to share the Winspear stage with RES. *April 17, Francis Winspear Centre for Music, 780-428-1414*.

**Edmonton Opera’s South Pacific**

Also in April, Edmonton Opera continues the celebration of its 40th anniversary with the first Edmonton performance in 23 years of Rodgers & Hammerstein’s *South Pacific*, starring Tracy Dahl as Nellie Forbush. Theodore Baerg plays Emilie De Becque, and Edmonton actor John Ulyatt makes his opera debut as Lt. Cable. Tickets were in such demand that a Sunday matinee performance was added in March. *April 24, 25, 27 and 29, Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, 780-429-1000*.

**Edgar Meyer**

With appearances at city clubs and folk festivals over the years, master double-bassist Edgar Meyer is getting to be an old hand in Edmonton. Meyer is equally adept at bluegrass (having recorded *Appalachian Journey* and *Appalachia Waltz* with cellist Yo-Yo Ma and fiddler Mark O’Connor) and jazz as he is at classical (his ensemble work with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center). In May, he makes his second appearance with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra as a classical player in a program that features the soloist’s *Concerto in D for Double-Bass*. *May 14 and 15, Francis Winspear Centre for Music, 780-429-1414*.

The Calgary Spring Music Scene

By Kenna Burima

As Calgarians awaken from their winter hibernation, they will be greeted by an eclectic spring season of classical music. With a new season, a new look and a new attitude, the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra offers a wide array of classics, pops and special events this spring. April 2 and 3 bring “The Star, the Strad and Scheherazade,” an evening of Estacio, Barber and Rimsky-Korsakov with guest conductor Christoph Campestrini and cellist Denise Djokic. In May, the Carthy Organ makes its annual grand appearance with the Calgary Philharmonic Chorus and organist Ted Brown.
members of Shakespeare in the Ruins, theatre group. Tchaikovsky: Romeo and Juliet. Overture; Schubert: Symphony No. 8 in B-Flat Major. 780-428-1414, 800-563-5081 (toll-free)

7:30pm. EpCPA JSH. $17-65. Mountain View Connection. An Evening of Commedia dell'arte. All singing, all dancing, all fun. Estacio (premiere); Barber: Cello Concerto, op.22; de Falla: El amor de los tres. 780-428-1414, 800-563-5081

8pm. EpCPA JSH. $17-65. Barber: Adagio for Strings; Telemann: Viola Concerto in G Major; Czerny: Piano Trio in A; Rossini: La Bohème; Delibes: Lakmé; Stravinsky: Die Fledermaus (e); Ibert: Flinders and Swann. 780-424-6320, 780-420-1579

7:30pm. LAPCA JSCH. $17-65. Light Classics. Così fan tutte; Le nozze di Figaro; Puccini: Turandot; Il trittico. 403-240-4174, 403-220-7002, 780-428-1414

8pm. LAPCA JSCH. $25-125. Russian Romances. Ivan Hoebig, cello; Cenek Vrba, violin. Barber: Sonata for cello and piano, op.6; Beethoven: Sonata #9, op.14 #1; Sonata #18, op.31. 403-240-4999, 403-220-7002

8pm. LAPCA JSCH. $35-150. The Masters. Sergey Khachatryan, violin. Birtwistle: Punch and Judy; Mozart: Don Giovanni; Stravinsky: L'histoire du soldat; Elgar: Enigma Variations; Dvorak: Symphony No. 9. 780-424-6320, 780-420-1579

5:30pm. UofCal Rozsa Centre. $15-35. Sunday Matinee. Daniel Moran, piano; Calgary Youth Ensemble; Corey Cerovsek, violin; Calgary Civic Symphony; Jennifer Malovany-Canesi, conductor. 780-424-6320, 780-420-1579


1:30pm. UofCal Rozsa Centre. $15-35. Sunday Matinee. CPO Dvorak. 780-421-1000, 780-428-1414, 800-563-5081


8pm. LAPCA JSCH. $20-100. Light Classics. Così fan tutte; Le nozze di Figaro; Puccini: Turandot; Il trittico. 780-424-6320, 780-420-1579

9pm. LAPCA JSCH. $25-125. Russian Romances. Ivan Hoebig, cello; Cenek Vrba, violin. Barber: Sonata for cello and piano, op.6; Beethoven: Sonata #9, op.14 #1; Sonata #18, op.31. 403-240-4999, 403-220-7002


