THE BEAT GOES ON

9TH Annual TIFF Tips

MUSIC THEATRE Loose Tea on the boil

Once COVID’s in the rearview mirror ...

Jazz Studies: the struggle for equity

ON THE FLY

18th annual choral Canary Pages

SEPTEMBER 2020

Concerts, live & livestreamed

Listening Room & record reviews

Stories & interviews

thewholenote.com
AZRIELI MUSIC PRIZES

GALA CONCERT

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN MUSIC COMPOSITION

WORLD PREMIERES BY COMPOSERS
KEIKO DEVAUX, YOTAM HABER & YITZHAK YEDID

LE NOUVEL ENSEMBLE MODERNE
LORRAINE VAUILLANCOURT, CONDUCTOR

SOLOISTS
SHARON AZRIELI & KRISZTINA SZABÓ

OCTOBER 22 8 P.M. (ET)

STREAMED LIVE
MEDICI.TV
FACEBOOK.COM/AZRIELIMUSIC

AZRIELIFOUNDATION.ORG
OPERATELIER 2021
35th Anniversary Season REIMAGINED!
A SEASON OF VISIONS & DREAMS

SOMETHING RICH AND STRANGE
OCTOBER 28, 2020 LIVESTREAMED
A fully-staged new creation exploring the realms of dreams, visions and the supernatural, coupled with a new composition by Edwin Huizinga for Canadian soprano Measha Brueggergosman.

Colin AINSWORTH
Mireille ASSELIN
Measha BRUEGGERGOSMAN
Christopher ENNS
Edwin HUIZINGA
Danielle MACMILLAN
Cynthia SMITHERS

Production Underwriters:
THE DALGLISH FAMILY FOUNDATION & ANONYMOUS

HANDEL THE RESURRECTION
APRIL 1, 2021 LIVESTREAMED
Opera Atelier’s exceptional cast brings this fully-staged masterpiece to the glorious acoustics of Koerner Hall, just in time for the Easter Season.

Colin AINSWORTH
Carla HUHTANEN
Meghan LINDSAY
Allyson MCHARDY
Douglas WILLIAMS

Both productions feature Artists of Atelier Ballet and musicians from Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra (Elisa CITTERIO, Music Director)

Production Underwriter:
VIVIAN ELIZABETH PILAR

LIVESTREAMED from Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre
OPERAATELIER.COM
Miles from India – A Celebration of the Music of Miles Davis
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 8PM KOERNER HALL
Tickets start at only $45
“The beauty of Miles from India is how the players from different cultures and backgrounds meet on Miles’ turf with their individual voices completely intact. ... a tribute to the way Miles and Teo Macero changed the way jazz music can be made.” (All Music Guide)

Anwar Khurshid and Friends
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1PM MAZZOLENI CONCERT HALL
Free tickets will be available starting at 10am on Monday, September 7, 2020.
Sitarist Anwar Khurshid’s music has been featured in the Oscar Award-winning film, Life of Pi, and Kama Sutra. He performs all over the globe with musicians from other genres and is a member of KUNÉ – Canada’s Global Orchestra.
Generously supported by Dorothy Cohen Shoichet

SongBird North
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 8PM TEMERTY THEATRE
Tickets: $40
Top Canadian songwriters Chris Tait and Jessie T come together with host Blair Packham to perform their music and tell us about the inspiration, the songwriting process, and the stories behind the songs.
Presented in partnership with the Songwriters Association of Canada (S.A.C.)

Fern Lindzon
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1PM MAZZOLENI CONCERT HALL
Free tickets will be available starting at 10am on Monday, September 28, 2020.
"Fern Lindzon is an engaging pianist and singer who brings an unassuming authority, an inquiring spirit, and a natural grace to contemporary jazz." (Mark Miller) For this concert, she delves into Duke Ellington and his suites.
Generously supported by Dorothy Cohen Shoichet

Ladom Ensemble
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1PM MAZZOLENI CONCERT HALL
Free tickets will be available starting at 10am on Monday, September 21, 2020.
"Elegant and contemplative ... rocking and fiery!" (CBC Radio) Passionate, sophisticated, and wild acoustic chamber world music with inspiration from Argentine tango, Serbian folk and dance traditions, Persian classical repertoire, and progressive rock.
Generously supported by Dorothy Cohen Shoichet

Royal Conservatory Orchestra
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 8PM KOERNER HALL
Tickets start at only $25.
The Royal Conservatory Orchestra (RCO) is widely regarded as an outstanding ensemble and one of the best training orchestras in North America.
Part of the Temerty Orchestral Program

Miles from India – A Celebration of the Music of Miles Davis
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 8PM KOERNER HALL
Tickets start at only $45
“The beauty of Miles from India is how the players from different cultures and backgrounds meet on Miles’ turf with their individual voices completely intact. ... a tribute to the way Miles and Teo Macero changed the way jazz music can be made.” (All Music Guide)

Ticket & Subscriptions on Sale Now! 416.408.0208 RCMUSIC.COM/PERFORMANCE
We chose The WholeNote name believing it could grow with us over time, embracing an increasingly whole, more diverse range of live music. Also there was something about the note itself – the way it sounds and looks (in western musical notation) like a heartbeat, present in us all. The images on this edition’s front and back covers reflect our hope for live music to remain at the heart of what keeps us all whole. A whole note embraces all the beats in a measure, no matter the tempo, and the metronome (or clicktrack!) helps us all stay steady and together. As long as we have a pulse we all will need music. And so the beat goes on.

Jack Buell, Team WholeNote
DISCOVERIES: RECORDINGS REVIEWED

23 JAZZ NOTES | Pandamit | STEVE WALLACE
25 EARLY MUSIC | How to Get Back to the Concert Hall | MATTHEW WHITFIELD
27 LIVE ELECTRONICS | Lessons Learned from the CEE’s COVID-Era Experiences | DAVID JAEGER
29 IN WITH THE NEW | Creative (E)mergents in These Days of Isolation | WENDE BARTLEY
30 BANDSTAND | The More it Changes, the More it Changes! | JACK MACQUARRIE
32 IN THE CLUBS | Three Bandleaders on Then, Now, and Next | COLIN STORY
35 LISTINGS: Live & Online, Livestream, ETCetera
36 REMEMBERING | Leon Fleisher – Music is the Star | PAUL ENNIS

IN THIS ISSUE, PAGES C1-C12
The 18th annual CANARY PAGES
All things choral in southern Ontario.

IN THIS ISSUE, PAGES C1-C12
The 21st annual BLUE PAGES
directory of music makers

OCTOBER 2020 AND ON
All things choral in southern Ontario.
PRICELESS!

Eagle-eyed readers will have already noticed that the word PRICELESS! is back in its time-honoured spot at the top right of our front cover, where a price would usually be.

It was supplanted this time last year in favour of a year-long 25th Season! shoutout. Before that it graced every cover for six seasons, commencing September 2013.

Before that, FREE was the word, all the way back to Vol 1 No 1 in September 1995. Although it must be said that in the first year we were somewhat inconsistent about including it. Everyone understood that, along with such timeless institutions as NOW magazine that’s what controlled circulation publications were.

So from “free”, to “priceless”, to a year of celebrating silver linings, and now back to priceless again. But for how long? And what comes next? Those are the questions.

Looking back, at kiosk.thewholenote.com (come on you can do it!) at the very first “priceless” cover in September 2013 makes me smile, not completely wryly. It’s a gorgeous cover photo of Tafelmusik’s Jeanne Lamon, hard hat in hand, standing in the under-reconstruction balcony at Trinity-St. Paul’s United Church and Centre for Faith, Justice and the Arts, Tafelmusik’s home from day one. She is smiling too.

WORK IN PROGRESS! the story title shouts from that cover. Which, from today’s vantage point – an entire world of faith, justice and the arts stood on its head – might just as well be taken as a sign of better things to come.

As to why we chose to go from “free” to “priceless” at that very moment in 2013, let’s just say, it was waving a flag: cocky, jaunty, danger ahead. Take your pick.

For now the priceless flag is back. But, as the signs say, “Watch This Space”. Because whatever it’s going to be, it won’t say “Free” again.

At what price The WholeNote? And who should pay? The answers to that are also a work in progress. No instant answers needed, but please, dear readers, give it some thought, and drop me a line.

In the meanwhile, please enjoy our “While you’re waiting” stroll through 25 years of WholeNote covers. And a bumper crop of stories bursting with ideas.

And look at “FOUR OF A KIND” on page 59. You could help keep the PRICELESS flag waving a little longer than it otherwise might.

publisher@thewholenote.com

CONVERSATIONS

OPERA SQUARED

Anna Theodosakis
On Brott Opera’s Don Giovanni

DAVID PERLMAN

It was a phone call from Hamilton, from Boris Brott, that put me on the trail of this story. Brott is indefatigable: between May 2 and August 13 the Brott Music Festival offered up 18 online productions, none more intriguing than their virtual Don Giovanni which aired, on Facebook, on July 30 and remains available at brottmusic.com. “You should watch it,” Brott said, so I did. Half way through I was hooked and called him back with questions.

“You should talk to Anna [Theodosakis],” he said. So I did. What follows is a highly condensed version of a half-hour telephone chat.

WHOLENOTE: I haven’t finished watching all the way through. Life gets in the way when you don’t have to dress up. I have reached the party scene though! A lot of the virtual stuff being generated right now that tries to be a “reasonable facsimile” of live, leaves me cold. What struck me about this is you have made the medium a huge asset.

Conversations
Anna Theodosakis: Thank you, I am really glad it came across that way. We’re never going to be able to recreate exactly the live experience so I wanted to use the medium of film to my advantage; but in the end actually it’s kind of its own new medium. It’s maybe two parts film but then another part I don’t really know how to describe either. It’s not a movie. Not a music video. It’s its own whole other creature we were discovering as we were doing it.

When did the idea kick in of having it take place right inside the "zoomerverse"? Was there some "aha" moment? It was really only about three weeks before rehearsals started, that Brott decided we would be going totally online. So there really wasn’t very much time to prepare. I’d like to say there was a big plan but it was really going moment to moment, considering what we can accomplish as we go.

Such as? Such as when we decided it was going to be pretty much impossible to do secco recit [minimally accompanied recitative] remotely. I had already had an interest in the concept of really bringing the women to the forefront – not changing any of the libretto, but in the action of scenes beyond the ones they are usually in. With the recit gone, we had to fill the story gaps, which gave me the opportunity to insert the black and white monologues, which are probably the most cinematic aspect of the piece. They give the female characters a little more agency, as subjective narrators throughout. I thought about writing them myself but decided to ask the singers, as well as their covers, so six women in total, if they would collaborate, in pairs, in writing them. So we would have the clearest differentiation of voices. (And also to be honest I was running out of time on story boards, et cetera!)

And what else? Well, we were rehearsing over Zoom, all together, and then later the singers would record themselves separately. A lot of the visual interaction and intent was inspired by how we were rehearsing and found its way into the story board. So I found myself trying to think how I could use the Zoom squares the singers were in to actually help tell the story. The lower status Leporello looking up to Don Giovanni, or Giovanni looking down on him, for example. Or people placed across diagonals so there is more tension in space.

The directionality is really effective, driven by the characters’ eyes all the time. I’m glad. For me as a director in live theatre, when people look at each is very important to me. Here I’d lost the dimension of depth, which I really use a lot in the theatre, but I gained this new kind of directional access I really like … Also one of handy things about film is you can’t see what’s behind the camera, so post-it notes and little drawings behind the camera meant they knew exactly who was where. “Donna Elvira is up and to your left,” … like that.

So each “home square” is the actor’s own home? It’s their own living space, and the singers were completely in charge of setting up their own cameras and audio recording, with me on Zoom providing advice and making sure the points of focus were there. Their own characters as well as their entire crew! Quite the feat actually.

And equipment compatibility? Brott Opera was prepared to deliver smart phones or cameras to people, but it turned out everyone had at least one iPhone, and in the end everyone had audio quality we could at least work with in the sound editing, although it took some tweaking. If I was doing this again, though, one thing I would love would be for everyone to have more consistent video quality and slightly more consistent lighting and backdrops.

I found the semi-coordinated off-white backgrounds in each square quite fun. Different shades for each character – a really shady shade in the case of your reptilian Don Giovanni! Yes. In Phillip’s case [Phillip Addis plays Giovanni] he had a couple of lighting sources so we were able to get some shadowy mix in Act 2 as he gets closer and closer to hell. It was nice to have a little extra control over source and brightness levels at that point.

I laughed out loud at the sleight of hand – the common properties, things getting passed or tossed from square to square – bouquets, the plates at the banquet, the hats. How much of this was on the fly? A lot was ideas rising while working through the moments, for sure, but honestly I was also watching YouTube and TikTok videos in preparation. I wasn’t on TikTok before but I knew that people have amazing videos there – simple but magical transitions, links like that. I was definitely most happy with the toss of the bouquet! If I get the chance to do one of these again, I’d choose some full-on comedy or farce: moving people in and out of boxes, creating motion by sudden appearance and disappearance … you could have a lot of fun with that.

There’s a lot that’s not so funny in Giovanni these days. Zerlina singing to Masetto words to the effect “If it makes you feel any better to beat me up, then go right ahead.” Delivered straight it’s really uncomfortable to watch. Yeah; definitely that’s one among many of the scenes I struggled, as a millennial woman of this time, with how to portray. But I think it might be good that people are left feeling really uncomfortable, because I would rather the audience feel “you didn’t have to do this, I don’t agree with it.” So sometimes I think it’s best not to censor the uncomfortable experiences and have them sit in that. And we do make choices – like at the very end of the aria when she starts singing I was actually thinking pace, pace – we kind of change the perspective of where the camera is, so the audience becomes Masetto, because singing to him she is also singing directly towards us. So those are the sorts of things I find interesting as a director.

On a different track, looking at the range of work you’ve done on the opera and art song scene over the years – your own company Muse 9, art song, indie opera, the COC – I was thinking how this particular medium brings the giants down into the same arena as everyone else. You’re completely right about the medium being an equalizer. I was speaking to the head of a university opera program – they don’t have a real theatre, they work in a dressed-up gym – but other schools that do have a dedicated theatre are going to be doing virtual too this year. So it definitely equalizes things.

So what are you going to be carrying away from this? I have always been a stickler for specificity especially with focus and eyeline and intention, so working with singers over film, where even a slight eye glance speaks volumes, is a gift. And these days, at the Met and other places that are filming, it’s now “ok so I’m performing for a massive fly? A lot of ideas rising while working through the moments, for sure, but honestly I was also watching YouTube and TikTok videos in preparation. I wasn’t on TikTok before but I knew that people have amazing videos there – simple but magical transitions, links like that. I was definitely most happy with the toss of the bouquet! If I get the chance to do one of these again, I’d choose some full-on comedy or farce: moving people in and out of boxes, creating motion by sudden appearance and disappearance … you could have a lot of fun with that.

There’s a lot that’s not so funny in Giovanni these days. Zerlina singing to Masetto words to the effect “If it makes you feel any better to beat me up, then go right ahead.” Delivered straight it’s really uncomfortable to watch. Yeah; definitely that’s one among many of the scenes I struggled, as a millennial woman of this time, with how to portray. But I think it might be good that people are left feeling really uncomfortable, because I would rather the audience feel “you didn’t have to do this, I don’t agree with it.” So sometimes I think it’s best not to censor the uncomfortable experiences and have them sit in that. And we do make choices – like at the very end of the aria when she starts singing pace, pace – we kind of change the perspective of where the camera is, so the audience becomes Masetto, because singing to him she is also singing directly towards us. So those are the sorts of things I find interesting as a director.

On a different track, looking at the range of work you’ve done on the opera and art song scene over the years – your own company Muse 9, art song, indie opera, the COC – I was thinking how this particular medium brings the giants down into the same arena as everyone else. You’re completely right about the medium being an equalizer. I was speaking to the head of a university opera program – they don’t have a real theatre, they work in a dressed-up gym – but other schools that do have a dedicated theatre are going to be doing virtual too this year. So it definitely equalizes things.

So what are you going to be carrying away from this? I have always been a stickler for specificity especially with focus and eyeline and intention, so working with singers over film, where even a slight eye glance speaks volumes, is a gift. And these days, at the Met and other places that are filming, it’s now “ok so I’m performing for a massive house but I also have a camera right in my face.” And I personally think there’s a way that, if you’re acting specifically, with detail and with great preparation that you don’t have to change how you act for a large hall versus a small space.

But most of all, it emphasizes for me that what is most important for an audience is relationships. You can have the dragons and the flashiness and spectacle but at the end of the day if the relationships and experiences aren’t clear and important then I don’t think there’s much core to the experience.

David Perlman can be reached at publisher@thewholenote.com
We regret to announce the cancellation of our 2020-2021 concert season as previously advertised.

We plan to present some virtual concerts. The next is Sept 10 with

St. Lawrence String Quartet
Haydn Discovery

We will return to presenting live performances when circumstances allow.

PLEASE WATCH OUR WEBSITE FOR UPDATES:
www.music-toronto.com

Make sure we have your email address for our newsletter: contact heather@music-toronto.com
In this year like no other, the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) has adapted to the pandemic’s parameters by making most red carpet events virtual and scaling back on how films will be presented.

TIFF’s 45th edition – running from September 10 to 20 – offers both digital and in-person screenings, using TIFF Bell Lightbox and the Isabel Bader Theatre at reduced capacity to conform to measures provided by the City of Toronto and Public Health Ontario, ensuring that there will be a modicum of lineups. As well as drive-ins at CityView and Ontario Place, there will be an open air cinema at Ontario Place. A sophisticated, secure digital platform, called Bell Digital Cinema, will house most of the 50-plus films selected for TIFF 2020 enabling Festival-goers to watch Festival films at home on their television screens.

Given The WholeNote’s early deadline, TIFF’s schedule and program notes were unavailable, so the current guide is based on a film’s subject matter, a filmmaker’s track record and gleanings from across the Internet.

The Disciple
“A finely crafted labour of love set in the world of Indian traditional music... The Disciple is a refined yet uncompromising portrait of a young artist’s journey, his dreams and his loneliness, featuring some extraordinary musical performances.” (New York Film Festival). Classical musicians prominent in the film include lead actor Aditya Modak, Arun Dravid and Deepika Bhide Bhagwat. In an interview on the scroll.in website, director Chaitanya Tamhane said he was drawn to the stories and anecdotes about musicians of the past, their secret knowledge and ancient wisdom. “The more I studied, listened, and attended concerts, the more I was enticed, and I realized Indian classical music is not as simple as the perception goes – how its practitioners act and behave, for instance.

“The lead character is a young vocalist, raised and introduced to music by his father. He has grown up on stories of the past, these secrets, modern-day myths and masters, purist concepts of music, and how one should live their life in accordance with them.”

For research, Tamhane travelled to cities with a vibrant Hindustani music culture: Delhi, ITC Sangeet Research Academy in Kolkata, Benaras, Pune, Ahmedabad. “I needed to form genuine friendships and build a rapport so they opened up and let me understand their inner world, and that took time. What you will see in the film is an amalgamation of insights I gained over two years.”

No Ordinary Man
For decades, the life of American jazz musician Billy Tipton was framed as the story of an ambitious woman passing as a man in pursuit of a career in music. In Aisling Chin-Yee and Chase Joynt’s documentary, No Ordinary Man, Tipton’s story is reimagined and performed by trans artists as they collectively paint a portrait of an unlikely hero. Working with Tipton’s adopted son Billy Jr., the filmmakers delve into Tipton’s complicated and contested legacy: how do you tell the story of someone who was hiding in plain sight yet desperate to be seen?

According to Diane Middelbrook’s book, Suits Me: The Double Life of Billy Tipton (quoted in the April 2013 issue of Allegro, the magazine of the NYC musicians’ union AFM Local 802), Tipton did not make a serious effort to become a recording star. He mainly earned his living...
The Inheritance

TIFF Wavelengths programmer Andréa Picard previews The Inheritance: “Ingeniously structured from visual and sonic counterpoint, Ephraim Asili’s much-anticipated feature debut The Inheritance is an eye-popping, jazz-infused, shape-shifter – part fiction, part documentary – fully attuned to this political and cultural moment. Shot on Super 16mm in vibrant primary colours, The Inheritance riffs off Godard’s La Chinoise in palette, structure and playful didacticism as it inventively weaves together the history of the MOVE liberation movement, the Black Arts Movement and the filmmaker’s formative experiences in a Black Marxist collective. New York-based Asili, who is also a DJ, teacher and avid record collector, imbues his film with an iconography of Black artists and freedom fighters via vintage photos, books and records. An audio collage of field recordings, onscreen free jazz performances, spoken word, archival sounds and the whirring of a recording Bolex collapses time and space in a trippy and moving way. Features musical excerpts by Sun Ra and his Solar Arkestra, Max Roach and Oscar Brown Jr.”

David Byrne’s American Utopia, Underplayed and Bandar Band

TIFF2020 opens with Spike Lee’s film, David Byrne’s American Utopia, which documents the former Talking Heads frontman’s brilliant, timely 2019 Broadway show, based on his recent album and tour of the same name. Among the many rave reviews of the Broadway show was David Rooney’s in The Hollywood Reporter. Rooney wrote that the “sheer jubilation being transmitted by the crew of 11 prodigiously talented and hard-working musicians, backup singers and dancers of diverse ages and ethnicities, not to mention the dynamic staging, seems to demand a new kind of sensory intake. “Hatched out of Byrne’s seventh solo studio album but anthologizing material from across his output stretching back to his days as the art-rock guru frontman of Talking Heads... It’s a sensational concert by any measure, but also a highly sophisticated extension of much of what Byrne has been doing over an eclectic and influential career spanning almost five decades.”

While you’re waiting...

Who said “At the age when most kids are practising their scales on the piano, I was learning to play the Button Boogie.”? (Vol 5 no 8, page 45)
The Broadway show’s running time was 100 minutes. Lee’s film is listed at 135 minutes. *Vive la différence.*

New Zealand-born, LA-based director Stacey Lee’s documentary *Underplayed,* about gender inequality in electronic music was shot over a period of six months with an all-female crew and (according to Lily Moayeri in *Variety*) takes us into the professional and personal worlds of established superstars like TOKiMONSTA and Alison Wonderland, newcomers like Sherelle and hardworking underground artists like Tygapaw.

Lee told Moayeri that Suzanne Ciani, Delia Derbyshire, Daphne Oram and Wendy Carlos – the pioneers of electronic music – have been tinkering away in “this almost scientific laboratory realm. As things have gotten more commercial, it’s become harder for a woman to be taken seriously. There is this underlying double standard where people who do the exact same thing don’t get the same level of acceptance.”

*Bandar Band,* Manijeh Hekmat’s music-infused twist on a road movie follows a group of Iranian women singers and their entourage on a day-long journey across a flooded landscape to Tehran where they hope to enter a competition. Every road they take leads to a dead end in a film that appears to be more allegorical than Sisyphean.

**Three Tempting Soundtracks**

Ludovico Einaudi, whose recordings invariably rise to the top of the classical charts, brings his lyrical minimalism to *Nomadland,* Chloé Zhao’s follow-up to her critically acclaimed *The Rider.* “Set against the grand backdrop of the American West, the film recounts a year in the life of a stoic, stubbornly independent widow – Frances McDormand, in a beautiful performance of understated grace and sensitivity – who, having spent her adult life in a now-defunct company town, repurposes an old van and sets off in search of seasonal work. In this richly textured feature, Zhao establishes herself as one of contemporary cinema’s most clear-eyed and humane chroniclers of lives on the American margins” (from the New York Film Festival program note). I wonder if Einaudi’s vision of the West will be more like Aaron Copland’s or Ennio Morricone’s.

In a 2009 interview – Patrick Lyons pointed out in an article for Bandcamp – the then-19-year-old Nicolas Jaar listed Erik Satie and Ethiopian jazzer Mulatu Astatke as his primary influences – heady stuff for an electronic music “it” kid whose early singles and remixes were marked by a precocious blend of dance rhythms and avant-garde approaches to structure and melody. “In the decade since, Jaar has ridden his omnivorous appetite to far-flung corners of ambient, house, psychedelic, jazz, drum & bass, noise, reggae, industrial, and more.” And now, he’s composed the soundtrack for Dea Kulumbegashvili’s *Beginning,* a Georgian film selected by the Cannes, Toronto and New York film festivals. The New York Film Festival program notes: “Her striking feature debut uses rigorous, compositionally complex frames to tell the devastating story of a persecuted family of Jehovah’s Witness missionaries from the perspective of a wife and mother. *Beginning* announces a major new arrival on the world cinema scene.”

Viggo Mortensen stars in his directorial debut, *Falling,* a film he also wrote. A veritable polymath, Mortensen (who speaks seven languages) is a painter, a poet, a photographer, a publisher – he started Perceval Press with some of his *Lord of the Rings* earnings – and a musician. He composed and performed *Falling*’s piano score with occasional help from Buckethead. Peter Debruge wrote in *Variety* that *Falling* is “more deeply felt than your typical American debut... unpretentious and perfectly accessible to mainstream audiences... Drawing on his own upbringing while touching on universal themes of family and loss, Mortensen reimagines the relationship with his parents – doting mother, difficult father – through the protective filter of fiction.”
QUICK PIX

A young woman in post-partition India struggles to balance family duty and personal independence in *A Suitable Boy*, Mira Nair’s six-part adaptation of Vikram Seth’s bestselling novel. Anoushka Shankar’s infectious contribution to the soundtrack intrigues.

Versatile American pianist and composer Dustin O’Halloran records for Deutsche Grammophon, has an ambient orchestral project on the side, is a member of A Winged Victory For The Sullen, and with his co-composer, Volker Bertelmann (aka Hauschka) was nominated for several awards for the score to *Lion*. That’s enough to get my attention and put Francis Lee’s *Ammonite* on my radar. Another film selected by Cannes this year, *Ammonite* stars Kate Winslet and Saoirse Ronan as two lovers in 19th-century Dorset.

From Peter Debruge’s *Variety* review: “Not since the summer of 2003, when François Ozon unveiled Sapphic sizzler *The Swimming Pool* at the Cannes Film Festival, has the French director seduced audiences quite as brazenly as he does in *Summer of 85*, which was also set to premiere at Cannes, before the global coronavirus outbreak forced the cancellation of the 2020 edition.”

Ozon talked about Jean-Benoît Dunckel’s score in an interview with Félix Lefebvre: “I wanted music that was sexy, romantic and nostalgic; something that would remind us of the 1980s and the beginnings of electronic music. All these aspects can be found in Jean-Benoît’s music. I have always enjoyed the work he did when he was in the band Air. And it turns out that in an interview where he was asked to give the title of a song he liked when he was young, he’d answered: *Stars de la pub*, [an 80s hit pop song], saying that it was a really well-produced song. I took this coincidence as a sign because it was also one of my favourite songs when I was a teenager. So I contacted him, and I explained that I wanted to use the very song he’d mentioned in my film. I gave him the script, from which he composed themes without having seen the images. It’s quite extraordinary because during the editing process we used the melodies exactly as they were written.”

Based in the UK, Hutch Demouilpied is a composer, sound designer and musician whose work has been praised by *The Guardian* and *Variety*. Her latest feature, *Limbo* – about a promising young Syrian musician stuck on a remote Scottish island while he awaits his asylum request – is Mark Sharrock’s “funny and poignant cross-cultural satire that subtly sews together the hardship and hope of the refugee experience.” When Festival head Thierry Frémaux announced *Limbo*’s selection for Cannes this year, he described it as “Wes Anderson by way of Scotland.”

*The Toronto International Film Festival runs from September 10 to 20. Please check tiff.net for further information.*

Paul Ennis is the managing editor of *The WholeNote*.

---

While you’re waiting...

Who said “There must have been a moment, there must have been some time when you said I’ve got something here.”? (Vol 8 no 4, page 6)
Loose Tea, an indie opera and music theatre company based in Toronto, was already a vibrant, though small, presence on the Toronto scene before the pandemic hit, producing innovative socially conscious productions that pushed the boundaries of interdisciplinary performance while staying based in classical voice. With the advent of the lockdown in March, like every other theatre company, all their plans had to be put on hold. Excitingly, however, as everything stopped and the usual doors closed, new doors blew open, as if the pandemic had unleashed a new energy.

Speaking with Alaina Viau, Loose Tea’s founder and executive artistic director, I was astounded by her hunger to create, and how she has embraced the enforced rest from live theatrical performance to concentrate on planning and building future initiatives for her company as well as initiating new partnerships to expand her own and her company’s artistic vision.

The Loose Tea project that first caught my eye and inspired this profile is Dead Reckoning, a new Canadian musical by Lezlie Wade and Scott Christian. Loose Tea is usually thought of as an indie opera company, but as Viau pointed out they are officially a “music theatre” company, and from the beginning (in 2013) she has been experimenting with combining classical voice with other genres and media. Last season, for example, included two non-traditional productions: Carmen=YesAllWomen reimagined as “half opera, half not,” and the Dora-nominated new “song opera” about Anne Frank, Singing Only Softly.

“I’ve been looking for a musical for Loose Tea to produce, but it had to be the right musical,” Viau explained. Composer Scott Christian was Viau’s music director for Carmen and they had begun talking about Dead Reckoning as Carmen was being written. Christian’s own composing style, she says, is similar to Stephen Sondheim’s, something that attracted her to the show: “It’s complex and needs to be well sung. It sits in that grey area where the lines are blurred between opera and musicals.”

The content also aligns wonderfully with Loose Tea’s mandate: “Written for five women, it focuses on the intersection of the lives of (famed aviatrix) Amelia Earhart and 15-year-old Betty Klenck – a real-life character – the girl who received Earhart’s last shortwave radio transmissions as her plane went down. It explores how Earhart was doing these amazing things herself but also influencing the next generation at the same time. It’s about how these trailblazing women end up affecting the next generation of women coming up.”

The work is written for two leads and a trio who act as a Greek chorus. In the words of the composer: “Both the Betty and Amelia parts are within the musical theatre soprano range, though Betty is written higher which gives a more youthful colour, whereas Amelia gets some juicy lower stuff by contrast. The trio are modelled after the Andrews Sisters and get a number of tight three-part-harmony features as well as a solo song each in the full version.”

While Dead Reckoning was not commissioned by Loose Tea, the company had planned to do a workshop of it in May that would have culminated in a semi-staged concert performance. Of course, that plan had to be jettisoned when the lockdown was imposed. Christian and Lezlie Wade, who wrote the book and lyrics, had also lined up an earlier workshop with the famed La MaMa in New York City that would have taken place in March. It’s a dramatic story as Viau tells...
me: “They were three hours into New York State when everything shut down and they had to turn around and come back. One of the cast members who had flown ahead had already landed and had to get on another plane right away and come right back, as well.”

Left up in the air like this and not wanting to lose momentum, the question they all had was “What do we do now?” This led to the idea of creating a digital version and discussion of what that would mean. Like many other companies, the first option they looked at was to do a video version on Zoom, filmed in pieces at individual cast member’s houses. None of the company were thrilled with this idea, however, and when Ontario moved into Stage 3 of recovery the exciting possibility of actually filming together came up and they all jumped at the chance.

(As this was an experiment and the budget not large – though partially supported by a digital creation grant from the Canada Council – only the first 30 minutes of the whole 90-minute musical would be filmed. In effect it is the first act, and has its own story arc so that it can stand alone.)

A different animal

At this point two more big decisions were made and the project became a different animal. Viau described how they “were all very concerned about the quality of what we were going to put out. My big thing was that it needed to sound good, so we did all the recording beforehand. Scott dropped off microphones to the singers and sent them the piano track. They recorded their parts separately, he gathered them together, added a bass track and mixed everything so that it sounded good. As we filmed, they sang to the recorded track so that it would look as if they were actually singing as we filmed.”

Viau also described how Lezlie Wade, whose story, whose “baby” this show was, was also concerned about quality and adamant that if they were going to do a film version she would need to rewrite it specifically for that medium – which she did, including complex intercutting between scenes and within songs. Wade also chose and planned the locations at which they would shoot in Niagara-on-the-Lake where she lives; the idea of filming had now grown far beyond Zoom or the recording of a live performance.

The actual filming would be done by Viau, herself. In another piece of serendipity Viau had already been experimenting with film on various productions both for Loose Tea (Carmen) and elsewhere (Cendrillon for SOPAC Ottawa, Haus Musik with Tafelmusik in Toronto, for example). The loan of professional camera equipment from a friend, filmmaker Patrick Hagarty with whom she had worked at Roy Thomson Hall on Seven Deadly Sins (when she was assistant production manager for the TSO), made it possible to aim for high professional quality in this category as well.

For the first time since founding Loose Tea, Viau would be the director of photography (DOP), but not the director of a Loose Tea show. Book writer and lyricist Wade was attached as director from the beginning, and now the two women would come together as a new team to realize the production they dreamed of. As Viau described their working relationship: “Lezlie reimagined the show completely in terms of the scenes and cuts for film, found the locations, planned the shots she wanted and where they would be, and she will have complete control on the final edit. As DOP I got on site and set up the shot with angles, lighting, actor placement and in-camera colour with my video knowledge, and suggested changes to get the best representation of her idea. As the creative producer, I am not directly involved with the nitty gritty of the editing, but will

By the end of filming in mid-August, ... the whole team was excited by what they had created that it wasn’t a “cop out” or “also-ran”, but felt instead “as if this weird situation had birthed a new thing.”

While you’re waiting...

Who said “So on the Friday Mrs Wilkins said that if I got sick so-and-so would sing instead, And I said oh that won’t happen.”? (Vol 13 no 1, page 35)
make suggestions as we come to the final edit, with an overall view of the work.”

By the end of filming in mid-August, Viau said the whole team was excited by what they had created, that it wasn’t a “cop out” or “also-ran”, but felt instead “as if this weird situation had birthed a new thing.”

The plan is to release the film online around mid-September, though no exact date has yet been set. It will be streamed for free, with donations suggested to help continue the development of the piece. A watch party will be announced on Loose Tea’s social media ahead of time (please see the info below). If the short film is well received the company may go on to film the whole musical. In the meantime, a full live version of Dead Reckoning is still planned to be part of the regular theatre season, once live performance is possible and safe again, perhaps in the 2021/22 season, after further workshopping.

**BIPOC composer/librettist development program**

Also in September, another Loose Tea initiative is being launched: a new BIPOC composer/librettist development program to be headed up by the company’s new artistic director Joanna Diindiisikwe Simmons, a Saugeen Ojibwe and professional opera singer originally from Lindsay Ontario, who has performed leads with the COC and Pacific Opera Victoria. Simmons was recruited by executive artistic director Viau to take on the leadership of this program as well as other innovative programming plans that she will be announcing later in the year.

*For more information about Loose Tea, the premiere of Dead Reckoning and the new BIPOC composer/librettist program please see:*

Facebook: www.facebook.com/LooseTEAMusicTheatre; Instagram: @looseteatheatre; Twitter: @looseteatheatre; and www.looseteamusictheatre.com

**Dead Reckoning: Video Adaptation Credits**

Leslie Wade - Director, Book and Lyrics
Scott Christian - Composer and Producer
Alaina Viau - Creative Producer and Director of Photography
John Chou - Technical Assistant
Alicia Barhan - Assistant Producer
Austin Check - Editor

Amelia Earhart - Laura Larson
Betty Klenck - Kelsey Falconer
American Trio - Alicia Barhan, Aisha Jarvis, Sara Shanazarian

Jennifer Parr is a Toronto-based director, dramaturge, fight director and acting coach, brought up at from young age on a rich mix of musicals, Shakespeare and new Canadian plays.

---

**Back to the Future**

The Struggle for Equity in Jazz Studies programs

**COLIN STORY**

As a first-year undergraduate at Capilano University’s Jazz Studies program in 2005, I, like the rest of my cohort, was automatically enrolled in a mandatory jazz history course. It was a survey course, designed to teach us how to listen actively, to distinguish between Armstrong and Parker and Coltrane, and to develop a sense of the historical arc of jazz in the 20th century. Our very first listening example was *Livery Stable Blues*, by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band.

Something of a novelty song, its name derived from the horns’ imitation of animal sounds in stop-time sections, *Livery Stable Blues* has the distinction of being the very first jazz recording, released by New York’s Victor record label in 1917. It also holds a more dubious distinction: all five members of the ODJB, who billed themselves as the “creators of jazz,” were white.

To his credit, our instructor mentioned this unexpected fact, though we, as a class, did not investigate it further. There was much we could have considered: the circumstances behind the recording, the tricky concept of artistic ownership, the way in which Black American Music gets repackaged by white performers – from the ODJB to Elvis Presley to Justin Bieber – and profitably sold to white audiences. But we didn’t; instead, we moved on to the next song, and focused on learning to correctly identify excerpts for our upcoming exam.

This experience is indicative of what is still a defining characteristic of Canadian post-secondary jazz programs: namely, that they are primarily concerned with teaching students how to be competent professional performers, and that teaching students to engage with issues of race, gender and equity within their field is outside of a program’s purview. On the surface, there’s an undeniable logic to this: students come to learn performance skills, and that’s what programs deliver. One of the unintended consequences of this outlook, however, is an erasure of the lived experiences of jazz’s canonical figures, the vast majority of whom are Black.

Rather than being examined as real people, these musicians tend to become avatars of the music they made. The present-day significance of Duke Ellington’s famous 1920s residency at the Cotton Club,
for example – a club which admitted a whites-only audience, was decorated in exotic jungle imagery, and was disdained by contemporary Black intellectuals like Langston Hughes – remains largely unexplored. Another unintended consequence of this colour-blind philosophy: faculty members and executive staff of Canadian jazz studies programs tend to be predominantly white men. Where greater diversity is visible, it tends to be in sessional faculty, hired on short contracts for relatively low pay.

The Call for Change

In the wake of the murder of George Floyd, weeks-long Black Lives Matter protests, and loud calls for changes to be made to major arts organizations, a concerted effort has been made by students, alumni, and faculty to address the inequities of Canadian jazz programs. On June 24, a call to action addressed to the Humber College School of Media and Performing Arts was posted on social media by the Humber Jazz POC Alumni Collective – Kyla Charter, Meagan De Lima, Claire Doyle and Lydia Persaud. The letter contains both questions (such as “How are you supporting your Black students?” and “How is the department addressing systemic racism?”) and demands (“conduct and publicly publish an equity audit at the end of each school year” and “hire more Black professors and pay them well”). By June 29, a response was issued by both senior dean Guillermo Acosta and the Humber music faculty, with a commitment to effecting systemic change. This change includes working with the college’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce, “recruiting, retaining and advancing more faculty and staff from Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities,” and developing and allocating “more scholarships for Black and Indigenous students.”

#thisisartschool

Near the beginning of July, a group of University of Toronto Jazz Studies alumni formed under the auspices of the hashtag #thisisartschool, which emerged as a way for social media users to share marginalizing experiences at post-secondary arts programs. By July 17, members of this coalition – Modibo Keita, Jacqueline Teh, Laura Swankey, Laura Yiu, RJ Satchithanathan, Belinda Corpuz, Sammy Jackson, Alexa Belgrave, Joelle Turner and Tara Kannangara – posted a call to action addressed to U of T’s Jazz Studies department, partly inspired by the earlier call to action addressed to Humber.

The U of T letter shares some similarities with the Humber letter, citing “the erasure of vital Black contributions to the arts” and “racism directed towards BIPOC students and faculty” as key issues. Unlike the Humber letter, however, which is primarily concerned with race, the U of T letter also highlights inequities related to gender and sexuality in jazz programs, including “discrimination directed towards LGBTQ+ students,” “the normalization of sexually inappropriate behaviour,” and the “lack of accountability for people who perpetrate these behaviours.”

Keita describes #thisisartschool as a coalition, and characterizes the process of making “decisions and sharing ideas” as “very organic.” Despite the “amount of people involved and the difference of opinions,” and the “highly delicate and emotionally charged” topics
being discussed, he told me that the group has “rarely run into major issues.” For Keita, the “concept of jazz education in itself is inherently broken”; he doesn’t see the possibility of reform within the current academic model.

In response to the issues that have been brought to the attention of the administration, the U of T Faculty of Music has formed a committee to address anti-racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion issues (AREDI). Kannangara – a sessional faculty member for the Jazz Studies program – is serving on the committee, along with full-time faculty members, graduate and undergraduate students and other sessional faculty. The Jazz Area (U of T’s formal administrative title for its jazz program) is also forming its own AREDI, which, according to Jazz Area head Mike Murley, “will provide advice on how to make our program more inclusive, providing input on such matters as curriculum, workshops/masterclasses, recruitment of students, faculty and guest instructors, and overall student experience.”

**Not without challenges**

The work of the committee is not without its challenges. It is easy, and not unfair, to point the finger upwards to university leadership when discussing equity issues. But, as Kannangara told me, “barriers are all around us, not just with our leadership.” Faculty and executives in post-secondary arts organizations tend to be liberal and invested in the idea of social progress, but systemic issues, no matter how severe, tend to be invisible, as if they’ve become “part of the furniture,” and introducing a new critical lens through which to see them can seem impossible.

Another major challenge, as Kannangara told me, is that so-called “diversity committees” tend to have “a lack of objectivity” amongst their membership. “Having a personal stake in policy outcomes,” as she put it, “is definitely a strength in some ways.” But, “it can be difficult to be efficient when you have your own personal grievances to air.” Though sharing these stories may be a necessary part of the process, she said, it’s important that they don’t hamper the committee’s capacity to “start making significant changes to the operations of the school.”

Another invisible issue: compensation for committee members. Committee members, Kannangara maintains, “should absolutely be paid. This work is extraordinarily labour intensive and to some committee members, retraumatizing. After a lot of conversation, I believe U of T is starting to take this seriously and I believe they are working on this point.”

In one sense, it’s easy to see the quaranitne of 2020 – and the uncertainty attending the upcoming scholastic year – as yet another complicating factor in the fight for equity within post-secondary jazz programs. But, as Keita put it, some “people just started caring because they had time to [care] during the pandemic.” Though it comes at a significant cost, this year has afforded us all a rare opportunity to take time to pause, reflect and reform. What 2020 will mean for the future of jazz programs remains to be seen; hopefully, it will have been time well spent.

**Colin Story is a jazz guitarist, writer and teacher based in Toronto. He can be reached at www.colinstory.com, on Instagram and on Twitter.**

**When I wrote about Arraymusic five years ago in a WholeNote series on Toronto concert spaces, I described it as a “seminal venue” — one that maintained a strong place as both a presenting organization and as a rental space for experimental music in Toronto. Now in the midst of the 2020 pandemic, the same remains true. Despite unprecedented challenges, Arraymusic continues to search for new ways of supporting local experimental music and its affiliated performing art forms—and to find relevance in the changing musical fabric of the city.**

**Array’s Early Years**

Years before it managed a concert venue, Arraymusic was an experimental music ensemble and presenter dedicated to commissioning and programming “full spectrum multimedia works, electronic events, group improvisations, music and dance collaborations.” The group was launched April 20, 1972 by a cohort of University of Toronto composition students. By the early 1980s, the group’s growing activities moved to a refurbished garage on a leafy upper Annex avenue.

From 1991 to 2012 Arraymusic rented a multifunctional space in an Artspace-run building. It was among a cohort of artists and organizations which reinvented Liberty Village as an epicentre of creative sector employment. I spent many happy hours rehearsing with the Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan and several other groups there, as well as leading community gamelan music workshops.

By the time that era came to an end, Arraymusic artistic director Rick Sacks had scouted a promising new loft location in another weathered-brick industrial building in the Queen and Niagara Street area. After extensive renovations, the Array Space now comprises a 1,200 sq. ft. main studio for rehearsals and performances with a
The Arraymusic Studio—now called Array Space—opened for business in 2013. A year later blogTO ranked it among Toronto’s “top five experimental music venues.” Since then, it’s gone from strength to strength.

Current Challenges

That was before the current COVID-19 lockdown slammed the brakes on concertizing. With many music organizations having cancelled their seasons, and some struggling to keep the lights on, I reached percussionist and current Array artistic director David Schotzko at his home on a hot August afternoon to ask how Array is faring.

“The organization has grown organically over the decades, and I have the pleasure to program our 50th anniversary season,” Schotzko says, over the phone with a smile in his voice. The spike in Array Space use over the last year or two is a reflection of heavy community need and use, he says. “That’s been an extremely positive development. Here’s how it looked by the numbers in 2018/19: according to our best figures, we hosted an impressive 660 workshops, rehearsals and concerts by 345 groups, involving 2,650 diverse artists. Last year the Space was so consistently booked that I had to take my vibraphone to my house to practice for the group shows – and I’m an Array Ensemble percussionist! Then suddenly on March 25, 2020 we had to shut the space down entirely, and lock the door behind us.”

That being said, Array is perhaps better positioned to weather the storm than some others.

“In 2012 our artistic director Rick Sacks had a vision of creating a mixed office and performance-ready venue,” Schotzko adds. “Due to Rick’s tremendous effort our rental revenue has allowed Array to grow in ways that [other new music ensembles] for instance cannot do, thanks to our initial investment in our space. Our venue has allowed us to grow in so many ways. Rick later installed high-definition video cameras with which we can livestream Array Ensemble shows. We’ve been doing that for years.”

“Since then, it’s gone from strength to strength.