April

March

ALBERTA

EpCPA Epcape Centre for the Performing Arts, 205 8th Ave S.E., Calgary, 403-299-8888; ESH Jack Singer Concert Hall Ticketmaster 403-299-8888, 780-451-8000

UofAB University of Alberta, 90th Avenue 6 114th Street, Edmonton, 780-932-4061; Convivial Hall Convivial Concert Hall

UofCal University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary, 403-292-4907; EGH Eckhardt-Gramatté Hall

Winspear Francis Winspear Centre for Music, 84 St. Winston Churchill Square, Edmonton, 780-428-1414, 800-563-5081

MAY


1pm. EpCPA JSH. $17-65. Light Classics. CPO. 780-421-1000, 780-428-1414, 800-563-5081 (toll-free)


The music scene

April-May 2004

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Wayne Marshall for an evening of “Pipes and Bellows.” The hugely successful “Mozart on the Mountain” launched the CPO’s 2003/2004 season on September 14, so “Beethoven in the Badlands” at the Canadian Badlands Passion Play Site in Drumheller should be a hit when it closes the season on Saturday, May 29. Under the big Alberta sky, patrons will enjoy an afternoon of Beethoven and music, fittingly, from the movie Jurassic Park.

Beethoven is big this spring with piano and piano trio cycles continuing to exert their presence on Calgary’s concert stages. The University of Calgary Music Department presents pianist Charles Foreman as he continues his formidable Beethoven Sonata Cycle concert series Saturday, April 3, with a program including Sonata No. 26 in E-flat Major (“Les adieux”), Op. 81a. Audiences are sure to be astounded by the sheer epic proportions of performing all 32 piano sonatas.

Beginning April 24 and running through April 26, the Calgary Promusica Society presents the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio continuing their Beethoven Piano Trio cycle including the Piano Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 1, No. 1 and Piano Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 97, the Archduke. Since making their debut as the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio at the White House for President Carter’s Inauguration in January 1977, pianist Joseph Kalichstein, violinist Jaime Laredo and cellist Sharon Robinson have set the standard for performance of the piano trio literature for 25 consecutive seasons. Their concert cycle is sure to raise that standard once again.

Calgary Opera finishes their successful 2003/2004 season April 24, 28 and 30 with Jacques Offenbach’s The Tales of Hoffmann. Offenbach had begun setting to music three stories by the 19th-century German poet and writer, E.T.A. Hoffmann, but died before they were completed. The sketches nevertheless provided the substance for an opera full of Offenbach’s zest for life. Conductor Brent McMunn, tenor William Joyner as Hoffman, prima donna Maureen O’Flynn and Eduardo Chama will join the Calgary Opera.

Smaller music series also are offering a delightful assortment of classical music this spring. A new chamber music series has made an appearance on Edmonton and Calgary stages. Sempre La Musica includes musicians from the Calgary Philharmonic and the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra who are dedicated to presenting string and piano chamber music, from duo sonatas through piano trios and piano quartets to a string sextet. On Monday, April 12, violinists John Lowry and Debra Belmonte, violists Stefan Jungkind and Liza Scriggins, cellists Tom Megee and Olena Kilchyk, and pianist John Robertson will perform a rousing program that will include Tchaikovsky’s Souvenir de Florence.

The Mountain View Connection is a fabulous concert series dedicated to providing opportunities for young musicians from across Canada and around the world to gain valuable experience performing and perfecting the song and chamber music repertoire. Sunday, April 18, they will finish their concert season with a multi-media presentation, “An Evening of Commedia dell’Arte,” based on the classic Italian comedy. It will feature the music of Debussy, Fauré, Joseph Marx, and the poetry of Verlaine, Gautier, Banville and Mallarmé. Young Canadian soprano Allison Bent returns to perform an evening of music and poetry inspired by the Commedia dell’Arte with Charles Foreman and Kathleen van Mourik.

The Millennium Music Foundation offers high quality chamber and solo performances from local and international musicians and they continue this tradition with Georgian pianist Alexander Korsantia Thursday, April 29, playing a program including Mussorgsky and Chopin.