Issues of Community

“We talk about Array as a creative hub, a community hub,” notes Schotzko. “Our vision was a place that our colleagues, peers, as well as those we don’t know yet, could all use. It was initially built on the community with roots in the experimental music and the new composition scene, but the breadth of what happens here now has

the wholenote.com
September 2020 | 19

BROWSE 25 YEARS AT KTOSK.THEWHOLENOTE.COM

BROWSE 25 YEARS AT KTOSK.THEWHOLENOTE.COM
expanded our community even more. We’re at the centre of various artistic scenes which spin around the space.”

To give a sense of the full scope of Array Space activity, Schotzko names some of the groups that use it. “Our current resident artists/ensembles include many established and emerging music groups. I can think of Canadian Creative Music Collective/CCMC, Thin Edge New Music Collective (TENMC), Invocation (produced by Jay Pollard), Frequency Freaks Modular Synthesizer Workshops, Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan, The Glass Orchestra and SlowPitchSound.”

And there are other regular users who call Array home, in addition to numerous occasional renters: the Toronto Improvisers Orchestra, Art of Time Ensemble, Soundstreams, the dance improv series coexist-Dance (which collaborates with the Association of Improvising Musicians Toronto), the community theatre company The Purple Stage, and Straeon Acting Studios.

“It’s the Space itself, Schotzko says, which has allowed Array to support a wider array of artists, and a more diverse group of musical genres, music and affiliated art forms – more so than the Array Ensemble and the contemporary music program stream alone can do.

On the issue of diversifying Array’s own programming, and responding to current social issues in the field, Schotzko is quite candid. “First of all I have to be extremely aware that I’m yet another white guy artistic director. Therefore I have to work extra hard to make sure that when I’m looking for projects, for composers – for music – that I consciously step outside what I already know.”

“Speaking specifically about contemporary classical music, there are so many fabulous women composers from Canada and across the world that at this point it’s just absolutely absurd when women composers don’t make up at least half of anyone’s overall programming.”

“Western classical music has historically not supported artists of colour,” he says. “At this point there are relatively few BIPOC composers and music-makers working in the genre. There are many [BIPOC] music-makers working in other genres, but I don’t see how the Array Ensemble as a group of classically trained musicians can bring something to their music that’s beneficial to it – and this is our failing.

“We need to play the work of BIPOC composers – and they have always been there – but we also need to make sure that programming their work is relevant to them and doesn’t just benefit us. Because in so many ways I feel like the classical music ensemble is the irrelevant part of that equation.”

I asked him how he intends to meet the challenges – perhaps traps – of tokenism, gatekeeping and virtue-signalling.

“In all honesty I’m not sure if I have a ready answer to that,” Schotzko replies. “I don’t think I’m going to know that until I mess up royally and get called out on it. When that happens, I have to try to listen and learn from my mistakes. I’m trying hard to check my privilege. I’m very lucky in that I’m married to an activist feminist professor who’s very good at checking my privilege (and her own). She’s used to dealing with these issues in her classroom, so she’s way ahead of me here.”

I ask about challenges facing Array in the immediate future. “The challenges are financial … aren’t they always?” comments Schotzko. “On one hand we don’t have to figure out how to produce events this year, since we can livestream them and do it well. The biggest question mark is that we just don’t know the extent to which we can rent out the Space, and count on that revenue stream.”

Array recently ran a successful fundraiser with sustainability in mind, he says. “Our community really came together with support. We’re trying to build a buffer in this way, since the next year is such an unknown.” Credit should also go, he adds, to the federal government and to the additional funding programs the Arts Councils have added to help during lockdown. “We hope these exceptionally vital supports from both private and public sectors will allow us to ride out the storm.”

In terms of new programming directions this season, Schotzko says he has turned to other curators with expertise in practices outside his own. “Michael Lynn has curated his concert series Audio Pollination at Array for many years. He’s reaching out to a diverse range of co-curators with the goal to move Audio Pollination from a user of our Space to being an official program of Arraymusic,” he says.

“I’m also excited about the other major series being added called Situated Sounds. It’s curated by visual/installation/sound artists Mehrnaz Rohbakhsh and Kristina Guison. They’re joining us as artistic associates this year, officially part of the Array programming team. The new series will be announced more fully in the coming weeks, but it will be focused on site-specific sound and installation works from a wide range of Toronto artists.”

So with the fall season right around the corner and venues still locked down, what’s immediately in store for the Array Space?

“Let me answer that beginning with rentals,” says Schotzko. “Assuming Ontario maintains the current reopening momentum, we could be able to offer rentals starting in October, but on a very limited basis. Plans have not yet been finalized and I’m electing to be conservative, but it may work on a single client per full-day-only basis, perhaps capped at four people at a time. The following day will then be ‘dark’ so we can thoroughly sanitize everything.”

In terms of Array Ensemble concerts, they are planning to announce their season in phases, allowing them to move dates around if needed. “I would be very pleasantly surprised if we could have a live audience in the Space this year. I hope I’m wrong … but at this point I’m anticipating livestream-only programming in the near future. While we all miss playing for a live audience, our three-camera studio setup allows us to create high-quality concert videos.”

Schotzko concludes on a hopeful note. “I have hope that we can all positively engage with and overcome the issues we’ve been talking about: upheavals due to the pandemic and also social justice and equality in the arts. I don’t just want to survive only to return to the status quo. I want our institutions to survive and be better.”

Andrew Timar is a Toronto musician and music writer.
The Canary Pages choral directory in this issue has been a fixture of the May WholeNote for the past 17 years. Until this year, that is, when the magazine decided to hold it back to September, given the climate of uncertainty that has gripped the choral community since March.

Better late than never: the directory remains welcome a reminder that hundreds of choral organizations across Ontario sustain and uphold communities that celebrate art and beauty from the largest cities to the smallest communities throughout Ontario.

March feels a long time ago now. Seasons shuttered, theatres closed, rehearsals stopped, and as the shutdown continued, choirs started thinking towards the fall and onwards. If you look at the language amongst the Canary profiles, there’s new terminology that has become standard – postponed, indefinite hiatus, online rehearsals, Zoom, suspended, TBD. The good thing is, the choirs and the people who make music are still around.

In my last column, I investigated some of the opinions and information being shared by organizations like Chorus America, Choral Canada and Choirs Ontario, speculating on what the future might hold for choral life. Months later, as the start of the 2020/2021 season looms, much of the uncertainty remains, across our artistic communities. But our resilient communities are forging ahead, adapting as they go.

This month I got in touch with three: Upper Canada Choristers, Reaching Out Through Music, and Achill Choral Society.

Continuing in different ways
While many choirs stopped making music together, some continued in different ways. The Upper Canada Choristers have continued to sing with regular Zoom rehearsals including sectionals and fun digital socials. The choir has “recently started singing together outside in small groups, socially distanced and wearing masks. I have personally tried out a variety of masks to see what works best,” shares artistic director Laurie Evan Fraser. “We have been in regular contact with Public Health to ensure we are taking appropriate steps to keep everyone safe, and our board has developed protocols for rehearsals and performances in accordance with Public Health directives.” Importantly, Evan Fraser notes, “The fact is, singing with a mask is not a problem.”

Upper Canada Choristers are revisiting the programming they initially planned for performance in the spring, revisiting the same repertoire they initially planned for, with some adjustments. “The concert we originally had planned for last May was a departure from our usual format,” says Evan Fraser. “It would have been performed without intermission, would have narration and unusual visual elements, and would depict a slice of Latin American culture from pre-Hispanic times to the present. We were excited by the possibilities, but then we had to cancel the concert because of the pandemic.”

So, the Choristers had to adjust to something different, as manifested in their upcoming October 2 performance with sister choir Cantemos.
The collaborative effort has been really important to Upper Canada Choristers as well. “The biggest challenge for us in preparing for this new format is technological,” Evan Fraser said. “We are blessed by the talented teachers of the program have kept the music going. And we expect this October performance to be every bit as exciting as if we were all in one place.” The conductor Fraser. “And we expect this October performance to be every bit as exciting as if we were all in one place.” The announcement says. Definitely a sign of the times.

Reaching Out

Reaching Out Through Music (ROTM) executive director Virginia Gallop Evoy provided some thoughts by email to me about the adaptations the music program has made over the last few months. ROTM is an accessible music program run out of St. James Town, in Toronto’s downtown core. Normally, this super-dense neighbourhood full of high-rises brings kids together to learn out of The Church of St Peter and St Simon-the-Apostle. The pandemic shutdown didn’t mean a shutdown of their programming. “Our private instrumental lessons carried on with minimal interruption,” she shares. The St. James Town Children’s Choir and ukulele group followed with online rehearsals starting in May. “Our overriding goal was to keep our children and families engaged, musically and socially.” Using technology and video, the talented teachers of the program have kept the music going. And there’s more to come with new connections and collaborations.

Early in July, ROTM was able to put together a virtual recital. “With some coaching and guidance, our choristers and music students learned how to record themselves, and the various pieces were synchronized and assembled by a fabulous video editor,” shares Gallop Evoy. The charming visual of a group of kids strumming away on their ukuleles on video makes it hard not to smile. The added advantage to more performances moving to a digital sphere is that they are recorded and available for enjoyment time and time again and can even reach audiences not usually accessible.

ROTM is also reaching out into their local community to collaborate with visual arts programs in St. James Town. Gallop Evoy says, “The plan is for the sounds of our choir to be combined with their children’s related artwork to create an arresting video performance. We hope this initial collaboration will be the beginning of many fruitful collaborative endeavours in the community.”

For a taste of how ROTM is accomplishing this, catch the Reaching Out Through Music virtual recital on YouTube. The St. James Town Choir, ukulele students, vocal students and piano students perform with appearances by special guests including tenor Asitha Tennekoon, ukulele teacher Tom Collins, pianist Jean-Luc Therrien, jazz performer and choir conductor Jacqueline Teh, pianist John Sheard and much more!

The collaborative effort has been really important to Upper Canada Choristers as well. “The biggest challenge for us in preparing for this new format is technological,” Evan Fraser said. “We are blessed by our longtime affiliation with Grace Church on-the-Hill. They too are committed to community service and have agreed to be our partners moving forward to provide a place for us to connect to community venues through Zoom and share pre-recorded performances as well as do live, interactive sing-alongs.” The upcoming digital performance that UCC has planned will incorporate pre-recorded video and some livestreaming. UCC even plans to have some singers and instrumentalists in person, masked and socially distant at the church.

Creating Community

More choirs may turn to this hybrid model in the coming season. Shawn Grenke, artistic director of the Achill Choral Society, shares a bit about what he has planned for Christmas: “We are going to be doing an online concert with past archival repertoire. We will have a number of choir members do video introductions to the pieces from their home, and as well, if allowed, record a few pieces in small groups, wearing masks and socially distant.”

The loss of the community element of music is a reminder that these organizations aren’t just internally focused, every performing arts organization exists to create community. “The singers in Achill desperately miss the community of music making,” shares Grenke, “and as well, the social element that is such a huge part of being in a choir and sharing the love of choral music.”

But between now and the next set of digital/hybrid performances they will be figuring a way back into the communal sharing, rehearsals and creation of music. “I’m also deeply aware of the loneliness COVID-19 has caused our Achill Choir community,” says Grenke. “It was a major part of the singers’ weekly routine – and it still will be in September...it will just look different.”

Achill and every other choir across the region is having to grapple with these same concerns in order to forge ahead.

“We have to be creative and willing to try new things if we are to survive” Evan Fraser says. “We don’t have the option of putting our operations on hold until the situation improves,” states Gallop Evoy. “The community needs us now more than ever... the prospects for the future of our organization seem bright.”

So off we go to the start of the 2020/2021 season... just a bit different. Follow Brian on Twitter @bjiang. Send info/media/tips to choralscene@thewholenote.com.
Canaries on the Fly!
Welcome to The WholeNote’s 18th annual Canary Pages choral directory, which would normally have been published within last May’s issue. We’ve been gathering profiles since March and publishing them online as we received them. But, given the circumstances, we decided to delay publication of this print version until September, to allow choirs a bit more time to figure out their plans.

As you’ll see from the 76 profiles that follow, even with the delay much remains uncertain in the choral scene. More choirs than usual have provided a more general view, using what they had planned for the coming season as an example of what they do; fewer than usual are able to be specific about how they are moving ahead. Most important, though, by being here they are all saying “Reach out to us if we seem like the choir you might be looking for! Because we are not going away!”

The profiles here, provided by the choirs themselves, as always reflect the richness and variety of our community’s choral scene. If you’re looking to join a choir, there’s something for everyone, from amateur, non-auditioned choirs, to professional, kids choirs, large and small ensembles, with a wide range of genres covered.

Given the uncertainty of these times, we encourage you to visit the choirs’ websites, listed here, to find out what’s happening, or contact them at the phone numbers given. We will also keep adding and updating profiles on our website on an ongoing basis, so bookmark www.thewholenote.com/canary for more information whenever we receive it!

Let’s hope that by next May all of us will be back in good company – once again raising our voices together, to celebrate being able to do so.

THE 2020 CANARY PAGES TEAM
PROJECT MANAGER: Karen Ages
PROJECT EDITOR: Danial Jazaeri
LAYOUT AND DESIGN: Susan Sinclair
WEBSITE: Kevin King

* A Cappella Niagara!
A Cappella Niagara is a vibrant male chorus performing four-part harmony in the Niagara region. As a member of our chapter you’ll not only experience the fun and fellowship of singing with the chorus and maybe a quartet, but you will also spread joy through performance, enriching your life and the lives of others. We share the delight of music at the Candlelight Stroll, Santa Claus parades, senior homes, district convention, annual Corn Roast, and other events. In February, our quartets deliver Singing Valentines to that special someone. Today, barbershop singing is a lot more than old tunes - we sing a wide range of styles, contemporary songs and fine arrangements.

It’s a sound that appeals to men of all ages and all walks of life. You’ll find four-part harmony is a little challenging, very creative, and a lot of fun.

TIMOTHY HEALEY
905-684-1634
thealey198@aol.com
www.niagarasingers.com

* Achill Choral Society
Achill is an 80-member mixed voice, auditioned choir composed of singers who are dedicated to becoming better musicians. We have been performing since 1982, with a repertoire that includes classical, contemporary, and traditional works. Our artistic director, Shawn Grenke, is also the associate conductor and accompanist of the Amadeus Choir and accompanist of the Elmer Iseler Singers.

We normally rehearse at St. John’s Church, east of Orangeville and perform two concert series a year, with performances rotating between Alliston, Bolton and Orangeville. During this time when we cannot meet physically, we will be focused on singing and performing in new and creative ways and increasing our musical skills. To learn more about Achill please email us or visit our website.

GAIL MACLENNAN
905-857-2737
info@achill.ca
www.achill.ca

* All Saints Kingsway Choir
All Saints Kingsway Choir provides musical leadership at weekly Sunday morning Eucharists, Festival Evensongs, community outreach projects and concerts year-round. The choir is made up of paid section leads and volunteer participants and welcomes new singers throughout the year. Recent performances include Karl Jenkins’s Stabat Mater, Howard Goodall’s Eternal Light: A Requiem, festal celebrations with the drumming ensemble Beyond Sound Empijah, the Michael Occhipinti Jazz Quartet, Maurice Duruflé’s Requiem and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s The Atonement, both with the Nathaniel Dett Chorale. Jazz Vespers and lunchtime organ recitals round out the regular musical offerings. New members are always welcome to the Music at All Saints Kingsway family. Come
and be a part of a fantastic choral and instrumental creative community.

D. BRAINERD BLYDEN-TAYLOR
416-233-1125
music@allsaintskingsway.ca
www.allsaintskingsway.ca

● Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto

Enlivening Toronto’s arts community for 46 years, the award-winning Amadeus Choir is a semi-professional choir of auditioned voices. Led by the dynamic artistic director and conductor Kathleen Allan, the choir champions the best of choral music through a self-produced Toronto concert series, guest performances, and special events. The choir is known for programming major classical works with orchestra, as well as works by Canadian and international composers. The Amadeus Choir actively engages in educational and community outreach through choral workshops. Regular rehearsals are held on Tuesday nights in the Don Mills and Lawrence area. Auditions are scheduled May 23 to 26. Depending on recommendations from the Ontario government, auditions may be held virtually. Please email us for more information.

ALLISON LUFF
416-446-0188
managingdirector@amadeuschoir.com
www.amadeuschoir.com

● The Annex Singers

Now in its 40th year, The Annex Singers is a spirited 65-voice auditioned choir with an eclectic repertoire spanning seven centuries. Under the dynamic and creative leadership of artistic director Maria Case, the choir performs three concerts annually, collaborating with a wide array of professional soloists and ensembles. Recently performed large-scale works include Faure’s Requiem, Poulenc’s Gloria, and Mozart’s Great Mass in C minor. The Annex Chamber Choir, a smaller ensemble drawn from the main choir, is dedicated to presenting gems from the chamber repertoire. We provide ongoing professional development to all choir members and encourage young singers with a sponsorship program. Rehearsals are held Monday evenings at St. Thomas’s Anglican Church, 383 Huron St. Please visit our website to arrange your audition.

JOANNE EIDINGER
416-458-4434
joedingers@gmail.com
www.annexsingers.com

● Avanti Chamber Singers

Named Promising New Adult Ensemble in the 2019 Choral Canada National Competition for Canadian Amateur Choirs, Avanti Chamber Singers, under the direction of Dr. Rachel Rensink-Hoff, is a community-based SATB chamber choir based in Niagara. We are dedicated to presenting intimate choral performances of exemplary quality in genres ranging from the Renaissance to present-day, emphasizing the works of living composers.

Our concerts typically feature an eclectic range of old and new musical styles, from small-scale compositions to extended choral works. We strive to build an enthusiastic audience base through inspired thematic programming. We offer three concerts each season as Ensemble-in-Residence at Brock University with additional performances in collaboration with area ensembles and festivals.

TIM STACEY
905-650-9962
avantichoir@gmail.com
www.avantisingers.com

● Bel Canto Singers

Bel Canto Singers is a four-part community choir with singers of various ages. Under the guidance of our accomplished Music Director, Leanne Piller, members enjoy the rewards and challenges of a varied repertoire including classical masters, Broadway show and movie tunes, opera choruses and pop songs. Traditionally, rehearsals are held on Tuesday evenings, 7pm to 9:30pm, from early September through May at Scarborough Bluffs United Church, 3739 Kingston Road. Presently, all of our in-person activities are suspended until further notice. We will return to rehearsing and performing in concerts as soon as it is safe to do so. At that time, experienced and committed choristers will be welcomed to join us. Please visit our website for updates.

KAM
belcantomembership@gmail.com
www.belcantsingers.ca

● Canadian Celtic Choir

Founded in 1996, conducted by Paul Grambo (also emcee) and accompanied by Jean Willadsen, the Canadian Celtic Choir is a London-based SATB choir of more than 50 voices that has built a solid reputation as one of the most in-demand choirs in SW Ontario. Our repertoire features songs primarily from Ireland, Scotland, England, Wales, and the Canadian Maritimes. Recipients of the Mayor’s Award from the City of London for their cultural contributions to the city, we won the Most Popular Classical Choir at the Forest City London Music Awards in 2015. The Choir plans a tour every three years (next tour in 2023). Our two most recent CDs are, *A Celtic Noel* (2013), and *Celtic Inspiration* (2014) and are available from our website. Our conductor emeritus is William “Bill” Zadorsky (retired June 2020).

IAN DAVIES
519-319-5847
celticchoir@iandavies.com
www.celticchoir.ca

● Canadian Children’s Opera Company

As the only permanent children’s opera company in Canada, the CCOC is committed to providing young people opportunities to develop their voices, build performance and musicianship skills, connect with opera and theatre professionals, and reach their full potential by learning about themselves and the world around them through storytelling and music. We commission, produce and tour new operas, with children as both the principal performers and main audience. The CCOC regularly collaborates with other leading arts organizations, including acting as the children’s chorus for the Canadian Opera Company. Spread across 6 choir divisions plus an outreach program, hundreds of young people ages 4 and up receive unparalleled performance experiences and age-appropriate vocal and dramatic training annually.

KATHERINE SEMCESEN
416-366-0467 x223
katherines@canadianchildrensopera.com
www.canadianchildrensopera.com
• The Cellar Singers

The Cellar Singers is a 40-voice mixed choir based in Orillia. For over 50 years, the choir has delighted audiences in Simcoe and Muskoka with choral masterpieces grand and intimate. Under the direction of gifted choral specialist Mitchell Pady, the choir presents four main concerts each season. Rehearsals are open to all and are held Wednesday evenings, 7:15pm, at St. James’ Anglican Church, Orillia. Visit us on our website, or Facebook.com/TheCellarSingers or Twitter/@cschoir. For more information, contact us at our email or at 705-718-4124.

REBECCA CAMPBELL
705-718-4124
info@thecellarsingers.com
www.thecellarsingers.com

• Choralairs Choir of North York

The Choralairs are a non-profit, charitable, 50-member, four-part harmony adult choir who sing a variety of popular, jazz, folk, Broadway show tunes and seasonal songs. Directed by our talented team of Peter Ness as conductor and Asher Farber on keyboard, the choir requires no auditions, just a love of singing and the ability to carry a tune! Our rehearsals are on Tuesday evenings from September to June at Edithvale Community Centre on Finch Ave. West. We have been singing for seniors for over 57 years and perform regularly at senior citizens’ residences in the GTA. New members are welcome. However, due to COVID, our starting date has not been determined. Please check our website for updates and information.

ELAINE
905-731-8416
choralairs@gmail.com
www.choralairschoir.com

• Chorus Niagara

Chorus Niagara, the Power of 100, is a passionate group of singers of diverse ages and walks of life. As the Niagara region’s premier auditioned symphonic chorus since 1963, Chorus Niagara performs classic choral masterpieces, innovative new modern, and seldom-heard works, providing a showcase for emerging Canadian talent. Chorus Niagara attracts singers of all ages through its Chorus Niagara Children’s Choir (CNCC), Side-by-side High School Chorale (SS) and Robert Cooper Choral Scholars program (RCCS). Chorus Niagara performs in the beautiful, state-of-the-art Partridge Hall in the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in downtown St. Catharines. Our artistic director is Robert Cooper, CM. View our flash mob with over 52 million views on YouTube. Visit our website, and for our children’s choir: www.chorusniagaraacc.com.

DIANA MCDOREY
905-934-3575
cnadmin@becon.ca
www.chorusniagara.org

• Chorus York

Chorus York is an amateur performance community choir based in Richmond Hill. We perform three to four concerts per year and sing a variety of choral music, from Bach to Broadway. We are diverse in age and culture, but we all share a love of fine choral music. Recent concerts include “Celebrate the Season,” a program of seasonal songs, and “Romantic Melodies,” a program of love songs for Valentine’s Day. Our 2020-2021 season will run from September to June, and end with a collabora -
tive concert with the Richmond Hill Philharmonic Orchestra in June. Auditions run throughout the year, and new members are always welcome. Please send inquiries to info@chorusyork.ca.

MARY-LOU MONTGRAIN
905-884-7922
mlmontgrain@rogers.com
www.chorusyork.ca

• Church of St. Mary Magdalene

Steeped in musical heritage and assisted by a generous acoustic, the Church of St. Mary Magdalene offers a music program strongly rooted in the tradition established by Healey Willan. Every Sunday, at the 11am Solemn Mass, the Gallery Choir sings a mass and motet from the west gallery, while the Ritual Choir sings the Gregorian propers from the east end. Both choirs rehearse on Thursdays.

At the 9:30am Sung Mass, the SMM Singers sing a motet and lead congregational singing. Membership is informal: rehearsals are at 9am directly before the service; regular attendance is not mandatory. One Sunday per month at 4:30pm, the meditative Solemn Evensong and Benediction are sung, preceded by an organ recital at 4pm.

For information, please contact the director of music, Andrew Adair.

ANDREW ADAIR
416-531-7955
andrew.timothy.adair@gmail.com
www.stmarymagdalene.ca

• The Church of St. Peter and St. Simon-the-Apostle

Music is central to worship at St. Peter and St. Simon and is rooted in the rich liturgical tradition of the Anglican Church. The Adult Choir enjoys a repertoire from medieval chant to 21st-century anthems, motets and spirituals. With approximately 25 voices including a professional core, many of its members have had extensive choral training or as instrumentalists and solo singers. The choir provides musical leadership at the Sunday 10:30am weekly worship service including full mass settings and seasonal evensong services. Carols Services are presented for Advent and Christmas. Annual concerts feature major works, with soloists and instrumental ensemble accompaniment. In August of 2019 the choir travelled to the UK to sing for one week residencies at both Gloucester and Chichester Cathedrals.

ROBIN DAVIS
905-409-6121
robin.davis@rogers.com
stpetersonsimon.ca

• Common Thread Community Chorus

Common Thread: Community Chorus of Toronto is a non-audition chorus which promotes a sense of community by performing joyful and empowering music. All voices are welcome! We believe that everyone can sing and that together we can make beautiful music. We sing music that cele-
brates the dignity of all people and their struggles to create a better world. We sing for recreation, for reverence, for learning and laughter, for struggle, for hope and for understanding. We sing for social justice and to build community.

HELEN NESTOR
647-345-7743
info@commonthreadchorus.ca
www.commonthreadchorus.ca

• Cummer Avenue United Church Choir

Cummer Avenue United Church Choir consists of a group of volunteer singers supported by a number of professional section leaders. The choir provides strong and vibrant musical leadership in worship each Sunday morning at 9am, 12 months of the year. A wide range of musical styles are included in the repertoire, and in addition to full choir anthems, various ensembles and solos are presented by members of the choir. On selected Sundays, the choir presents extra choral music such as traditional carols at Christmas and a cantata at Easter. Rehearsals are held Thursday evenings from early fall to early spring and on Sunday mornings all year.

Due to extensive renovations of our church site, we are temporarily worshipping with the congregation of Willowdale/Emmanuel United Church just a few blocks south at 349 Kennedy Avenue.

TAYLOR SULLIVAN
416-222-5417
taylorsullivan@yahoo.com
www.cummeravenueuca.ca

• DaCapo Chamber Choir

The 24-voice DaCapo Chamber Choir was founded in 1998 in Kitchener-Waterloo under the direction of Leonard Enns. The mission of the choir is to identify, study, rehearse & present outstanding choral chamber works of the past 100 years and to champion music of Canadian and local composers. In November 2018, the choir released its 3rd CD, NewWorks, with selections received through the first 10 years of its national choral composition competition.

Although the 20/21 season remains uncertain, the choir will continue to release archival recordings online and plans to complete their 3-year “Road to Refuge” program in May, presenting the concert that was cancelled due to COVID-19 in May 2020.
For the most recent updates to the choir’s plans, please visit their website and check out their music on their YouTube channel!

SARA MARTIN
519-725-7549
info@dacapochamberchoir.ca
www.dacapochamberchoir.ca

● Duly Noted

Duly Noted is a Toronto-based a cappella ensemble, singing everything from madrigals to Shawn Mendes. We are currently 10 women strong but have had up to 12 members and as few as 8. One of our primary mandates is to support charities while sharing our love of singing. To date we have raised over $14,000 for local GTA charities. Find out more about us and when we are performing on our website.

JENNIFER KIRNER
416-629-7554
dulynotedto@gmail.com
www.dulynotedtoronto.com

● Echo Women’s Choir

Celebrating its 29th year, Echo is a 50-voice, non-auditioned community choir open to women from all walks of life. Echo performs at city-wide grassroots events, and traditionally holds fall and spring concerts. Echo aims to build community with a strong, varied and vibrant singing culture. Repertoire includes music from worldwide village singing traditions and newly commissioned music. Echo keeps membership fees accessible to all. This fall term, beginning on Tuesday, September 8, Echo will present a series of 3 online mini-sessions (4 weeks) and create virtual recordings, and the occasional Saturday singing outing. All are welcome. To join us, register on our website.

ALAN GASSER
416-779-5554
info.echo@gmail.com
www.echowomenschoir.ca

● Elmer Iseler Singers

Elmer Iseler Singers is a 20-voice professional chamber choir based in Toronto and founded in 1979. Directed by the acclaimed Lydia Adams, the Singers are known for tonal beauty and interpretive range, and valued for their contributions to masterclasses and workshops with schools and community choirs. Their unique “Get Music! Educational Outreach Initiative” mentors conductors, music educators and students. EIS has 15 recorded CDs featuring Canadian music. EIS with TSO was 2019 Grammy-nominated to and JUNO awarded for a collaborative CD. Touring in Canada is a major part of the Elmer Iseler Singers’ activities, offering both concerts and workshops to Canadian audiences. Weekly rehearsals are on Mondays and Tuesdays in preparation for our Toronto Series. During COVID-19, singers of all voices are invited to audition by video.

JESSIE ISELER
416-217-0537

info@elmeriselersingers.com
www.elmeriselersingers.com

● Ensemble vocal Les voix du coeur

Les Voix du Coeur is a vocal ensemble of more than 40 amateur singers that, for 25 years, has offered lively concerts showcasing the richness of French popular songs from Canada and abroad. Our shows present choral singing and cabaret style numbers, combining music, theatre and dance in a highly entertaining performance. The only group of this nature in the GTA, we reach an ever-growing public, and we play a dynamic role in the French-speaking cultural community in Toronto. Please visit our website to discover who we are and what we do, all in French!
LES VOIX DU COEUR
eslesvoixducocoeur@gmail.com
www.lesvoixducocoeur.com

● Exultate Chamber Singers

Exultate Chamber Singers is an auditioned group of 28 skilled singers who enjoy performing a variety of chamber choir repertoire, both a cappella and accompanied, including many works by Canadian composers. The choir is under the direction of artistic director Mark Ramsay and will be celebrating its 40th anniversary this season! In addition, the choir commissions new works, collaborates with guest artists, and supports aspiring young music professionals with singing and conducting opportunities. Rehearsals take place on Tuesdays from 5:45 to 7:45 pm at St.Thomas’s Anglican Church, 383 Huron St. Please contact Exultate for audition information.

VIVIAN MOENS
416-971-9229
info@exultate.net
www.exultate.net

● Etobicoke Centennial Choir

Celebrating its 40th anniversary this season! In addition, the choir commissions new works, collaborates with guest artists, and supports aspiring young music professionals with singing and conducting opportunities. Rehearsals take place on Tuesdays from 5:45 to 7:45 pm at St.Thomas’s Anglican Church, 383 Huron St. Please contact Exultate for audition information.

LAUREN MAYER
416-433-5495
info@etobicokecentennialchoir.ca
www.etobicokecentennialchoir.ca

● Ensemble vocal Les voix du coeur

Les Voix du Coeur is a vocal ensemble of more than 40 amateur singers that, for 25 years, has offered lively concerts showcasing the richness of French popular songs from Canada and abroad. Our shows present choral singing and cabaret style numbers, combining music, theatre and dance in a highly entertaining performance. The only group of this nature in the GTA, we reach an ever-growing public, and we play a dynamic role in the French-speaking cultural community in Toronto. Please visit our website to discover who we are and what we do, all in French!

LES VOIX DU COEUR
eslesvoixducocoeur@gmail.com
www.lesvoixducocoeur.com

● Exultate Chamber Singers

Exultate Chamber Singers is an auditioned group of 28 skilled singers who enjoy performing a variety of chamber choir repertoire, both a cappella and accompanied, including many works by Canadian composers. The choir is under the direction of artistic director Mark Ramsay and will be celebrating its 40th anniversary this season! In addition, the choir commissions new works, collaborates with guest artists, and supports aspiring young music professionals with singing and conducting opportunities. Rehearsals take place on Tuesdays from 5:45 to 7:45 pm at St.Thomas’s Anglican Church, 383 Huron St. Please contact Exultate for audition information.

VIVIAN MOENS
416-971-9229
info@exultate.net
www.exultate.net

● Etobicoke Centennial Choir

Exultate Chamber Singers is an auditioned group of 28 skilled singers who enjoy performing a variety of chamber choir repertoire, both a cappella and accompanied, including many works by Canadian composers. The choir is under the direction of artistic director Mark Ramsay and will be celebrating its 40th anniversary this season! In addition, the choir commissions new works, collaborates with guest artists, and supports aspiring young music professionals with singing and conducting opportunities. Rehearsals take place on Tuesdays from 5:45 to 7:45 pm at St.Thomas’s Anglican Church, 383 Huron St. Please contact Exultate for audition information.

VIVIAN MOENS
416-971-9229
info@exultate.net
www.exultate.net

● Exultate Chamber Singers

Exultate Chamber Singers is an auditioned group of 28 skilled singers who enjoy performing a variety of chamber choir repertoire, both a cappella and accompanied, including many works by Canadian composers. The choir is under the direction of artistic director Mark Ramsay and will be celebrating its 40th anniversary this season! In addition, the choir commissions new works, collaborates with guest artists, and supports aspiring young music professionals with singing and conducting opportunities. Rehearsals take place on Tuesdays from 5:45 to 7:45 pm at St.Thomas’s Anglican Church, 383 Huron St. Please contact Exultate for audition information.

VIVIAN MOENS
416-971-9229
info@exultate.net
www.exultate.net

● Etobicoke Centennial Choir

Exultate Chamber Singers is an auditioned group of 28 skilled singers who enjoy performing a variety of chamber choir repertoire, both a cappella and accompanied, including many works by Canadian composers. The choir is under the direction of artistic director Mark Ramsay and will be celebrating its 40th anniversary this season! In addition, the choir commissions new works, collaborates with guest artists, and supports aspiring young music professionals with singing and conducting opportunities. Rehearsals take place on Tuesdays from 5:45 to 7:45 pm at St.Thomas’s Anglican Church, 383 Huron St. Please contact Exultate for audition information.

VIVIAN MOENS
416-971-9229
info@exultate.net
www.exultate.net

● Exultate Chamber Singers

Exultate Chamber Singers is an auditioned group of 28 skilled singers who enjoy performing a variety of chamber choir repertoire, both a cappella and accompanied, including many works by Canadian composers. The choir is under the direction of artistic director Mark Ramsay and will be celebrating its 40th anniversary this season! In addition, the choir commissions new works, collaborates with guest artists, and supports aspiring young music professionals with singing and conducting opportunities. Rehearsals take place on Tuesdays from 5:45 to 7:45 pm at St.Thomas’s Anglican Church, 383 Huron St. Please contact Exultate for audition information.

VIVIAN MOENS
416-971-9229
info@exultate.net
www.exultate.net

● Etobicoke Centennial Choir

Exultate Chamber Singers is an auditioned group of 28 skilled singers who enjoy performing a variety of chamber choir repertoire, both a cappella and accompanied, including many works by Canadian composers. The choir is under the direction of artistic director Mark Ramsay and will be celebrating its 40th anniversary this season! In addition, the choir commissions new works, collaborates with guest artists, and supports aspiring young music professionals with singing and conducting opportunities. Rehearsals take place on Tuesdays from 5:45 to 7:45 pm at St.Thomas’s Anglican Church, 383 Huron St. Please contact Exultate for audition information.

VIVIAN MOENS
416-971-9229
info@exultate.net
www.exultate.net

● Etobicoke Centennial Choir

Exultate Chamber Singers is an auditioned group of 28 skilled singers who enjoy performing a variety of chamber choir repertoire, both a cappella and accompanied, including many works by Canadian composers. The choir is under the direction of artistic director Mark Ramsay and will be celebrating its 40th anniversary this season! In addition, the choir commissions new works, collaborates with guest artists, and supports aspiring young music professionals with singing and conducting opportunities. Rehearsals take place on Tuesdays from 5:45 to 7:45 pm at St.Thomas’s Anglican Church, 383 Huron St. Please contact Exultate for audition information.

VIVIAN MOENS
416-971-9229
info@exultate.net
www.exultate.net

● Etobicoke Centennial Choir

Exultate Chamber Singers is an auditioned group of 28 skilled singers who enjoy performing a variety of chamber choir repertoire, both a cappella and accompanied, including many works by Canadian composers. The choir is under the direction of artistic director Mark Ramsay and will be celebrating its 40th anniversary this season! In addition, the choir commissions new works, collaborates with guest artists, and supports aspiring young music professionals with singing and conducting opportunities. Rehearsals take place on Tuesdays from 5:45 to 7:45 pm at St.Thomas’s Anglican Church, 383 Huron St. Please contact Exultate for audition information.

VIVIAN MOENS
416-971-9229
info@exultate.net
www.exultate.net
**Grace Church on-the-Hill Choirs**

The choir of Grace Church on-the-Hill proudly embraces our excellent Anglican choral tradition while looking towards the future for new inspiration. Our choirs for both adults and children sing weekly from September to June. Our children’s choirs provide the ideal learning environment for young musicians, and we have funding available to subsidize the cost of music lessons for our children! Choristers of all ages develop lifelong friendships, self-esteem, and the joy of coming together to sing. We take a choir tour every year. Some tours are small, like a day trip to Niagara-on-the-Lake, and some tours are larger, such as our two-week tour to sing in cathedrals in Dublin and Oxford in 2016. We welcome new members every September.

**Sarah Hicks**
416-488-7884
music@gracechurchonthehill.ca
www.gracechurchonthehill.ca

---

**Grand Philharmonic Choir**

The Grand Philharmonic Choir, under the artistic direction of Mark Vuorinen, brings the enchantment of choral music experiences to our community. Our singers range in age from 7 to 80 years old and participate in one of four choirs: the adult main choir; the adult chamber choir; the youth choir; or the children’s choir. We sing in Kitchener’s acoustically superior Centre in the Square and in local church buildings. Through these performances, we strive to transform our community into a more harmonious and peaceful place.

**Administrator**
519-578-3669 x5290
info@grandphilchoir.com
www.grandphilchoir.com

---

**Harbourfront Chorus**

Did you know that choral singing improves health and happiness? You are invited to join Harbourfront Chorus, a non-auditioned community choir. We perform a wide range of music that spans from early Renaissance music to contemporary popular songs. Rehearsals run Tuesdays from 7:45pm to 9:15pm at the Waterfront Neighbourhood Centre, located at the south-east corner of Queens Quay W. and Bathurst St. Our season runs September through May. The 2020/21 season begins Tuesday, September 15.

**Albert Wong**
416-392-1509
harbourfrontchorus@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/harbourfrontchorus

---

**Healey Willan Singers**

The ensemble was originally formed as a youth choir to celebrate Dr. Willan’s 125th anniversary in 2005. Since 2007, the choir has reinvented itself into a women’s ensemble and has become one of the finest women’s ensembles in the city. Rehearsals run from September to April on Saturday mornings from 10:15am to 12:30pm. This season, the choir will perform Antonio Vivaldi’s Gloria with orchestra on December 5, 2020. On April 24, 2021, the ensemble will end their season with a concert of music chosen by the choristers in celebration of our 15th anniversary season. Auditions are held throughout the year. Apprentice conductor program is also available. Rehearsals and concerts are held at the Church of St. Martin in-the-Fields, located at 151 Glenlake Avenue (near Keele and Bloor Street West in Toronto).

**Ron Cheung**
416-519-0528
healeywillansingers@yahoo.ca
www.healeywillansingers.com

---

**Jubilate Singers**

The Jubilate Singers, a community choir of about 40 voices directed by Isabel Bernaus, specializes in music from a variety of traditions and time periods, sung in original languages. We normally feature a non-auditioned main chorus and an auditioned chamber choir and present three concerts a year, with additional community appearances. This year we are becoming a virtual choir, with online rehearsals on Tuesday evenings, open to anyone interested. We will learn some new repertoire, sing some favourites, and work on vocal skills through occasional workshops and guest clinicians. We will also take our famous Jubilate potlucks online, and use other social activities to build and maintain a sense of community until we can all come together again in person. Call us for more information!

**Pauline McKenzie**
416-223-7690
pkenzie3@gmail.com
www.jubilatesingers.ca

---

**King Edward Choir**

Founded in 1952 by Jean Dobson, Barrie’s King Edward Choir today is a group of 50 dedicated musicians encompassing all voices, striving to present a repertoire that is broad and engaging to both chorister and audience: recent years have seen performances of works by Britten, Mozart, Bernstein, Vivaldi, Mark Sirett, Stephanie Martin, Imant Raminsh and Ruth Watson Henderson, along with offerings of Renaissance motets, Spirituals, folk songs and show tunes. The choir frequently collaborates with other artists and groups, and enjoys community sing-outs. Rehearsals for our three annual performances take place Monday evenings, and new members are welcome at any time.

Under the direction of interim conductor, Leanne Edwards, KEC continues to plan for a new season!

**Peter Sullivan**
070-5729-7281
psullivan71@gmail.com
www.kingedwardchoir.ca

---

**Leaside Chancel Choir**

The Leaside Chancel Choir provides musical leadership at weekly Sunday morning service at 10:30am, community outreach projects/events, and concerts year-round. The choir is made up of paid section leads and volunteer participants, and welcomes new singers throughout the year.

Recent choral works have included Requiem by Eleanor Daley and The Seven Last Words by Heinrich Schutz. Rehearsals take place on Thursday evenings from 7:30pm to 9:30pm, and offer an opportunity to develop musicianship through vocal instruction, while being a part of an open and welcoming community. In addition, our Junior Choir provides the ideal learning environment for young musicians. The Junior Choir rehearses Thursday evenings from 6:30pm to 7:15pm. For more information, contact Matthew Boutda, director of music.

**Matthew Boutda**
647-981-3705
matthewboutda@hotmail.com
www.leasideunited.org

---

**London Pro Musica Choir**

London Pro Musica is an auditioned, mixed-voice choir based in London, Ontario, Canada. LPMC is an inclusive and multi-generational, member-managed adult choral organization under the professional leadership of Markus Howard, dedicated to engaging audiences by providing and promoting artistic excellence in the London area and beyond, through education, outreach and high quality performances of choral music. We perform an extensive range of classical music - from the medieval to the contemporary - both for accompanied and unaccompanied voices.

**Nancy Knowles**
519-914-5769
marketing@londonpromusica.ca
www.londonpromusica.ca

---

**Lyrica Chamber Choir**

Founded in 2000 by the late Natalya Gurin and directed since 2005 by Steve Winfield, Lyrica Chamber Choir of Barrie strives to present eclectic and evocative programs of excellent choral chamber music. The 40 singers of Lyrica demonstrate a strong desire to present artistically varied choral programs with a high degree of musicianship to the community of Barrie and surrounding area.

Recent highlights include performances of Marc-Antoine Charpentier’s Messe de Minuit pour Noël, Benjamin Britten’s A Ceremony of Carols, Ola Gjeilo’s Dark Night of the Soul and Josef Rheinberger’s Missa in G “St. Crucis” Op. 151. Professional soloists and instrumental musicians regularly join Lyrica for performances. Our accompanist, Brent Mayhew, enhances the choir’s performances.

**Steve Winfield**
705-722-0271
steve.winfield@sympatico.ca
www.lyricachoir.ca
Milton Choristers

Milton Choristers, a chamber choir of 35 auditioned voices, is Mississauga’s only adult choral organization committed to the choral classical repertoire. MCS Choruses offers a diversified season of extensive community engagement events and ticketed concerts performed with chamber orchestras, instrumental ensembles and soloists. This wide range of programming contributes a strong and unique voice to the cultural fabric of the city. MCS is dedicated to bringing the choir’s performances into the communities of Mississauga under the dynamic leadership of artistic director Mervin William Fick.

SANDY
905-278-7059
info@miltonchoristers.com
www.miltonchoristers.com

Men of Note

The Men of Note four-part non-auditioned male voice choir of over thirty strong, based in Stouffville, Ontario, has recently celebrated twenty years of song. Our main desire is to have fun singing. Always hoping to grow, we invite men of all ages with a similar passion to join. We rehearse every Monday night at the Stouffville United Church, 34 Church St., Stouffville. Choir members hail from across the GTA, from Toronto to Uxbridge. Men of Note is built on a foundation of Fellowship, Community Service and a quest for musical excellence. Our goal is to provide music across many genres, to entertain locally and to develop musical connections with other choirs, both across Canada and abroad. Check out our website for more.

GORD BIBBY
416-509-5249
info@menofnote.com
www.menofnote.com

Milton Choristers

This dynamic four-part community choir has entertained audiences in Halton Region and beyond. The 50-member choir performs two major concerts per choir year, often including premier guest soloists and musicians. We also enjoy performing at numerous local events. Our director, Rachel Cleland, is expanding our already varied repertoire. From classical to contemporary, sacred to secular, we sing it all. Rehearsals are Tuesday nights from 7:30pm to 9:30pm from September to December. A love of singing, some sight reading and a sense of humour are all you need to become a Milton Chorister.

BILL MCLEAN
905-875-1730
info@miltonchoristers.com
www.miltonchoristers.com

Mississauga Festival Choir

Mississauga Festival Singer Choir (MFC) was formed in 2008 as a smaller branch of the large ensemble, Mississauga Festival Choir (MFC). This 26-voice, auditioned choir delights audiences with intimate and challenging works of music, their most recent being The Wound in the Water by Kim Andre Arnesen with string orchestra. MFC performs an annual concert, as well as various performances throughout the season, serving as an ambassador for MFC. They reach out to the community in a variety of venues from the Port Credit Library to Hammerson Hall. All experienced choral singers are now welcome to audition, as it is no longer a requirement to sing with MFC to be part of Mississauga Festival Chamber Choir.

JENNY JOHNSTON
416-986-5537
choiradmin@mfchoir.com
www.mfchoir.com

Mississauga Festival Choir

With over 150 singers, Mississauga Festival Choir is the largest and most spirited community choir in our city. Our Mission is to enrich lives through music by way of performance, education and outreach, while valuing excellence in choral music. Under the leadership of David Ambrose, MFC also host three subsidiary choirs: Mississauga Festival Chamber Choir, an auditioned group which explores intimate and challenging works; Resonance, a non-auditioned choir for youth and young adults aged 15 to 28 directed by Bob Anderson (resonance.mfchoir.com), and Raising Voices - an intergenerational choir of music lovers to provide the therapeutic value of music to people with Alzheimer’s and dementia and their caregivers.