Mezzo-soprano Jacqui Lynn Fidlar will be joined by pianist Kathleen van Mourik on Saturday, May 1 for an evening of Brahms, Poulenc, Chaminade, and Korgnold in finishing the “Alberta in Concert” series. The series has brought many talented young soloists to the Eckhardt-Gramatté Recital Hall, such as cellist Tanya Prochazka, pianist Daniel Moran and violinist Kai Gluestein.

New music group, the Land’s End Chamber Ensemble, will hold their season finale concert, “Artists Around Us,” May 9, featuring works by past and present winners of the Land’s End Chamber Society Composers Competition, and the world premiere of a duo for two pianos by Calgary composer Allan Bell.

In all, this spring season promises to offer something for everyone as Calgary classical music organizations continue to program fresh and exciting concerts for audiences from all walks of life.

**Vancouver Music Scene**

**“Mid-season report”**

By Robert Jordan

If nothing else, Vancouver’s 2003-2004 classical music season to date shows that generally conservative repertoire choices do not mean less than stratospheric performance standards. It also is gratifying that a substantial amount of Canadian talent is involved in those scintillating performances.

There were sublime moments, too, such as when music director Bramwell Tovey conducted the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and Bach Choir in Verdi’s Requiem last November. The performance was well attended, warmly applauded and, above all, nourished many souls.

Vancouver Opera began its season with La Fanciulla del West in October, followed a month later by a highly kinetic Barber of Seville. Although neither is cutting-edge repertoire, it was Vancouver Opera’s first production of Fanciulla in over 35 years, and Tracy Dahl as Rosina was a sheer delight in Barber.

These were big productions, excellently done and well received. But bigger has never meant better and there have been accounts of marvelous experiences in local recital halls. Two piano recitals in the Vancouver Recital Society’s series were particularly memorable: Marc-André Hamelin (November 30) and his limpid, insightful rendition of Schumann’s Fantasiestücke, Op. 12, and Radu Lupu (February 16) who, according to one enthusiast, had a virtual séance with the same composer’s Kreisleriana. The similarities ended there; for the second part of his recital, Lupu backtracked to Schubert’s monumental Sonata in B-flat Major, D. 960, whereas Hamelin led his willing audience down a much less traveled path with a technically spectacular yet musically profound traversal of Alkan’s rarely heard Symphony for Solo Piano.

Soprano Measha Brueggergosman was the epitome of charm, wit and fun on her November recital and, in January, Swedish songstress Ann-Sophie von Otter’s recital was as much a revelation for her clear, expressive mezzo-soprano as the remarkable interpretive insights of her astounding accompanist Bengt Forsberg. Her repertoire may have been light, less than stratospheric performance standards, but von Otter’s delivery was pure artistry.

Vancouver Opera’s production of the world premiere of the world premiere of Baldassare Galuppi’s The Garden (1754) to the St Lawrence String Quartet playing Osvaldo Golijov’s Yiddishbbuk, a veritable spectacle, providing a much needed divertissement from the norm.

The 2004 Canadian Opera Company’s season opened with Rossini’s epic epic La Fanciulla del West in October, followed by a new production of Donizetti’s Lucia di Lammermoor in November, which was widely praised for its strong singing and acting. In December, the company presented Verdi’s La Traviata, directed by John Hume and conducted by James Gaffigan. The production was well received and featured a strong cast, including soprano Adam Nordqvist as Alfredo and tenor Tony Pelosi as Gastone.

One of the highlights of the season was the company’s presentation of the world premiere of the new opera, The Gardener, by Canadian composer Stephen Zény. The opera, based on the novel by Lawrence Johnston, tells the story of a gardener who falls in love with a young woman and must choose between his duties to his employer and his feelings for the woman. The opera received critical acclaim for its music and staging, and was performed to packed houses throughout its run.

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The music scene
April-May 2004

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Unless stated otherwise, events take place in Vancouver, and the area code is 604. Main ticket seller: Ticketmaster 8-676-3311.


29: 8pm. VECC, 1417 Broad St, Victoria.

APRIL


15th Annual Bell Symphony Splash

Sunday, August 1st, 2004

Watch www.victoriasymphony.ca for details and program information. Only in Victoria, British Columbia.