JENNY JOHNSTON
416-986-5537
choiradmin@mfchoir.com
www.mfchoir.com

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale is a 21-voice SATB professional choir based in Toronto, dedicated to performing Afrocentric music of all genres, including classical, spiritual, gospel, jazz, folk and blues. Founded by artistic director D. Brainerd Blyden-Taylor in 1998, the NDC is Canada’s premier performer of Afrocentric composers and a touchstone for the education of audiences and communities regarding the full spectrum of Afrocentric choral music. The mission of the NDC is to build bridges of understanding, appreciation and acceptance between communities of people through the medium of music. The Chorale has a three-concert season in Toronto, tours extensively each season and has released several CDs and DVDs. The Nathaniel Dett Chorale is artist-in-residence at the Harriet Tubman Institute for Research.

D. BRAINERD BLYDEN-TAYLOR
(416) 712-7740
info@nathanieldettchorale.org
www.nathanieldettchorale.org

Novi Singers Toronto

Led by accomplished musical director Matthew Jaskiewicz, Novi Singers Toronto perform an ambitious multilingual repertoire including classical sacred and secular, jazz, cabaret, and opera. We enjoy an ongoing collaboration with Toronto Sinfonietta, distinguished soloists and guest musical ensembles.

Our 2019/20 season began with a successful gala concert, "Freedom Reborn: 30th Anniversary of the Fall of Communism", and the eagerly anticipated sold-out “Christ is Born” annual Christmas concert. In March, we regretfully postponed the rest of the season, while continuing to meet virtually for fellowship and song.

NST welcomes new members with a commitment to excellence, and offers opportunities to enhance musical skills at Wednesday evening practices (8pm, 71 Judson Street, Etobicoke) and occasional...
Saturday workshops.
KRIS RUMIAN
905-848-1885
novisingerstoronto@gmail.com
www.novisingerstoronto.ca

● Oakville Choir for Children & Youth
For 26 years, Oakville Choir has provided exceptional music education and leadership training to young people. We believe providing a fun, safe and educational space for youth to express themselves encourages them to find their voice and use it for good in this world. Currently, we offer a collaborative and comprehensive choral music education program to nearly 300 young people, exploring a wide range of repertoire, diverse musical programming, and high standards of performance. We are proud of the choral collaborations that we have created with other arts and community organizations, both locally and internationally through our touring program. We continue to focus on empowering all youth to use their voice to lead, connect, learn, and build confidence in our community, developing leaders one voice at a time!
KATHERINE HAMILTON
905-337-7104
info@oakvillechildrenschoir.org
www.oakvillechoir.org

● Oasis Vocal Jazz
Oasis Vocal Jazz, Toronto’s longest-running close harmony ensemble, has been making a unique contribution to the city’s artistic life since 1985. Influenced by pioneers Lambert, Hendricks and Ross and inspired by modern-day masters of the genre such as New York Voices, Take 6 and Toronto’s own Cadence, we enjoy sharing our love of vocal jazz with a wide range of audiences. Whether performing in community or corporate events and charitable fundraisers, or putting on our own concerts backed by some of the city’s top jazz instrumentalists, we have always valued both the pursuit of musical excellence and the joy of making music with each other. We are always looking for new voices to add to our blend. For more information, contact us. Why not become a fan of our Facebook page?
ALAN GOTLIB
416-500-7040
info@oasisvocaljazz.com
www.oasisvocaljazz.com

● Oriana Women’s Choir
Oriana Women’s Choir is an auditioned ensemble of 30-40 amateur upper-voice singers who perform at a high artistic standard. With artistic director Mitchell Pady, Oriana explores the possibilities in choral music for the female voice, collaborating with diverse artists to push the boundaries of typical expectations for upper-voice ensembles. We foster the creation of Canadian choral music, regularly commissioning works from Canadian composers for upper voices. In rehearsal we are focused but friendly, and maintain an inclusive, respectful and supportive environment. Oriana meets on Tuesday evenings - we are starting our season virtually, working together on musical skills and repertoire in preparation for resuming in-person rehearsals and performances once possible. We welcome potential new singers at any time.
CHOIR ADMINISTRATOR
416-346-7918
info@orianachoir.com
www.orianachoir.com

● Orpheus Choir of Toronto
Orpheus seeks to celebrate the transformational power of choral music as an agent of social change and a passionate medium of artistic expression. The 65-voice choir, under artistic director Robert Cooper, champions the new and unusual in choral performance, commissioning and introducing new works and performing overlooked masterpieces. Working frequently with living composers and singing a wide range of repertoire styles in concerts with high production values, Orpheus has introduced audiences to many accessible works from leading contemporary composers. Orpheus supports young emerging vocal talent through its highly respected Sidgwick Scholars Program and Vocal Apprentice Program for high school singers. We welcome enthusiastic singers for an “expect something different” experience.
HELEN COXON
416-530-4428
info@orpheuschoirtoronto.com
www.orpheuschoirtoronto.com

● Pax Christi Chorale
Pax Christi Chorale delivers stirring performances with great polish and total conviction. Under the leadership of artistic director David Bowser, the award-winning choir aspires to build on its strengths and accomplishments to achieve new levels of performance and audience engagement. Collaborations with outstanding guest artists and partners give audiences and performers a deep appreciation for choral masterworks and new Canadian music. The Pax Christi Chamber Choir placed first in its category in Choral Canada’s 2017 national competition for amateur choirs. Pax Christi Chorale has moved its activities online for the 2020/21 season. We warmly welcome audience members and choristers from all backgrounds and walks of life. Visit our website for more information on audition and concert information.
CYNTHIA HAWKINS, INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
executedirector@paxchristichorale.org
www.paxchristichorale.org

● Peterborough Singers
The Peterborough Singers was founded in 1993 under the energetic and creative leadership of director Sydney Birrell. We are an auditioned 100-voice choir of adults and youth which attracts members and audience from Peterborough, the Kawarthas, and around the Lakeshore. We are committed to featuring new talent and each season introduce one or more emerging soloists. We perform four concerts each year: a Yuletide concert, Handel’s Messiah, an oratorio, and one concert dedicated to music outside the box of regular classical programming. This season we will be performing the songs of Paul Simon, and we are fortunate to have a director, choir members, and friends who are adept at musical arrangement. Rehearsals are held Wednesday evenings from September to May in Peterborough. Auditions take place in May and September.
PEG MCCRACKEN
705-745-1820
singers@peterboroughsingers.com
www.peterboroughsingers.com

● Resonance
Founded in 2016, Resonance is the newest member to the Mississauga Festival Choir family directed by award-winning conductor, Bob Anderson. Resonance is a non-auditioned choir for youth and young adults ages 15 to 28. Each season they have performed their own concert, as well as collaborating in concerts with several choirs and ensembles around the Greater Toronto Area. Their most recent performances were with the Toronto Symphony, the Mississauga Symphony, A Few Good Men, and the Elmer Iseler Singers. For information visit their website.
JENNY JOHNSTON
416-986-5537
choiradmin@mfchoir.com
resonance.mfchoir.com

● Schola Magdalena
Schola Magdalena is a six-voice ensemble singing medieval polyphony, chant, and new music for women’s voices. Ensemble-in-residence at the Church of Saint Mary Magdalene, Toronto, we have recorded two CDs (available on iTunes) and have toured from Chicago to Chicoutimi, from Waterloo to Waupoos. Our past season centred around touring and holding workshops with amateur singers interested in learning about Gregorian chant and the music of Hildegard von Bingen. In the coming year, we look forward to a return to Prince Edward County. For details, please visit our website, our Facebook page, or check out our Bravo Video on YouTube.
STEPHANIE MARTIN
416-236-9421
smartins@yorku.ca
www.scholamagdalena.ca

● Serenata Singers
Serenata Singers is a 60-voice, four-part community seniors’ choir who rehearse during the day. This fall we begin our 45th year, under the guidance of our accomplished Choral Director, Leanne Piller. Serenata’s repertoire covers a wide
range of music, including classical, show tunes, pop, and folk. Traditionally, rehearsals are held on Wednesday mornings from September to May at Wilmar Heights Centre, 963 Pharmacy Ave., Scarborough. Currently, due to COVID-19, our plan is for rehearsals to continue in the fall in a virtual format. When it is safe to do so, we will return to choral singing in person. Anyone interested in joining the choir is encouraged to visit our website for further information.

Charlotte Judd
charlotte.judd55@gmail.com
www.serenasingers.ca

Shevchenko Choir

The Shevchenko Choir, with the Toronto Mandolin Orchestra, constitutes the Shevchenko Musical Ensemble. Although its roots lie in the Ukrainian community, through its 70-year history, the choir has evolved into a multicultural choir with a repertoire of folk songs and classical works reflecting the diversity of our society. The choir presents an annual choral concert, participates in ‘Singing Together’ with other community choirs and appears with the Toronto Mandolin Orchestra as part of the full ensemble.

A non-audition choir, it rehearses Sunday mornings (10am to 12pm) at Borochov Centre, 272 Cossell Ave. Both choir and orchestra are under the artistic direction of Alexander Veprinskiy, graduate of the Lviv Conservatory of Ukraine.

ALEXANDER VEPRINSKIY
905-763-7516
veprinskiy9@hotmail.com
www.shevchenkomusic.com

Society of Singers

The Society of Singers is a non-auditioned SATB choir that rehearses Wednesdays from 1pm to 3pm at Blythwood Road Church (80 Blythwood Rd.). Under the direction of pianist/composer Peter Ness, we sing a wide repertoire of music ranging from classical hymns to traditional ballads to show tunes to swing numbers. We perform one or two afternoon concerts per month at Toronto seniors’ residences, where we are always much appreciated. If you love to sing and are looking for a happy, relaxed choir that is still serious about music, you are warmly invited to drop in to any Wednesday rehearsal or to contact us (by email, preferably) for more information.

SOCIETY OF SINGERS
647-202-1800
societyofsingers@gmail.com
www.societyofsingers.ca

SoundCrowd

SoundCrowd (www.soundcrowd.ca), Toronto’s first large-scale a cappella ensemble, is the brainchild of artistic director Scott Pietrangelo. The group made its concert debut in 2016 alongside former Barenaked Ladies front-man Steven Page at Toronto’s Danforth Music Hall. Since then, it has been featured guests on a national TV show (The Social), created viral music videos, appeared together with other notable Toronto-based a cappella groups (Cadence, Countermeasure, Retrocity), sang backup for Jonathan Antoine (Britain’s Got Talent), opened for Disney’s a cappella sensation DCappella, and performed at Carnegie Hall with choirs from around the world under the direction of Deke Sharon (Pitch Perfect, The Sing Off). SoundCrowd is releasing its debut album, All Voice No Limits on June 13, 2020.

SCOTT PIETRANGELO
647-970-1397
info@soundcrowd.ca
www.soundcrowd.ca

St. James Town Children’s Choir

We’re online! St. James Town Children’s Choir (SJTCC) welcomes kids in grades 1 and up, from St. James Town and surrounding area. Additionally, we offer instruction in piano, violin, ukulele and singing. Choir and Ukulele choir is free. Private lessons fees scaled to income. ROTM artistic staff are all professional musicians, and have extensive experience working with children’s choirs and instrumental instruction. Over the years, the SJTCC has enjoyed many opportunities to perform in our community and throughout the city. SJTCC has sung with professional choirs, at sports events, in senior’s facilities, in schools and community events, and, recently, collaborated with The Canadian Opera Company in its Hansel & Gretel opera. The repertoire is secular, diverse, inclusive, fun and musically enriching.

VIRGINIA EVOY
416-421-8518
ed.rotm@gmail.com
www.reachingoutthroughmusic.org

St. Michael’s Choir School

Since 1937, St. Michael’s Choir School has served the Archdiocese of Toronto by educating and training the boys’ choirs that sing every weekend at St. Michael’s Cathedral. Founded by Monsignor J.E. Ronan, St. Michael’s Choir School is unique in offering both an enriched academic program, including extended French instruction, integrated with a lively ministry of sacred music. Choirs from St. Michael’s Choir School perform annually on tour and at many local concerts and events. During the school year, they sing three weekly Masses at St. Michael’s Cathedral. School alumni are active in Toronto and beyond, performing in choral groups, operas and more. St. Michael’s Choir School accepts boys Grades 3 to 12. For audition information please visit www.smcs.on.ca/auditions or contact Wanda Thorne at admissions@smcs.on.ca.

WANDA THORNE
647-232-5598
thorne@smcs.on.ca
www.smcs.on.ca

Tempus Choral Society

Tempus Choral Society is a very welcoming, 100-voice SATB un-auditioned community choir based in Oakville, led by director Brian Turnbull. Our repertoire encompasses contemporary, Broadway, Great American Songbook, gospel, classical and jazz. Last year, we celebrated our 20th anniversary. We love to travel and to reach out to our community. Tempus has sung Handel’s Messiah at Lincoln Center, performed Vaughan Williams’ Dona Nobis Pacem at Carnegie Hall, part of an international choir of auditioned singers. In 2015, Tempus4Us (our 60-voice children’s choir) and Tempus Jazz Choir were formed, with help from an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant. After a successful 2018 European singing tour, we look forward to another adventure soon. New members are heartily welcomed in September and January; please visit our website.
TBCYC, founded in 2006 by artistic director Bronwen Low, with drama instructor Joanne Mitchell, has grown from a membership of 30 to over 150 children and youth (JK and up) from all over Scarborough and Toronto’s East End. TBCYC welcomes all, regardless of ability, offering a high quality musical and dramatic experience within an atmosphere of fun and hard work. Each year, choristers are involved in concerts and events throughout the city. In the spring, they perform a fully staged musical production at a professional theatre. Select past shows: Shrek Jr, Wizard of Oz, Alice in Wonderland, Oliver, and Fame. Past touring highlights include singing in Nashville at the Grand Ole Opry, the 2016 DCINY festival performance at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center as part of the 2019 Serenade Choral Festival in Washington, D.C.

The Toronto Choral Society

The Toronto Choral Society (TCS) was founded in 1845, to foster a positive musical environment that enables members to learn and develop both musical ability and choral repertoire. The TCS aims to be an integral part of the community, presenting works from traditional choral repertoire while exploring music of our multicultural nation. We have performed our last three Christmas Concerts to sold out audiences at Koerner Hall. Our rehearsals begin in September and continue until May on Wednesday nights 7:30pm to 9:30pm at Eastminster United Church, 310 Danforth Ave. (Due to current conditions our 2020 season will rehearse on a virtual platform). We would, under normal conditions, be performing a minimum of 3 concerts a year. (Again this year TBD). If you would like more information please go to our website.

Toronto Classical Singers

Toronto Classical Singers is the only choir in the country dedicated exclusively to the great choral/orchestral repertoire. Now in its 29th season, the organization continues to celebrate and contribute to the glorious tradition of choral music in Canada. Known for its unique musical point-of-view, the choir features lesser-known and rarely performed pieces as well as the beloved vocal/orchestral repertoire. Led by founding conductor Jurgen Petrenko, the choir has a long-standing partnership with Talisker Players who accompany the choir in their presentations of the great choral masterpieces. Auditions are usually held in September however, this year we are inviting interested singers to contact us through our website. When we can resume our rehearsal/production schedule, our audition coordinator will be in touch.

Toronto Concert Choir

The Toronto Concert Choir is a reincarnation of the Oakham House Choir, which was based at Ryerson University for 35 years. Like its predecessor, it will specialize in large-scale choral masterpieces and will be accompanied by the Toronto Sinfonietta chamber orchestra. We hope that our first major concert after the pandemic, at Knox Presbyterian Church, will feature Mendelssohn’s Elijah. We will also be performing on campus for the Ryerson community. Membership, which will number about 90, will be open to Ryerson students, alumni, faculty and staff, as well as to singers from outside the university. The choir will be led by its founding music director, Matthew Jaskiewicz. For more details, please visit our website. Experienced choristers are invited to contact us by e-mail for information about openings.

The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2019 and plans to continue sharing great choral music throughout 2020/21 and the pandemic – starting with online programming and adding in-person opportunities when health and safety permit. The 100-voice choir includes a professional core, auditioned volunteers, and apprentices (aged 17 to 22). Spring and Fall 2020 see choristers involved in virtual choir projects and virtual choir and orchestra projects. For the 2020/21 season, the Choir is under the artistic leadership of Associate Conductor Simon Rivard. The Choir’s international search for a new artistic director is temporarily on hold during the pandemic.

Toronto Children’s Chorus

In 2020/21, the award-winning Toronto Children’s Chorus marks its 43rd concert season and its 14th year under artistic director Elise Bradley, MNZM. The Chorus comprises a family of choirs: KinderNotes for children aged 3 to 6 (no audition required), four Training Choir levels, Main Choir (five ensembles) and Toronto Youth Choir (ages 16 to 30). The Chorus welcomes singers at its Midtown and North York locations. Each year, more than 400 choristers develop skills in vocal technique, sight-singing, music theory and performance. The Main Choir offers master classes, recording and touring opportunities, and guest performance experiences, including with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Tafelmusik and Opera Atelier. BONNIE O’SULLIVAN 416-932-8666 x225 bonnie@torontochildrenschorus.com www.torontochildrenschorus.com

The Toronto Choral Society

The Toronto Choral Society (TCS) was founded in 1845, to foster a positive musical environment that enables members to learn and develop both musical ability and choral repertoire. The TCS aims to be an integral part of the community, presenting works from traditional choral repertoire while exploring music of our multicultural nation. We have performed our last three Christmas Concerts to sold out audiences at Koerner Hall. Our rehearsals begin in September and continue until May on Wednesday nights 7:30pm to 9:30pm at Eastminster United Church, 310 Danforth Ave. (Due to current conditions our 2020 season will rehearse on a virtual platform). We would, under normal conditions, be performing a minimum of 3 concerts a year. (Again this year TBD). If you would like more information please go to our website.
**The Toronto Welsh Male Voice Choir**

The Toronto Welsh Male Voice Choir (TWMVC) was established in 1995 when its founding member and first president, Gwyn Roberts, gathered together a group of like-minded individuals of Welsh heritage, who sought to kindle the spirit of Traditional Welsh Male Voice singing in their adopted country. The TWMVC proudly draws on the great Welsh tradition of singing hymns and songs born of the mountains and valleys of Wales. At the same time it emphasizes a multicultural context in its broad repertoire which also includes spirituals; operatic arias, Canadian folk songs as well as Broadway show tunes and contemporary music. Our blend of traditional and contemporary music, all sung off book in accordance with tradition, appeals to a broad audience.

With the current situation we all have now, our concerts have been put on hold, until we receive clearance to resume our concert schedule. Please visit our website www.welshchoir.ca for all updated information. We are seeking new members to join.

ALAN SADEGURSKY
647-389-8084
alansadegursky@yahoo.ca
www.welshchoir.ca

**Upper Canada Choristers**

The Upper Canada Choristers is a mixed-voice community choir with a diverse membership that intertwines fun with the commitment to musical excellence and vibrant community service. Performances feature collaborations with international choirs, local children's choirs, and professional instrumentalists and singers. Cantemos is an auditioned a cappella Latin ensemble within UCC. Lead by Artistic Director, Laurie Evan Fraser, the choirs perform three diverse choral programs annually. Weekly rehearsals for the Main Choir are Monday evenings from 7:30–9:30 PM at Grace Church on-the-Hill, 300 Lonsdale Rd. Cantemos rehearses on Saturday mornings from 10:30am to 12:30pm at 2700 Bathurst Street. The choirs sing up to 20 concerts annually in a variety of community venues.

LAURIE EVAN FRASER,
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
416-256-3809
lefe@uppercanadachoristers.org
www.uppercanadachoristers.org

**Vesnivka Choir**

Vesnivka Choir, established in 1965 by founding artistic director Halyna Kvitka Kondracki, is an award-winning women's ensemble whose repertoire consists of Ukrainian liturgical, classical, contemporary and traditional folk music. The choir’s regular concert season comprises three major concerts, one of which is an annual Christmas concert. Vesnivka, together with its partner the Toronto Ukrainian Male Chamber Choir (TUMCC), often accompanied by local professional musicians. The choir also sings Christmas and Easter Liturgies. Singers are welcome; rehearsals on Tuesdays, 7:15pm to 9:15pm (4 Bellwoods Ave., Toronto). Male singers are welcome to join TUMCC who rehearse on Mondays, 7:30pm to 9pm (2445 Bloor St. W., Toronto). Concert schedule, rehearsal times and venues all subject to change during COVID-19 pandemic.

NYKOLA PARZEI
416-246-9880
lkonorowsky@gmail.com
www-vesnivka.com

**Victoria Scholars Men’s Choral Ensemble**

A past winner of the Canada Council Healey Willan Grand Prize, CBC Radio National Competition for Amateur Choirs, and one of Canada’s finest male choral ensembles, the Victoria Scholars treat an audience to a wide range of music, from Medieval plainchant and works from the baroque, renaissance and romantic eras through to contemporary and newly commissioned works from some of Canada’s best-known composers. Along with an annual three-concert series in Toronto, the Scholars have toured nationally/internationally, performed with international vocal soloists, and have released five acclaimed recordings, including most recently, “Songs of Love”. If you are an experienced musician with excellent sight reading abilities and would like to join us, please contact us. For updates on the upcoming season, please check our website.

JERZY CICHOCKI
416-476-4978
admin@victoriascholars.ca
www.victoriascholars.ca

**VIVA Singers Toronto**

VIVA is a vibrant community of singers and educators committed to equity, excellence, and the belief that every voice matters. VIVA empowers children and adult singers in seven choirs through innovative choral pedagogy and performance experiences. Vital choir components highlight VIVA’s philosophy: the TD Inclusion Program for singers with disabilities; and the Choral Mentoring & Leadership Program for aspiring conductor-educators.

VIVA’s youth choruses include: Preparatory (ages 4-6), Junior (ages 6-10), Main (ages 9-16), and Senior Treble (ages 13-16). The Every Voice Matters Chorus welcomes teens and adults with disabilities. Adult choirs include the Community Choir (SATB; non-auditioned) and Chamber Singers (SATB; auditioned). Auditions and assessments are held regularly throughout the year.

CHARLOTTE BURRAGE
416-788-8482
info@vivayouthsingers.com
www.vivashingertosronto.com

**Village Voices**

We are a community choir in Markham. Village Voices has served the community for 31 years. It is an SATB non-auditioned choir of approximately 55 members. The choir gives two concerts a year, in December and May. In addition, we also do outreach concerts at seniors’ residences in Markham and surrounding areas. Our repertoire comprises works of contemporary Canadian/North American composers, such as Ola Gjeilo, Eleanor Daley, Jake Runstead, Jeff Smallman, etc., as well as old favourites. We rehearse once a week from September to May at Markham’s United Presbyterian Church under the baton of our music director, Shirley Madden. More information is available on our website or by email.

DEB YOUNG
905-294-7373
info@villagevoices.ca
www.villagevoices.ca
The WholeNote 2020/21 CANARY PAGES DIRECTORY

**VoCA Chorus of Toronto**

The VOCA Chorus of Toronto is a dynamic, auditioned ensemble which performs eclectic repertoire (including arrangements by our artistic director, Jenny Crober) in collaboration with some of Canada’s finest artists. Each season consists of two major concerts, cabarets and workshops with guest clinicians, as well as community performances. Rehearsals are held on Monday evenings at Eastminster United, near Chester subway. We hope to be presenting our “Star Songs” concert program (featuring a world premiere by Cree composer Andrew Balfour, along with works by Halley, Lauridsen, Daley and others) at both Roy Thomson Hall (part of RTH’s Noon Hour Choir and Organ Series) and at Eastminster United. Director: Jenny Crober. Accompanist: Elizabeth Acker. Guests: Colleen Allen, sax; Shawn Grenke, organ; Jamie Drake, percussion.

JENNY CROBER
416-931-8224
crober.best@gmail.com
www.vo cachorus.ca

**Voices Rock Canada**

We have a rock choir for everyone! Started as a children’s choir, VRC has grown to include 2 adult choirs, 3 children’s locations, a female physician’s choir and a senior’s daytime program. Since March 2020, we have had a very active on-line rehearsal presence through Zoom. This has (and will) include rehearsals to tracks, musicianship classes, fun karaoke nights and creating virtual videos, one of which has gone viral. We continually monitor the pandemic situation and have 2 options moving forward for our choirs. The most heart-warming thing about our choirs is the community - we are an inclusive, warm and loving group. As a result of this, 95% of our choir re-registered for the Fall. We truly are rock choirs for the 21st Century - ages 9-99! Join Us today! Our artistic director is Anthony Bastianon.

CHERYL BOWER
416-833-4431
ceryl@cherylbower.com
www.voicesrockcanada.com

**West Toronto Community Choir**

Entering into its 25th season, Voices Chamber Choir has firmly established itself as one of Toronto’s finest chamber choirs. The choir has received awards and recognition from across Canada and at an International Competition. As part of our anniversary season, the choir will reprise our very first Christmas program on December 12, 2020. Antonio Caldara’s *Stabat Mater* will be performed for our Lenten presentation on March 27, 2021. The season will close with J. S. Bach’s monumental work *Mass in B minor* with orchestra and soloists on May 29, 2021. Voices rehearsals are on Wednesday evenings from 7:30pm to 10:00pm at St. Thomas’s Church, 383 Huron Street, Toronto. Auditions are available throughout the year. Apprentice conductor program is also available.

RON CHEUNG
416-519-0528
voiceschamberchoir@yahoo.ca
www.voiceschoir.com

**Voices Rock Canada**

We have a rock choir for everyone! Started as a children’s choir, VRC has grown to include 2 adult choirs, 3 children’s locations, a female physician’s choir and a senior’s daytime program. Since March 2020, we have had a very active on-line rehearsal presence through Zoom. This has (and will) include rehearsals to tracks, musicianship classes, fun karaoke nights and creating virtual videos, one of which has gone viral. We continually monitor the pandemic situation and have 2 options moving forward for our choirs. The most heart-warming thing about our choirs is the community - we are an inclusive, warm and loving group. As a result of this, 95% of our choir re-registered for the Fall. We truly are rock choirs for the 21st Century - ages 9-99! Join Us today! Our artistic director is Anthony Bastianon.

CHERYL BOWER
416-833-4431
ceryl@cherylbower.com
www.voicesrockcanada.com

**Young Voices Toronto**

Founded in 1986, Young Voices Toronto is the Children’s Choir-in-Residence U of T, led by artistic director Maria Conkey - experienced conductor, clinician, and pedagogue. YVT instills the joy of singing and builds confidence in children, by teaching techniques of healthy singing and rudiments of music. We engage choristers through diverse repertoire, movement and interaction, infusing performance with meaning that connects to their hearts and audiences. YVT’s motto ‘More Than Music’ inspires and educates children musically while building a community beyond singing. YVT’s senior ensemble tours annually and travelled to Germany and Austria in July 2019. Choristers range in age from 4 to 18. Vocal placements begin at age 7. There are five choir levels. Rehearsals take place weekly on Tuesday and/or Thursday in the Bloor West area.

GENA NORBURY
416-762-0657
manager@youngvoicestoronto.com
www.youngvoicestoronto.com

Thank you for taking a gander at this year’s Canaries!

If you are looking for a specific group of songbirds, visit our directory online, at thewholenote.com/canary where you can do more browsing, or conduct a more focused search – by genre, geography, audition type, gender, age range, skill level and more.
Jazz Notes

PANDAMIT!

STEVE WALLACE

It’s almost impossible to believe that this most Twilight Zone of summers is rapidly drawing to a close. How did September come so fast despite many of us enduring so many long, empty and isolated days? Days upon days of not working, of not going out much save when necessary, of not seeing people, except on a computer screen or in brief “Dare we?” encounters. Indeed, with everything still pretty much upside down and our sense of normalcy and time in tatters, it’s hard to even say what the passing of summer means anymore. More on this later, but it reminds me of one of the many wonderfully droll lines from the great relief pitcher Dan Quisenberry: “I’ve seen the future; it’s a lot like the present, only longer.”

A Blizzard of Cancellations

In the old days, during inevitable patches when work was slow (we didn’t know what slow was), musicians would jokingly say “I looked in my gig book the other day and got snow blind” – as in too many blank, white squares, a blizzard of empty dates. It’s like that now, only the vast white spaces are interspersed with dates that have been scratched out, looking like little scruffs of dirt poking through the snow. And COVID-19 has brought a new gig convention: the courtesy cancellation, when a bandleader calls or emails the other musicians they’d booked on a job to tell them it’s been cancelled.

This has happened so often between March and well into the fall that we all just (rightly) assume that every gig is off, but it’s still the considerate thing to do, plus it gives everyone a chance to commiserate and indulge in some gallows humour. As in, “You thought you were busy? I’ve cancelled way more gigs than you!” And even rare new bookings have to be taken with a large grain of salt. Recently my old friend Georgia Ambros called to hire me along with guitarist Reg Schwager to play at her 85th birthday party on August 29. She explained that it would be held outside in the back courtyard of her building and that it would be small, with people spread out. I was delighted to hear from her and accepted. But a couple of weeks later she called saying she’d have to cancel because the other tenants were nervous about a gathering, and I wasn’t all that surprised. She offered to pay me anyway, bless her, but I flatly refused, saying we’d just have to do it later when things are safe.

Time On My Hands

For me personally, the unending Groundhog Day of life-with-COVID increased with my decision to retire on July 17 from the Law Society of Ontario, where I had worked in the Great Library (actually its real name) for nearly 29 years. (Yes, I finally stopped listening to the advice many have given me over the years after hearing my bass playing – “Don’t give up your day job.”) I’d been seriously mulling over retirement from the library for about a year, and as my long-suffering wife put it: “It only took a pandemic crisis for him to make up his mind.” I really enjoyed working in the august old place and somehow found a way to fit the jazz life into the straight workaday world. No wonder I’m a bit schizoid.

Now that my jazz life has been severely curtailed – along with everyone else’s – it may seem odd to decide to have even more time on my hands, but in the end I obeyed the almost palpable message that seemed to come from deep inside me: when push came to shove and the Great Librarians moved toward reopening, I just didn’t feel like doing it anymore. The four months off during lockdown were like a rehearsal for retirement and, while I generally hate to rehearse – it’s cheating, after all – I took to the free time like a duck to water.

Of course, as it has with so many aspects of life, the pandemic made the decision seem surreal – I was retiring from a place I hadn’t set foot in for four months. Normally there would have been a party, a chance to say goodbye to my colleagues, the ritual of cleaning out my desk of personal belongings and walking out the door for the last time. But there was none of that; it was as if I was retiring from….. thin air. And while it’s generally a good thing, retirement has made it even harder to tell what day it is: in a good week, every day is Saturday and in a bad one, every day is Monday.
Getting Back On the Horse

With even more free time I grew determined to be more active and was itching to play. As if reading my mind, drummer Mark Micklethwaite, who has taken John Sumner’s place in Mark Eisenman’s trio, emailed Merv (Eisenman) and me with a loose plan for doing some recording and maybe trying to drum up some work and touring in the future once it was safe. He had some good ideas and we all agreed that in the meantime we should get together to play and shake the cobwebs off at Merv’s house the following week. I looked forward to it, but with no small trepidation: I’d done some practising but hadn’t played with anybody for real since early March. Would I be up to it? Would my softer hands do what I wanted them to? Would my back hold up? The morning of, putting the cover on the bass, carrying it out of the house and loading it in the car – which I’ve done countless times – seemed weirdly foreign, like I was sleepwalking.

After exchanging greetings and some jazz banter, the music began without any planning or so much as a word. Mark Micklethwaite simply started playing time with brushes at a medium tempo and I fell in, walking a blues in – what else? - B-flat. Eisenman was nowhere near the piano so the two of us just continued swinging until Mark joined us at the top of a chorus; then off we sailed. We must have played that blues for 10 or 11 minutes, but nobody was counting. In fact, as is always the case when jazz players are really locked in and concentrating, really listening to one another and building, the notion of a clock simply disappeared. It felt just great to be playing with these two again; there’s an unspeakable musical consensus amongst us, a trust which I had deeply missed. And even without any people listening, there was sweat and intensity, everyone was playing their best because we hadn’t done it for so long, we were almost afraid of failing. It was as if someone had flipped a switch or plugged the jazz intravenous into our veins after months off; it was the most satisfying musical experience I’d had in a long time.

Mind you, a medium blues in B-flat is relatively simple, but on the other hand its starkness means there’s nowhere to hide, especially in a trio, and I felt like we passed the test. Perhaps more importantly, it was fun, a lot more fun than practising. It wasn’t all smooth sailing for me, though, I noticed definite signs of rust and fatigue as we played. We’d lost some speed and dexterity and sometimes I stumbled on solos when my fingers couldn’t quite catch up to my ideas, or vice versa. I realized I needed to practise more and with greater intensity, but now I had the motivation to do so.

We’ve played once a week ever since but switched locales when John and Patti Loach generously offered their house as a venue. It’s a great place to play with a terrific piano and good acoustics, plus John wanted to experiment with recording the drums, as most of the recording he’s done hasn’t involved drummers. It helps a lot that Micklethwaite is such a sensitive player with good dynamic control.

John also had some video cameras set up and has posted some of the videos on YouTube. Here’s one of our earlier efforts, Cherokee, which has the advantage of no camera coverage of the bassist, who has a face made for radio and a rear end made for a wide-angle lens:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=oR1okJACL_L

Returning to the coming end of summer... it used to mean going back to school and still does, sort of. And there’s the rub. With everything still up in the air and the real possibility of a surge in the virus coming with flu season; and with cooler weather on top of a bunch of people suddenly in close proximity again, the return to school is fraught with anxiety and uncertainty, to say the least. I’ll be teaching an ensemble and some private lessons again at U of T, which, at least in the jazz department has left the choice of in-person or virtual teaching up to individuals. Most of the classes will be taught online, but it’s trickier with private lessons and especially ensembles. I’m grappling with the decision and for now have opted for teaching my ensemble and the two private students who aren’t bassists in person, and the two bass students online. This could all change suddenly if things get worse so I’m negotiating the never-ending technological learning curve as a back-up plan. Old dog, new tricks.

Pandamit

The title for this article came about as follows: Back in late May there was a knock on my door and when I opened it I was very pleasantly surprised to see Pat Williams, a staunch jazz fan and friend for many years. It was great to see her and I asked her in but she demurred, saying “I’m parked illegally across the street and I have a lot more of these to deliver,” handing me a black T-shirt with PANDAMIT written in big block letters. It broke me up and she said “Georgia Ambros had them made up for radio and a rear end made for a wide-angle lens:

Toronto bassist Steve Wallace writes a blog called “Steve Wallace jazz, baseball, life and other ephemera” which can be accessed at Wallace-bass.com. Aside from the topics mentioned, he sometimes writes about movies and food.
Early Music

How to Get Back to the Concert Hall?
Adapt. Adapt. Adapt.

MATTHEW WHITFIELD

If the past seven months have taught us anything, it might be that the post-COVID world will move at a different pace than that which came before. Everyday decisions previously motivated by personal, social, and economic factors are now tempered by input from public health officials and other medical professionals attempting to contain and control the transmission of this new and deadly pathogen, resulting in exceedingly cautious and temporally conservative steps forward that have made dining at a restaurant feel like a momentous occasion. While social interactions and public spaces continue to reopen, at least for the time being, those things that were previously taken for granted and assumed to be perpetual have been reframed by the pandemic and forced to undergo a societal reevaluation through a new kind of cost-benefit analysis.

For public performers and those who make their living within arts organizations, these public health interventions have appeared as doomsday prophecies, requiring unprecedented quick action and the changing of entire business models in mere weeks or months. Although soloists and smaller groups are able to pivot relatively quickly and efficiently, larger organizations – such as orchestras – face a more daunting challenge, having to implement novel guidelines and codes of conduct that ensure the safety of their performers and prospective audiences as the possibility of reopening draws closer. As September approaches and new seasons launch, how are arts organizations grappling with, and managing, these new and essential factors?

Tracking Tafelmusik’s Turnaround

Tafelmusik is the go-to ensemble for many early music fans in Toronto, combining scholarly research and historically informed knowledge with cutting-edge programming and decidedly modern presentations. When the world shut down in March, the orchestra quickly downsized and modified its programming by cancelling the remainder of its in-person season and starting Tafelmusik@Home, a set of concerts performed by core members of the orchestra and hosted virtually from their salons and living rooms. Since then, a number of other programs have been put in place and are ready to launch this fall, including digital concerts and in-depth panel discussions. According to a recent media release, the 2020/2021 season, "headlined by a combination of pre-recorded and livestreamed programs that will be rehearsed and performed according to current public health guidelines, offers the beauty of Tafelmusik concerts while ensuring the health and safety of musicians and audiences."

Part of this process of adaptation involves that skill for which Tafelmusik has become renowned: finding innovative and original ways of moving ahead by looking back in time. In the same media release quoted above, the orchestra announces that they will consider returning to live-audience concerts in January 2021, a huge step forward and a significant move towards the old normal that requires immense flexibility from the entire organization. A significant part of this flexibility is thorough, multifaceted preparation, which the orchestra is currently undertaking through the purchasing of PPE, communicating with its musicians, and creating a series of...
internal protocols that will guide the orchestra through its stages of reopening.

According to Kehoe, “Our main-stage series programs between February and May 2021 as originally announced in March remain largely unchanged, although we are looking into back-up concerts for filming/recording should live concerts still not be prudent and given challenges of working with larger ensembles or non-local artists. Our goal is to be as flexible as possible. When we made the decision to reimagine the 20/21 season, we based our discussions on three key criteria: [that] whatever we did would protect the health and safety of our musicians, staff and patrons; [that] we would comply with government public health and safety regulations; and [that] we would respect our patrons and community by providing them with access to the beauty and joy of music, even when in-person concerts aren’t possible. We’ll adapt as we can to ensure our artists can work and our art endures.”

Perusing Tafelmusik’s fall brochure, one may be forgiven for believing that circumstances have already returned to the way they were last season, for the programming is as characteristically vibrant and enticing as any other year. Mozart Together, scheduled to be streamed on October 1, will be the first time that the orchestra’s musicians perform on stage together since March and will undoubtedly be an emotional and stirring season debut. Shortly after, on October 22, Passions of the Soul explores the heights and depths of the early music canon through works by Bach, Locatelli, Lalande and Telemann, while A Tafelmusik Christmas, on December 10, promises choruses and chorales from seasonal favourites, including Bach’s Christmas Oratorio and Handel’s Messiah.

As for patrons...

At this point in the column I usually insert a paragraph encouraging you, the reader and audience member, to consider attending some of the concerts contained in this issue of The WholeNote, and this month is no different. With so much incredible programming more readily accessible than ever before, you can enjoy world-class live music from the comfort of your home and every ticket, currently virtual but eventually in-person, makes a concrete and profound difference to the stability of arts organizations and those who work within them. Reviewing Tafelmusik’s schedule over the next three months, it appears that the orchestra is capable of handling the pandemic’s challenges quickly, effectively and efficiently – but such drastic adaptation is not without some difficulties. “While it may appear that Tafelmusik has escaped the current situation relatively unscathed, it is far from business as usual within our organization,” said Kehoe. “Layoffs, reduced work schedules and other sacrifices have been made by artists and staff alike so that we may remain stable for the next 12 months.”

“Patrons who participate during this crucial season will be supporting the welfare of our artists and staff, ensure wider community access to the comfort of music in these deeply unsettling times, and help to ensure Tafelmusik’s survival into the future. We want to take a moment to recognize the support of our subscribers and donors, who are the foundation upon which we are building this new future. In a time of great challenge, they have chosen to put their faith in us, our team, our artists, and our music. We are deeply grateful for their support.”

Matthew Whitfield is a Toronto-based harpsichordist and organist.
Lessons Learned from the CEE’s COVID-Era Experiences

DAVID JAEGER

A significant event in the history of the Canadian Electronic Ensemble (CEE) took place during the last week of February, 2020: the nearly 50-year-old ensemble was engaged by Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) School of Music for a four-day residency at their Pittsburgh campus. It was one of the most ambitious and impactful tours in the long history of the CEE, a live-electronic music group that Jim Montgomery and I co-founded in 1971, together with David Grimes, who left in 1986, and the late Larry Lake (1943 – 2013) The current membership includes violinist, synthesist, composer Rose Bolton; pianist, synthesist, composer John Kameel Farah; synthesist and composer Paul Stillwell; synthesist and composer David Sutherland, as well as Jim and me. The significance of the residency, which felt at the time like it was opening up new audiences, soon revealed itself as having prepared the CEE members for a creative path through a pandemic.

The residency was organized by CMU assistant professor of Musicology, Alexa Woloshyn, who is Canadian. She created a plan that had CEE members working closely with CMU students in masterclasses, lecture demonstrations, composition workshops, and of course, live performance. “Pittsburgh and CMU have vibrant electronic music communities,” said Woloshyn. “I thought it would be great to learn from the CEE’s almost 50 years of experience in electronic sound-making and collective improvisation. The week was energizing for the students. I witnessed new and renewed interest in improvisation, modular synthesis, electronic composition and collaboration.”

Woloshyn partnered with several of her CMU colleagues, including composer Jesse Stiles, professor of Sound Media, who directs an innovative student performance group known as the Exploded Ensemble that also works in the live-electronic music medium. The two ensembles rehearsed together and it became clear from the outset that both groups operated with similar and compatible procedures and musical languages. Stiles and Woloshyn had the idea to invite the extraordinary violinist and composer Pauline Kim Harris to join in the sessions.

Stiles wrote, “CEE visited Exploded Ensemble rehearsals several times to share their methodologies for electronic sound-making as well as their approach to improvised performance. They would set up their various mountains of rigs beside those of Exploded Ensemble and very quickly a vast neural network of audio and control cables sprawled across our rehearsal space. With roughly 20 musicians blasting out electronic sound it would be easy for matters to devolve into sonic chaos – but the Canadians were able to guide the students that comprise Exploded Ensemble through a thoughtful approach to performance that balanced listening and responding. This yielded

Shape the future of Soundstreams as an

YOUR FREE INSIDER MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES:
• Access to tickets for any future in-person shows before the general public
• Invites to staff-led digital town halls
• Sneak Peeks into future shows from Artistic Director Lawrence Cherney

Sign up for free today at soundstreams.ca/insider
performances with exhilarating dynamics that swept between quiet fields of spatialized chirps and squeaks to tremendous waves of drone and thrilling thunderous noise. A few days later, when the students walked onstage with CEE and Pauline, they did so with confidence and eager excitement. That concert was one of the finest performances in which Exploded Ensemble had ever participated. "At that final concert, the two ensembles played together, and the CEE performed two of its own works, including a homage to Larry Lake, in which the CEE improvised variations on a signature Lake gesture. Lake's Psalm for solo oboe and electronic tracks was performed by oboist Hanna Senft, a gifted graduate student. And the impressive undergraduate violinist Sara Frankel delivered a brilliant performance of my Sarabande for viola and live electronics. We departed Pittsburgh on February 28 feeling gratified that we had left a positive impression with the students and buoyed with the connection our music had made. Paul Stillwell said, “The success of our recent trip to Carnegie Mellon University shows that we are relevant to both longtime fans of electronic music and younger students of the craft.”

Just a few days after our return to Toronto, we learned that the CEE was the last foreign group to be allowed to visit the CMU campus, as international borders began to harden, and then to close. But the feeling of such a fabulous visit lingered with us, and with it, a sort of creative momentum. Jim Montgomery wrote in his blog on the CEE website, “As the reality of social isolation and physical distancing set in, we decided to try doing some music while maintaining our isolation. The result: the Pass the Track (PtT) project.”

**Building on the buzz – “Pass the Track”**

John Kameel Farah, who has had a thriving international solo career, describes what happened: “I felt unable to make solo music because of the stress and isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, which left me feeling very little creative inspiration. I thought maybe the answer would be instead to be creative in a collaboration, so I asked Paul Stillwell to send me some electronic sounds to work with. He sent me a beautiful synth drone and I added piano over it. Then we passed it to other members of the CEE and each added another layer. After that was done, we had enjoyed it so much that we thought to do more tracks, but with each starting with a different person, each adding in a different sequence. Each got the chance to be first, last and in the middle.

The biggest challenge, if you were a ‘starter’ was to try to leave enough musical space so that three or four musicians could make a meaningful contribution without feeling the space had already been taken up, or without the whole thing becoming an overwhelming cacophony.”

Rose Bolton further pointed out that, in the collaborative method we used, “The process of layering on tracks revealed that the person who puts down the first track in the piece, often sets the tone, shape and sound of each movement. So how each movement sounds, is greatly affected by the musical sensibility and choices that the first person has done.”

As accustomed as the CEE members were to collective composition, this was a fresh approach to collaboration, born out of the COVID lockdown, and the results were highly satisfying. It seemed that those few days on the CMU campus, steeped in intensive interaction with both students and faculty, had energized the CEE and had the members constantly engaged in demonstrating, analyzing and explaining how their music works. And it had helped to refresh the CEE’s own processes with a clarity among the members of the group, enabling us to immediately jump into the creative opportunity that the pandemic presented. No click tracks were needed as the PtT pieces came together – just the free flow of layer after layer of freshly minted electronic music that blended smoothly and naturally.