MARCH

25: 8pm. Legacy, 403-220-3111.
28: 8pm. Symphony on the Pier, 603 Smithe St. $16-40. Vancouver Operatic Society. 604-876-0000.

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JUNE


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carnucopia of fine performances by both local and imported musicians was eloquent testimony to the wealth of activity on Vancouver's classical music scene. And there's still more. In purely chronological order, here are five recommended events that occur before the season peter out in June.

**The Threepenny Opera**

By the time this issue of The Music Scene hits the streets, Vancouver Opera's new production of The Threepenny Opera (March 20-27) will have begun its four-performance run. It will be worth seeing: along with innovative direction and set design by Morris Panych and Ken MacDonald (of The Overcoat fame), there will be the diverse vocal talents of John Mann (singer/founder of the folk/rock band Spirit of the West) as Macbeth, cabinet chanteuse Patricia O’Callaghan as Polly Peachum, and the infinitely versatile mezzo-soprano Jean Stilwell as Jenny. It's Vancouver Opera's first staging of Threepenny Opera and likely will be a classic (604-683-0222; www.vancouveropera.bc.ca).

**Vancouver Williams’ Sea Symphony**

Ralph Vaughan Williams Sea Symphony (1909), with Walt Whitman’s surging sea poetry set to wildly evocative music, rings its glorious old head about once a decade in Vancouver. On March 27, Bruce Pullan conducts the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and Bach Choir (beefed up by Edmonton’s Richard Eaton Singers to give extra heft to the choral sections). Soprano Valdine Anderson and baritone Nathan Berg are persuasive soloists and Christos Hatzis’ newly-composed Septuor of Life is also on the program. Tickets from Ticketmaster, 604-280-3311.

**Gryphon Trio**

Music by Hatzis appears again when the Gryphon Trio performs his “Old Photographs” along with music by Haydn and Mendelssohn (March 30-April 2) for the popular Music in the Morning series (604-873-4612; www.musiconthemorning.org). Vancouver native Jamie Parker is the pianist in the Toronto-based group along with Annalee Patipatanakoon, native Jamie Parker is the pianist in the Toronto-based group along with Annalee Patipatanakoon, and has been nominated for the 2004 “Indies” Award for Favorite Classical Artist/Group and has been nominated for a Juno. It’s a great recording, but hearing this electrifying threesome live is something else again.

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**Chanticleer**

Last but not least, Vancouver Opera appearances by Chanticleer are few and far between, so keep the evening of May 2 clear. That’s when the renowned San Francisco-based men’s choir brings its immaculate blend, pure intonation and stylistic diversity to the last Music at the Chan concert at UBC. Tickets from the ubiquitous Ticketmaster, or in person at the Chan Centre, noon-5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday.

**Victoria Picks**

By Anna Sampson

**Just Call Me Tania**

Victoria Symphony’s recently acquired conductor Tania Miller leads the orchestra in a program of Russian music on April 11 and 12. The equally talented Alain Lefèvre is the piano soloist in Rachmaninoff’s Third Piano Concerto. Violinists Jonathan Crow and Jasper Wood round out the Canadian cast as the soloists of the two last concerts of the season. Crow and conductor Timothy Vernon play American music by Ives, Bernstein and Barber on the 2nd and 3rd of May while Wood performs Mozart on April 25. www.victoriasymphony.bc.ca 250-385-6515

**Opéra Érotique**

Benefits AIDS Vancouver Island

Out of the Box Productions has recently teamed up with AIDS Vancouver Island, to which they will be donating half of their profits. The company will stage a mixed media production called “Opéra Érotique” from May 6 to 16 at the Victoria Multi-Cultural Centre. Excerpts from operas by Puccini, Dvořák, Saint-Saëns, Mozart, Monteverdi, and Offenbach will be part of an original play, www.outoftheboxproductions.ca 250-386-6121, 888-717-6121

**Carmen in Victoria**

Timothy Vernon conducts Pacific Opera Victoria with soloists Julie Nesrallah (Carmen), David Pomeroy (Don Jose), Aaron Nicholson (Escamillo) and Cheryl Hickman (Micaela) in Bizet’s Carmen from April 22 to May 1. www.pov.bc.ca 250-385-0222
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- Michel Ferland, Radio-Canada

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- Christophe Rodriguez, Journal de Montréal

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