David Sutherland wrote, “When the CEE was founded, electronic music was pretty much confined to electronic music studios in universities. In 1978 Brian Eno released Music for Airports and called the music ambient. Today there are thousands of people around the world who make ambient electronic music and they have no connection to universities. This expansion of interest in electronic music has both created a much larger audience than existed in the 1970s and in some ways made our music less exceptional.

“What surprises and delights me is how well the recordings of the past stand up in today’s music, and how well we can still play together. In some of the later tracks, there is some really outstanding playing that would stand on its own compared to much of the music produced today. Then you have everyone else adding to the whole and, where I thought there wasn’t any more room, someone has found just the right thing. I find that quite remarkable and inspiring.”

There are now six episodes of PtT, pieces that range widely in terms of style, temperament and duration. Two of the pieces are accompanied with digital animation, the skillful work of Paul Stillwell, who also did the audio mixing. The full set of six pieces is due for fall release on the CEE’s Bandcamp page: thecee.bandcamp.com. People can have a preview right now, however, on YouTube at youtu.be/asGiXXoyC1o (PtT 1) and youtu.be/oD7QPvUcVU4 (PtT 5).

David Jaeger is a composer, producer and broadcaster based in Toronto.

John Kameel Farah

Rose Bolton

The biggest challenge, if you were a ‘starter’ was to try to leave enough musical space so that three or four musicians could make a meaningful contribution without feeling the space had already been taken up, or without the whole thing becoming an overwhelming cacophony.”

Rose Bolton further pointed out that, in the collaborative method we used, “The process of layering on tracks revealed that the person who puts down the first track in the piece, often sets the tone, shape and sound of each movement. So how each movement sounds, is greatly affected by the musical sensibility and choices that the first person has done.”

As accustomed as the CEE members were to collective composition, this was a fresh approach to collaboration, born out of the COVID lockdown, and the results were highly satisfying. It seemed that those few days on the CMU campus, steeped in intensive interaction with both students and faculty, had energized the CEE and had the members constantly engaged in demonstrating, analyzing and explaining how their music works. And it had helped to refresh the CEE’s own processes with a clarity among the members of the group, enabling us to immediately jump into the creative opportunity that the pandemic presented. No click tracks were needed as the PtT pieces came together – just the free flow of layer after layer of freshly minted electronic music that blended smoothly and naturally.

David Sutherland wrote, “When the CEE was founded, electronic music was pretty much confined to electronic music studios in universities. In 1978 Brian Eno released Music for Airports and called the music ambient. Today there are thousands of people around the world who make ambient electronic music and they have no connection to universities. This expansion of interest in electronic music has both created a much larger audience than existed in the 1970s and in some ways made our music less exceptional.

“What surprises and delights me is how well the recordings of the past stand up in today’s music, and how well we can still play together. In some of the later tracks, there is some really outstanding playing that would stand on its own compared to much of the music produced today. Then you have everyone else adding to the whole and, where I thought there wasn’t any more room, someone has found just the right thing. I find that quite remarkable and inspiring.”

There are now six episodes of PtT, pieces that range widely in terms of style, temperament and duration. Two of the pieces are accompanied with digital animation, the skillful work of Paul Stillwell, who also did the audio mixing. The full set of six pieces is due for fall release on the CEE’s Bandcamp page: thecee.bandcamp.com. People can have a preview right now, however, on YouTube at youtu.be/asGiXXoyC1o (PtT 1) and youtu.be/oD7QPvUcVU4 (PtT 5).

David Jaeger is a composer, producer and broadcaster based in Toronto.
In these days of limited performances, for this month’s column I decided to take up a suggestion made by my ever-inventive editor at The WholeNote, and write a story related to some aspect of my own creative work during this time.

On New Year’s Day of 2020, I had awoken with the inspiration to start a video-audio blog, something that is very new for me. Titled Earth Soundings, my original vision was that for each blog entry I would select a particular natural environment in which to take photos and videos, and then create the soundtrack in response to the images and my experiences in each specific environment. My overall intention in creating these short nature-based videos was to invite people to take a brief pause in their day to remember and attune to their connection with the Earth, the elements and all beings. A short time of reflection or meditation. At the heart of the project: my desire to contribute in one way toward the restoration of our relationship with nature, for I believe that one of the root causes behind our climate crisis is due to our cultural disconnect from nature.

The guideline I set for myself for these blog posts was to take the photo and video footage on specific days of celebration, connected to either cultural holidays or days on the Earth calendar related to the passing of seasons or phases of the moon. For the music I would select various members of the wider community to collaborate with me. Initially, I released these videos on my Facebook page Earth Soundings (facebook.com/wendalynvoice), again on days significant in the calendar. The videos are also available on my website soundingherwisdom.ca/earth-soundings.

Enter COVID-19
A key point to the story I’m telling here is to reflect a micro-view of what has happened in the larger story of the creative performing arts since isolation, lockdown and distancing have become a fact of life. How do we adapt when we don’t have the same freedom of movement and when live collaborations are not as easy as before? For the first two videos, I proceeded as envisioned, but by the time I was ready to create the next two, COVID-19 had arrived. I was now going to have to find a different approach to creating the soundtracks.

I had begun taking footage for my first video right away on January 1, often considered a turning-point day in people’s lives, with resolutions for change and new behaviour. I chose Grenadier Pond in High Park at sunset as my location and began work creating a sequence with the videos and photos, returning a few days later for some extra shots I wanted to include. Shortly after completing a draft sequence, I visited writer and singer Michelle Tocher who was eager to do some vocal improvisations with me using her new shruti box. We had such a great time together that I was inspired at that moment to invite her to collaborate with me for the soundtrack. The sounds we had made together ideally captured the feeling of the images. We planned a recording session together and recorded one of her original songs along with some free improvisations, which I edited to the image sequence. I posted the video on February 4 to celebrate the season of Imbolc, the cross-quarter day in the Celtic calendar to mark the midway point between the winter solstice and the spring equinox.

Inspired by my experience with Michelle, I invited another friend with whom I’ve collaborated vocally for many years, Deborah Brodey, to be my collaborating partner for the second video. I returned to High Park to take the footage on the day of the full moon known as the Snow Moon, February 8, and this time headed to one of the forest areas where I focused on trees and fallen logs in the snow – their shapes and shadows in the bright sunlight, as well as some close-ups of tree bark. For the recording session with Deborah, I created five different drones that we improvised to, while watching some of the raw video footage. I then edited these vocal improvisations to create a musical sequence to which I edited the images. It was posted on March 8 to celebrate International Women’s Day.

A few days later on March 11, COVID-19 was declared a world pandemic, and everything changed.

By that time I’d got to Woodstock!
On that day, I happened to be in Woodstock, Ontario, the town I grew up in, living part-time in my family home. I decided to stay put rather than return to the city. When it came to the Earth Soundings blog, my major question was how to approach the soundtrack. Collaborating as I had been doing was no longer possible, especially since singing with others was portrayed as one of the riskier activities. I turned instead, to resources I had on hand: the old out-of-tune piano in my family home, the same piano I learned on as a child and teenager. I improvised a series of chords on this new partner, rekindling a connection with my younger self. I then processed those recordings through a drone-making tool in my computer, disguising to some
degree the funky tuning. For the video footage, I went to another childhood friend, the local Thames River, at the time of the spring equinox. The image sequence takes the viewer from winter into spring, beginning with images of frozen and thawing ice, then turning to flowing river water reflections interspersed with a few budding signs of spring. It was posted on April 8 at the full moon in Libra.

For the soundtrack to the fourth video, I turned to my own relationship with nature. I undertook two separate video shoots just as spring was beginning to really kick in. The first, on April 24, was a couple of days after Earth Day along a country road that featured a bog and small streams. The second set of images was taken on Beltane, the Gaelic May Day festival, May 4, again at the Thames River. The video progresses from the small bog and culminates in unusual footage that I captured at the Thames with the sunlight’s reflection flashing intensely on the river, almost like a strobe light. While gazing at the flashing sunlight I found myself in deep communion with the natural world around me. Using my voice, I translated this natural phenomenon into sound, and the resulting improvisation became the foundation of the soundtrack with additional material improvised on the Heintzman piano. The special part of the music for me were the recordings of frogs and birds I made along the shores of the river. When I mixed all the elements together, the soundtrack became for me a full integration between the natural world, the musical instrumental world, and my internal self-expression through voice. The video was posted on June 5 for the Strawberry Full Moon.

The fifth video is still in process. The video footage was taken at the time of the summer solstice at the mouth of the Humber River in Toronto at sunrise. I focused on the water itself – the various currents created by the meeting of the river and Lake Ontario, the sunrise on the water, along with floating wildlife. For the music, I invited a colleague from my sound-healing trainings, Muriel Reymond from Chicago, to collaborate with me. I created a drone sequence that went through various chord changes and sent her the file through email. She recorded three takes in a recording studio and sent back the tracks. I’m currently in the process of editing this material and am planning for release on Labour Day, September 7.

In moving from a normal creative approach with collaborators, I experienced unintended expansions to the original idea. This is of course something that occurs naturally, but when it is imposed from the outside, it requires a shift in mindset that can either be embraced or resisted. As each performer, presenter and creator struggles with how to move forward, finding the gold in the need to find new ways of creative expression can often bring about unanticipated discoveries.

Wendalyn Bartley is a Toronto-based composer and electro-vocal sound artist. sounddreaming@gmail.com
Online Recordings

Nobody in the band world is being precocious enough to predict a date when band rehearsals and concerts might return to normal. In the meantime, if regular rehearsals can’t be resumed, what are the alternatives? Perhaps, as Stefan Brunette’s UCCB has done, individual community bands will offer to host virtual performances of one or two pieces at a time, allowing musicians from a wider geographical range to sign up and participate. The first goal should be to keep our community music alive, performing and growing.

Since most bands and band members are not familiar with online recording techniques, I decided to speak to Steffan Brunette regarding his experiences during UCCB’s two projects to date during COVID-19, and have included a few of his useful comments here:

First is his point that while most online virtual ensembles usually feature highly experienced musicians comfortable learning and performing their parts individually, in a community band, such as the non-auditioned UCCB, some players learn their parts by imitating players in their vicinity. Over the course of several rehearsals, this kind of rote learning allows such a player to learn enough to participate in the concert. So before making a virtual recording UCCB had to think of a way that allowed musicians whose reading skills were lower to still feel they were a part of the band, and to allow the entire group to have a sense they were playing with others.

Second, a lot of online projects use a foundational track upon which other elements are layered, in most cases, some kind of click track, or an actual drum track. In pieces without a steady tempo, though, or with changeable tempo, the foundation needs to be a visual one. For UCCBs first online recording of Nimrod they recorded a silent conductor video, prefaced with tuning pitches. Players were given two weeks to perform their parts aligned with the conductor video. These phase one recordings were adjusted as necessary to ensure that they all landed on the necessary beats, making for a rather ugly first recording, with gaps in certain tracks to force matches to the conductor. As Brunette says, wryly: “If only such a tool could be used for live performances too!”

The Phase one track, with all parts aligned, was sent back, mixed and as single parts, to the players (along with feedback for individuals who needed assistance with various passages). They were asked to resubmit a recording while playing along with the phase one background on their headphones. Now all players could finally perform with the band, with no one left out!”

The Virtual Band Performance that her North York New Horizons group created was posted on the New Horizons Music International website. You can find the international site at newhorizonsmusic.org, and Baskin’s North York Band website is at newhorizonsmusicnorthyork.ca.

Cohesion and Camaraderie

These kinds of conscientious approach to virtual performance could certainly alleviate some of the dismay, but one major component of being a regular member of any band is the social component. While many groups have some members gathering occasionally with various forms of Zoom sessions, the true face-to-face social component is missing. No form of fancy technology is going to replace that socializing.

So, what can bands do to keep some kind of cohesion and camaraderie? As the executive of the Newmarket Citizen Band put it: “The business of running a community band continues even during a global pandemic.” Recently they announced more than one event to celebrate.

The first was the arrival of new timpani to replace the band’s timpani which had been in service for some 60 years. On July 8, president Connie Learn, vice-president Linda Guenther and percussionist Lawrence Moule took delivery of their new set of Ludwig timpani, with a brief ceremony on arrival, after which they were then installed in the NCB’s storage space – thanks to the staff at Newmarket’s Department of Recreation and Culture! Certainly something to look forward to: the first time the new timps see active service.

As if that wasn’t enough, in 2022, the Newmarket Citizen Band will be celebrating their 150th Anniversary as the oldest continuously operating community band in Canada. The local newspaper, the Newmarket Era, recently published a front-page article featuring the band, their history and their plans to commemorate this very important milestone. While COVID-19 has temporarily curtailed their rehearsal and concert activities, they have four anniversary projects on the go. As explained in the article, they are looking for photos, memorabilia, artifacts and family and community connections to help tell their story. To see that article go to: www.yorkregion.com/news-story/10125215--community-treasure-newmarket-band-preparing-for-150th-anniversary

Bunny Graf

Over the years, the name Graf has been mentioned many times in this column. Musician, bandleader and arranger Eddie Graf, who passed away in 2017, his wife Bernice (“Bunny”) and his son Lenny Graf have all been mentioned many times. As I wrote in the October 2018 issue of The WholeNote, Eddie Graf married Bernice O’Donnell at 9am on New Year’s Day 1945. Eddie had been the leader of an Army Show band, and Bunny had been a singer and dancer with the band.

They had chosen to be married “at the earliest hour on the first day of a new year when the promise of a long life filled with joy and happiness was strongest.” It is with heavy heart that we report that Bunny passed away peacefully in her sleep, on Saturday, May 2, 2020 at Sunnybrook Veterans long term care.

Jack MacQuarrie plays several brass instruments and has performed in many community ensembles. He can be contacted at bandstand@thewholenote.com.
Mainly Clubs, Mostly Jazz!

Three bandleaders on then, now, and next

Colin Story

While most club performances are still off the table for musicians, relaxed physical-distancing guidelines have meant that artists have been able to return to some form of live gigs. Near the end of August, I interviewed three different bandleaders – Joanna Majoko, Jenna Marie Pinard and Allison Au – about their recent performances, their quarantine experiences, and moving forward into “the new normal.”

The Artist: Joanna Majoko
The Performance: Live-to-air concert for JazzFM, as part of the TD Toronto Jazz Festival Summer Concert Series, July 24
The Band: Joanna Majoko, vocals and percussion; Jeremy Ledbetter, keyboards; Andrew Stewart, bass; Larnell Lewis, drums

Finding balance in quarantine:
“Thankfully, quarantine has not affected my ability to create or practise. It’s been a blessing to have had this time to create a harmonious work environment here at home, and to set up a small home studio and explore and diversify my musical interests, such as getting more comfortable and experienced with recording as well as trying my hand at vocal mixing. I don’t think I would have explored these avenues had it not been for quarantine. The only major aspect quarantine has affected is my ability to perform.”

On the experience of returning to the stage after quarantine:
“This was not my first performance since quarantine began, but it was my first as a bandleader. It felt surreal, it felt like a gift. It was an all-body experience. I remember feeling quite emotional and that was primarily due to the musical exchange with my amazing friends – Larnell, Andrew, and Jeremy. We brought all the energy and creativity we could conjure up because who knows when the next opportunity will come – at least that was the mindset.”

Looking ahead:
“I’ll be part of the Kensington Market Jazz Festival, 2020 airing online this November 7 and 8. We actually just pre-taped last week at the Handlebar in Kensington Market. I’ll be joined by Andrew Marzotto on guitar, who happens to be my favourite guitarist in Toronto for many reasons, but the most important is how well we gel musically. He’s such a free spirit on the guitar, it’s exciting to improvise and explore with him in performance.”

The Artist: Jenna Marie Pinard
The Performance: Live concert at The Emmet Ray, August 15
The Band: Jenna Marie Pinard, vocals; Jay Yoo, guitar

Embracing the unexpected while missing live music:
“I had planned a trip in March to visit my parents in Montreal and I ended up staying there for four months. I hadn’t intended being there for more than a week, so I didn’t have access to my piano, my journals or gear. I will say that it was surprisingly refreshing to take time away from the hustle and bustle of the artist lifestyle and connect with family. Quarantine has affected my creativity in many ways, but the biggest trouble for me is that I am heavily inspired by live music, and having not seen a show in months, I’ve found it challenging to get the creative juices flowing. I normally watch a couple of shows on a given night, feel extremely inspired and go home to write lyrics or compose... live streams or archived performances just don’t give me that same fulfillment.”

On firsts:
“My first live performance since quarantine was just last Saturday at The Emmet Ray! Jazz in Toronto is a lovely organization led by Lina Welch and Ori Dagan and they’ve partnered with The Emmet Ray for a series of live performances and live streams. Andrew and the staff at The Emmet Ray did a great job of setting up the space; the performance area has sheets of plastic separating musicians from the audience. Admittedly it was quite strange to sing through a plastic screen, but it felt incredible nonetheless.”

Reconnecting with collaborators and audiences:
“In November I came out with a duo album with my longtime friend and collaborator Jay Yoo. I have been absolutely longing to play with him again, and the moment Ori asked me to be a part of the series, I knew that Jay and I would perform as a duo – my soul had been craving it for months! We play a mixture of modern arrangements of jazz standards and original music. I absolutely love to sing in all formations, especially with the bands that I lead, but there’s truly nothing like playing duo with Jay. Hearing the audience clap and laugh, and seeing them smile as well as actively listen, was extremely energizing for me. In fact, it’s been four days since the live performance and I’m still riding that high.”
The Artist: Allison Au
The Performance: Recording session, August
The Band: Allison Au, saxophone; Todd Pentney, piano; Jon Maharaj, bass; Ethan Ardelli, drums

A deadline-free quarantine experience:
“I tend to work really well having deadlines in mind when tackling a new project, so the quarantine has affected the drive with which I typically tend to work. That said, having no deadlines to work towards has also decreased the stress I typically work with. It has been a fantastic challenge and reminded me to cherish the creative process; an aspect of my pre-quarantine approach to work that I believe, like many of us, I had lost sight of.”

Lessons learned:
“This quarantine has affected my outlook on the quality of the music I create. I had a deep period of reflection during all of the social upheaval the pandemic exposed over the past few months. More than ever, I want to create music that I love, that means something to me, that is creative and that strives to explore new ground in some way.”

The new and the old, in studio.
“I conducted a short studio session. The studio I rented had rigorous health protocol in place. I had to fill out and sign two separate forms confirming that I did not present any COVID-19 symptoms and confirming that I would abide by all of the studio’s rules for having my temperature taken upon arrival, wearing a mask while not playing, and frequently using hand sanitizer placed strategically throughout the studio. None of these things affected my performance. It was truly wonderful to play music with others in a studio setting. And as soon as we started the session, I was flooded with positive emotions and a strong reminder as to why I love what I do.”

Colin Story is a jazz guitarist, writer and teacher based in Toronto. He can be reached at www.colinstory.com, on Instagram and on Twitter.

Jenna Marie Pinard

In the Clubs (Mostly Jazz)

- Alleycat
  2409 Yonge St. 416-481-5865
  alleycat.ca
  All shows: No cover/PWYC
  • Cameron House
  • The Blue Goose Tavern
  1 Blue Goose St. 416-255-2442
  thebluegoosestavern.com (full schedule)
  • Bloom
  2315 Bloor St. W. 416-767-1315
  bloomrestaurant.com (full schedule)
  All shows: 2:30pm. No cover.
  • Emmet Ray, The
  924 College St. 416-792-4497
  theemmetray.com (full schedule)
  mannhattans.ca (full schedule)
  • Home Smith Bar – See Old Mill, The
  261 Victoria St. 416-363-5299
  jazzbistro.ca (full schedule)
  • Jazz Bistro, The
  251 Victoria St. 416-363-5299
  jazzbistro.ca (full schedule)
  • Jazz Room, The
  Located in the Huether Hotel, 59 King St. N., Waterloo. 226-476-1565
  kwjazzroom.com (full schedule)
  • Lula Lounge
  1585 Dundas St. W. 416-588-0307
  lula.ca (full schedule)
  • Nice Bistro, The
  117 Brock St. N., Whitby. 905-668-8839
  nicebistro.com (full schedule)
  • Nice Bistro, The Live jazz and dinner, $45.00 per person. Dinner from 6pm and music from 7pm to 9pm.
  • Old Mill, The
  21 Old Mill Rd. 416-236-2641
  oldmilltoronto.com (full schedule)
  • Old Mill Toronto Jazz Room: No reservations. No cover. $20 food/drink minimum. All shows: 7:30-10:30pm unless otherwise listed.
  • Only Café, The
  972 Danforth Ave. 416-483-7843
  theonlycafe.com (full schedule)
  • Poetry Jazz Café
  22 Old Mill Rd. 416-236-2641
  theonlycafe.com (full schedule)
  • Rex Hotel Jazz & Blues Bar, The
  184 Queen St. W. 416-596-2475
  therex.ca (full schedule)
  • Sauce on Danforth
  1376 Danforth Ave. 647-748-1376
  sauceondanforth.com
  All shows: No cover.
  • Sauce on Danforth
  1376 Danforth Ave. 647-748-1376
  sauceondanforth.com
  • Seniors Bar & Grill, The
  1980 Queen St. E. 416-849-5064
  theseniors.ca (full schedule)
  • The Senator Winebar
  249 Victoria St. 416-364-1755
  thesenator.com (full schedule)
  • The Salty Dog
  194 Queen St. W. 416-598-2475
  therex.ca (full schedule)
  • Tranzac Bar & Lounge
  2845 Dundas St. W. (416) 766-0746
  larewto.com (full schedule)
  • The Tranzac
  249 Victoria St. 416-364-1755
  thesenator.com (full schedule)
  • University of Toronto Jazz Room: No reservations. No cover. $20 food/drink minimum. All shows: 7:30-10:30pm unless otherwise listed.
  • Vancouver Jazz Room: No reservations. No cover. $20 food/drink minimum. All shows: 7:30-10:30pm unless otherwise listed.
  • Whistler’s Jazz Room: No reservations. No cover. $20 food/drink minimum. All shows: 7:30-10:30pm unless otherwise listed.
  • White’s Bar & Grill
  1980 Queen St. E. 416-849-5064
  theseniors.ca (full schedule)
  • White’s Bar & Grill
  1980 Queen St. E. 416-849-5064
  theseniors.ca (full schedule)
  • Woodbine Jazz Room: No reservations. No cover. $20 food/drink minimum. All shows: 7:30-10:30pm unless otherwise listed.
  • Zanzibar
  1980 Queen St. E. 416-849-5064
  theseniors.ca (full schedule)
Event listings in *The WholeNote* are free to all eligible music presenters.

Under ordinary circumstances the listings in the magazine are arranged in five sections: **GTA** and **BEYOND GTA** (concerts); **MUSIC THEATRE: CLUBS**; and what we call our **ETCETERAS**, (all kinds of date-related musical events that don’t fit the other 4 sections).

But these are not ordinary circumstances. So right now GTA and ETCETERAS are all you will find here, mostly in the area of online and livestreamed concerts, fundraisers, master-classes, etcetera. Our listings are being updated online on a weekly basis, so our website thewholenote.com is the place to be, to keep up with online events as well as live listings as they start to come back, and new seasons as they are announced.

Most of our online listings can be searched in various ways – by date ranges, types of music and geographic zones (see map to the right). These expanded ETCETERAS are still a work in progress!

Visit thewholenote.com/justask for performance listings, and thewholenote.com/et etcetera for online activity.

All further inquiries should be addressed to our listings editor John Sharpe at listings@thewholenote.com or 416-323-2232 x27. *(Please note we do not take listings information over the phone.)*

**HOW TO LIST:**

Send event information

a) by using the convenient online form at thewholenote.com/applylistings

b) by email to our listings editor, John Sharpe at listings@thewholenote.com

**DEADLINES:**

Listings for an upcoming print issue need to be submitted by the listings deadline stated in the Dates and Deadlines at the foot of page 7 of every issue. For the coming issue (covering October 1 to November 7), the deadline is September 15.

Listings received after deadline will be posted to the online listings as soon as feasible.

Listings may also be submitted in advance for an entire concert season. Inquire to listings@thewholenote.com
Monday September 7

Sunday September 13

Monday September 14

Monday September 21
● 12:00 noon: Music Mondays. Duo Concertante. Works by Bach, Beethoven, Smetana, Carmen Braden (new work) and Ian Cusson (new work). Duo Concertante (Nancy Dahn, violin; Timothy Stevens, piano). Online streaming. Visit musicmondays.currentseason.html for links.

Saturday September 26

Sunday September 27

Monday September 28
● 12:15: Music Mondays. Mozart’s Genius. Chopin: Ballade No.1 in g; Mozart: Kegelstatt Trio for violin, piano and clarinet K498; and works by Lewin and Schumann. Alex Tozkov, violin/viola; Peter Tozkov, piano; Goran Gojevic, clarinet. Online streaming. Visit musicmondays.currentseason.html for links.

Friday October 2

Saturday October 3

Sunday October 4

Monday October 5

Online, Streamed, ETCetera

NOTE: All times are Eastern Time unless otherwise noted.

Saturday, September 26

Sunday, September 27

Monday, September 28

Friday, September 25

Monday, September 21

Saturday, September 26

Saturday, September 26

Mon-Fri, September 21-25

Monday, September 21

Sunday, September 27

Monday, September 21

Monday, September 21

Monday, September 21

Monday, September 21

Sunday, September 27

Monday, September 21

Monday, September 21
LUNAIRE LIVE III: The Harvest Moon

OCT 1st at 8 PM

● NEW! The Piano Lunaire. Lunaire Live: The Harvest Moon. Oct 1st at 8pm. Pianist Adam Sherkin performs. Donations are welcomed. Please visit universe.com/events/lunaire-live
● Kingston Symphony. Finale of Beethoven’s Third Symphony (Eroica). Forty members of the orchestra perform the finale of the Eroica, Beethoven Symphony No. 3 in isolation in their homes. To view the virtual performance, visit youtu.be/Fz2VdsgsQAY. For more information on the Kingston Symphony, please visit kingstonsymphony.ca
● Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Friday Night with the KWS. Online broadcasts of archival concerts every Friday at 8pm. Select broadcasts will feature video and others will be audio-only. Content for each concert will be announced each week via KWS social media platforms. Visit facebook.com/kwsymphony and youtube.com/user/kwosymphoney/videos
● Koerner Hall. Concerts from Home. There are more than 25 classical, jazz, and roots music concerts currently available online. Check out the available items at rcmusic.com/performance/live-from-koerner-hall-concert-livestream
● Danny Michel. Live From Lockdown Sundays. A weekly, interactive online concert on Saturdays at 3pm, on ZOOM from his studio in the woods. Unlike Facebook live, fans can see each other, interact, chat, play along & be a part of the show. Buy a ticket for $7.00, get a private link in your email and join the party on ZOOM (free download available at danny-michel.com
● Opera Reved. Isolation Series. Comic operatic duo Danie Friesen and Claire Harris film and record operatic parodies as well as legit opera and art song for a weekly release. Join us every Saturday. For info email operareved@gmail.com
● Ottawa Chamberfest. Chamber Chats: At Home/ Chez vous. Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2pm. Hosted by celebrated broadcaster/ writer Eric Friesen. Interactive episodes combine chat with pre-recorded and live performances and feature guest artists and lectures from all over the world. For information: 613-234-8008. Visit the website at chamberfest.com
● Recollective. Currently holding on-line meetings. A unique musical group made up of people affected by memory challenges caused by illness (such as dementia) or brain injury (stroke, PTSD, etc.) and their care partners. Volunteers of all ages also form part of the band, making this a positive intergenerational experience for all. Participation is free with pre-registration. Contact info@recollective.ca for meeting times, information and registration.
● Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts. a•p•art (of) performance series, every Thursday at 7:30pm at facebook.com/RHCPA
● Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and Chamber Choir. Tafelmusik at Home is a new online concert featuring solo and duo performances. Be sure to stay until the end for live Q&A sessions with featured musicians. These concerts are $5, $10, $20 Choose-What-You-Pay, allowing you to pay what you feel is the value of the concert. Join them for this new way to experience the beauty of Tafelmusik at tafelmusik.org
● Toronto Botanical Garden. Music in the Garden Series. The first concert will launch on Thursday, July 16 at 7 p.m. with a new performance released every Thursday at 7 p.m. until Labour Day. All concerts will be viewable via the Toronto Botanical Garden’s website here. More concerts will be released later this summer. Virtual performances and further information can be found at torontobotanic-algarde.ca/edwards-summer-music
● Toronto Consort. Explorer: Discovering the World of Early Music. Explorer is a blog for the curious; a place of learning, sharing, and community. This all-new offering will present an assortment of curated content in a range of formats, like original short- or long-form articles, original video and audio recordings, and educational content on relevant topics relating to Early Music, history, and world music, as they relate to our beloved repertoire. Visit torontoconsort.org for further information.
● NEW! Toronto Operetta Theatre. An audio recording of Toronto Operetta Theatre’s production of Jacques Offenbach’s The Beautiful Helen (La belle Hélène) performed from April 27 to 29, 2018, Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, Toronto. Listen to the audio at youtube.be/splF35Se1_Ox

VOICEBOX|Opera in Concert.
Archival Video Project: Fierabrass by Franz Schubert, Schubert’s opera had its Canadian premiere in 2019. If you missed our full production, please take a look at our gift to you with this video of excerpts featuring an amazing cast under the masterful conducting of Kevin Mallon and the Ardia Ensemble. It is a rare opera at its highest degree of excellence in performance. In the midst of wars between the Frankish Christians and Spanish Moors of the late 700s, conflicts are brought to an end with the intersession of a younger generation, where love conquers all. See the video at youtube.be/7uJnfVOMmMw

WORKSHOPS
● NEW! Toronto Early Music Players Organization (TEMPO). Online Workshop. Sep 13 from 1:30 to 3:00pm. We are very fortunate to have Alison Melville, a longtime friend of TEMPO and Toronto’s leading recorder player, for our first online workshop. She has become a leader in offering online courses on her own and as part of Amherst Early Music Online. Please visit the TEMPO website at tempotoronto.net for more information on how to participate online.
● NEW! Toronto Early Music Players Organization (TEMPO). Online Workshop. Oct 4 from 1:30 to 3:00pm. Lawrence Lipnik will be leading our October event. Lawrence has performed with many acclaimed early music ensembles from ARTEK and Anonymous 4 to Piffaro and the Waverly Consort, and is a founding member of the viol consort Parthenia and vocal ensemble Lichine. He teaches recorder and viol on Amherst Early Music Online. Please visit the TEMPO website at tempotoronto.net for more information on how to participate online.
WholeNote CLASSIFIEDS can help you recruit new members for your ensemble, find a new music director or accompanist; sell your banjo, offer online music lessons! Starting at only $24/issue. INQUIRE BY SEPT 26 for the OCTOBER edition. classad@thewholenote.com

AUDITIONS & EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES


AVAILABLE POSITIONS with the KINDRED SPIRITS ORCHESTRA: All instruments. Visit KSOchestra.ca or email GM@KSOrcchestra.ca

BUY & SELL

CLASSICAL RECORD AND CD COLLECTIONS WANTED. Minimum 350 units. Call, text or e-mail Aaron 416-471-8169 or A@A31.CA

TRUMPET , Olds Ambassador; EUPHONIUM Besson silver, compensating. TROMBONE, classic Silver King 2B in hard case. FLUTE. Phone 416-964-3642.

WHAT’S IN YOUR CLOSET? Does your old guitar gently weep? Sell that nice old accordion / clarinet / drum kit and find a new owner! WholeNote classified ads start at just $24.00. INQUIRE BY SEPTEMBER 26 for the OCTOBER edition. classad@thewholenote.com

INSTRUCTION

ONLINE CELLO LESSONS with Dr. Dobrochna Zubek http://dobrochnazubek.com

PRECIOUS MEMORIES & PERFORMANCES

transferred to CD, DVD, records | tapes VHS | Hi-8 | mini DV slides | photos | clippings

RESTORED & PRESERVED

ArtsMediaProjects
416-910-1091

NEED HELP WITH YOUR TAXES?

Specializing in personal and business tax returns including prior years and adjustments

HORIZON TAX SERVICES INC.
• free consultation • accurate work For CRA stress relief call: 1-866-268-1319 hts@horizontax.ca www.horizontax.ca

VENUES AVAILABLE / WANTED

ARE YOU PLANNING A CONCERT OR RECITAL? Looking for a venue? Consider Bloor Street United Church. Phone: 416-924-7439 x22. Email: tina@bloorstreetunited.org

SERVICES

ACCOUNTING AND INCOME TAX SERVICE for small business and individuals, to save you time and money, customized to meet your needs. Norm Pulker; B. Math. CMA. 905-251-0009 or 905-930-2985.

DOG BOARDING (near Woodbine subway). Heading away for a while and can’t bring your favourite canine companion? I take just one dog at a time and give it a very special vacation. Your dog will pull you to my door on repeat visits! Call or text Sheila at 416-574-5250 or lilackayak@gmail.com.

RESTORE PRECIOUS MEMORIES lost on old records, tapes, photos etc.? Recitals, gigs, auditions, air checks, family stuff. Old 78’s, cassettes, reels, 35mm slides etc.? ArtsMediaProjects will lovingly restore them to CDs or DVD’s. Call George @ 416-910-1091.

Special Offer! FREE CLASSIFIEDS

ALL CLASSIFIED ADS offering immediate paid employment opportunities for musicians and other arts workers will be free to the end of December 2020, in print and online.

WholeNote classifieds are online all the time, and can be published at any time!

INQUIRIES by email only to classad@thewholenote.com
Editor’s Corner

DAVID OLDS

As The WholeNote celebrates the stellar achievement of 25 years of publication, I note that the DISCoveries section has entered its own 20th year. There have been a number of changes since our first modest column back in July 2001 with just 13 discs reviewed by eight writers. In the interim we’ve had contributions from 125 reviewers and, with the current issue, have covered more than 8,800 CDs and DVDs. In recent years we’ve seen an enormous growth in the number of independent releases, physical and digital, primarily by jazz and contemporary artists, as evidenced in our burgeoning Jazz & Improvised and Modern & Contemporary sections. But all sectors remain very active and we receive two or three times the number of discs we actually have room to cover. A large part of my job entails collating and prioritizing the enormous number of releases that arrive each month. It’s a daunting but satisfying task, especially when it comes to matching selected titles with appropriate writers, some of whom have particular interests and specialties and some who constantly amaze me with the breadth of their knowledge and eclecticism.

Looking back at the first edition of DISCoveries it was interesting to note that Bruce Surtees’ first review was of an EMI reissue of Schoenberg’s Gurrelieder with the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra under the direction of János Ferencsik. In his Rimsky-Korsakov review further on in these pages Bruce relates an anecdote about advice given to a fledgling record producer: “Look for the composition that has the most recordings and make one more.” I chuckled when I read that Bruce has reviewed 12 different recordings of Gurrelieder for The WholeNote, evidence that the old adage still applies. But Gurrelieder is far from the most reviewed title in our archives. Other greatest hits include The Goldberg Variations tied with Das Lied von der Erde and Wind image, in which each, Bach’s Six Suites for Solo Cello (15), Mahler’s Symphony No.2 (12), the complete Der Ring des Nibelungen and Pictures at an Exhibition (11), and Le Sacre du Printemps and Symphony Pathétique with ten...

I took a bit of a cheap way out last issue writing, “What to say about yet another recording of the Bach Cello Suites?” in regards to Alisa Weilerstein’s release. I’m about to do it again with Yo-Yo Ma the Bach Project (Cmajor 75.4.408 naxosdirect.com), but in this instance I feel excused by the fact that Ma does the talking for me. The two-CD set includes one with an outdoor concert performance of all six Bach suites and a separate disc of Ma speaking about Bach, the suites, and their importance in his own life. It’s quite an extraordinary extrapolation of his thoughts about Bach as scientist and psychologist/philosopher. He is very articulate and thoughtful, and his ideas are both intriguing and enlightening.

The website bach.yo-yoma.com tells us that “In August 2018, Yo-Yo Ma began a two-year journey to perform Johann Sebastian Bach’s six suites for solo cello in 36 locations around the world, music that is among the first he ever learned when he began playing the cello at age four. The project is motivated not only by his six-decade relationship with the music, but also by Bach’s ability to speak to our shared humanity at a time when our civic conversation is so often focused on division. For Yo-Yo, Bach’s 300-hundred-year-old music is one extraordinary example of how culture connects us and can help us to imagine and build a better future, but he believes there are many, many more. And for Yo-Yo, culture includes not just the arts, but everything that helps us to understand our environment, each other, and ourselves, from music and literature to science and food. The Bach Project explores and celebrates all the ways that culture makes us stronger as individuals, as communities, as a society, and as a planet. Alongside each concert, Yo-Yo and his team partner with artists and culture makers, cultural and community organizations, and leaders from across sectors to design conversations, collaborations, and performances. These public events and creative experiences are different in every location; they aspire to local relevance and global significance; they demonstrate culture’s power to create positive change; they inspire new relationships, connect partners across locations, and ask us all to keep culture at the centre of our efforts to build a shared future.”

This DVD set is Ma’s fourth release of the suites. The first dates back to 1983 on vinyl for Columbia Records and subsequently released on CD. I don’t think it has ever been out of print. The second was his reimagining of them in collaboration with artists from a variety of fields for the TV series Inspired by Bach produced by Toronto’s Rhombus Media in 1997, later released on DVD by Sony Classical. It is a lasting legacy of this series that the city acquired The Toronto Music Garden, on the waterfront. designed by Julie Moor Messervy when plans to build it in Boston fell through. The third iteration was a studio recording in 2018 released on CD by Sony as Six Evolutions – Bach: Cello Suites.

This CD release was a direct precursor to The Bach Project represented here by live concert footage of one of the 36 recitals that took place between 2018 and 2020 over six continents featuring Ma’s current interpretation of the suites. It was recorded on June 30, 2019 in the open air at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, a stone Roman theatre structure completed in 161 CE on the southwest slope of the Acropolis of Athens, Greece. The set is stunning with the stage backlit to 1983 and the surrounding terraces filled to their 5,000 seat capacity in the evening darkness. The audience is silent, in rapt attention until breaking into thunderous applause at the end of each suite.

The DVD is edited so that we hear the entire cycle without breaks (although there are cues for each movement for selective viewing). In a way this is a shame because during the applause after each suite we see Ma bend down to pick up a microphone to address the audience, but never get to hear what he says. This is especially unfortunate after...
American Gabriela Lena Frank (b.1972) is currently composer-in-residence with the Philadelphia Orchestra who will premiere a major orchestral work of hers in 2021. Featured on the Washington Post’s list of the “Top 35 women composers in classical music,” Frank was also 2017 composer-in-residence at the Willamette Valley Chamber Music Festival. Her Own Wings (brightshiny.ninja / her-own-wings) grew out of this collaboration, and includes the world premiere recording of Milagros (2010), plus Frank’s acclaimed string quartet, Leyendas: An Andean Walkabout.

Identity has always been at the centre of her music. Born in California to a mother of mixed Peruvian/Chinese ancestry and a father of Lithuanian/Jewish descent, Frank explores her multicultural heritage through her compositions. Comprised of eight short movements for string quartet, Milagros was inspired by Frank’s mother’s Peruvian homeland. She writes: “It has been a remarkable, often difficult, yet always joyous experience for me to visit, again and again, this small Andean nation that is home to not only foggy desert coasts but also Amazonian wetlands. Usually a religious and marvellous occurrence, milagro here refers to the sights and sounds of Peru’s daily life, both past and present, which I’ve stumbled upon in my travels. While probably ordinary to others, to me, as a gringa-latina, they are quietly miraculous.” Composed in 2001, Leyendas draws inspiration from the idea of mestizaje as envisioned by the Peruvian writer José María Argüedas, where cultures can coexist without the subjugation of one by the other. As such, this piece mixes elements from the Western classical and Andean folk music traditions.

Recorded in the unique acoustic of a winery barrel room, the performers are Willamette Festival founders Sasha Callahan (violin) and Leo Eguchi (cello) who are joined by violinists Greg Ewer (Milagros) and Megumi Stohs Lewis (Leyendas), and violist Bradley Ottesen. The warmth and clarity of the recording combined with these stunning and nuanced performances makes this a disc to treasure.
BANG ON A CAN
A NEW YORK STATE OF MIND
RAUL DA GAMA

Bang on a Can was founded in 1987 by three American composers who remain its artistic directors: Julia Wolfe, David Lang and Michael Gordon. During the current COVID-19 crisis, particularly devastating in New York City, the renowned Bang on a Can Marathon, a celebration of the best and latest contemporary music from the Big Apple, has migrated to the internet, morphing from an annual live event into periodic streaming blasts. There have been three six-hour iterations so far (May 3, June 14 and August 16) and plans are to continue these online activities until performances for live audiences can fully resume. You can stay apprised of future events at bangonacan.org.

Michael Gordon – Anonymous Man
The Crossing; Donald Nally
Cantaloupe Music CA 21154 (cantaloupemusic.com)

Meredith Monk – Love Fail
Lorelei Ensemble; Beth Will
Cantaloupe Music CA 21158 (cantaloupemusic.com)

David Lang – Love Fail
Quince Ensemble
Innova 056 (innova.mu)

The human voice, one of the first instruments in our world (there are likely others, such as interstellar “noise”), has rarely been glorified in better circumstances than in the five recordings mentioned above. Perhaps this is because in all of the recordings in question the purest of sound – that of the human voice – has been pushed to both define exactly what it means to give praise to the arts melodically, harmonically and rhythmically. But each of these works also redefines polyphony – within the continuum of music – in the grand manner. Coincidentally (or perhaps not at all) members of the ineffably brilliant musical New York City cooperative, Bang on a Can have been associated with each of the recordings and this means, of course, that you can expect the unexpected in the most sublime sense of the term.

Musicians such as Meredith Monk, Julia Wolfe, Michael Gordon and David Lang are – together and separately – proverbial forces of nature. They represent everything that is transcendent about human vocalistics. Impossible leaps in register, manipulating breathing whether nasal, throat or diaphragmatic, weaving voices (using harmony and electronic manipulation) into diaphanous musical fabrics of breadth-taking beauty or simply singing with lustrous simplicity and honesty are just some of their many phenomenal characteristics. And then there is the interpretation – or sometimes using the non-interpretation of the works to deliver the finest quality of music and musicianship – which catches us off guard. This is something that happens across all of the works and recordings in question.

Michael Gordon’s Anonymous Man deals with the existential loneliness of community. The music describes both the discovery and effects that something like that could have on the human sensibilities. Gordon’s work comprises the music and accompanying narratives that, when sung solo or in ensemble, speak to the existential angst of Gordon’s character as the Anonymous Man. The music startled and the words constantly enliven it through their beautifully bizarre and almost neurotic sensitivity to feeling and experience. The musicians of The Crossing, conducted by Donald Nally, capture all of Gordon’s angst by investing the music with just the right amount of drama and emotion – which is also often delightfully deadpan. The textural light and shade of music in On That Terrible Beautiful Morning is perfectly judged in terms of both phrasing and intonation.

Meredith Monk’s work on Memory Game is a traversal through the topographical landscape of the mind and is somehow viewed through the spatial and the horological. Just as you would need a small leap of imagination to see hour in horology, but could nail the meaning by envisioning the study of time and the art of making timepieces, in Monk’s case you are drawn forwards and backwards in time by playing the proverbial Memory Game. The members of Bang on a Can bring with them instruments to evoke a kind of musical séance in the fullest and most magical sense of things supernatural and brilliantly entertaining. In these nine pieces the listener is led slowly through subtly changing mental-musical scenery. There are often deliberately comical (spoken, sung and instrumental) effects. Slowly, like a brilliant jigsaw puzzle these brightly coloured musical fragments evoke a Memory Game that is dismantled and reassembled in constantly hypnotic patterns.

The eighth stanza of Wallace Stevens’ poem Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird describes metaphorical antecedents of the dizzying exploits of the ensemble Eighth Blackbird who make music by means of “...noble accents/and inescapable rhythms...” While not strictly speaking a vocal recording, the album, Singing in the Dead of Night, is certainly creatively and evocatively a singing one. Although it is David Lang, Julia Wolfe and Michael Gordon of the formidable group Bang on a Can, who have splintered the iconic Beatles song, Blackbird, by reimagining it in five fractured segments of the original lyric in a somewhat darker realm than its original creation, Eighth Blackbird must also be credited with its most magical reconstruction. Instruments – specifically the exquisite manner in which they have been played – don’t simply recreate the whisps, murmurs, moans and groans of the human voice as well as the proverbial flutterings of the blackbird of the Beatles song, but, in fact, propel the music into a proverbial orbit.

Finally, David Lang’s deeply introspective almost operatic meditation Love Fail fuels the endeavours of two accomplished chamber groups – the Lorelei Ensemble and the Quince Ensemble. The release of both concurrently is probably a coincidence but to imagine that this fact may not do either release any favours would be a fallacy. Both releases are superb and recommend themselves for different reasons. The Lorelei’s a cappella version affects with a performance that is forthright and deeply moving; unravelling in the ensemble’s wonderfully flexible approach, creating imagery that beholds something of great density and import as well as something delicate and light. Quince Ensemble’s performance adds minimalist instrumentation and is equally profound, bringing wonderful shape and motion to the simpler pieces and musical clarity to the most dense.

Together these five recordings offer a rare and uplifting musical repast in this time of great consternation and stress. ☺
The compositions by French and non-French composers on Silhouettes, the new CD from violist Dana Zemstov and pianist Anna Fedorova (Channel Classics CCS 42320 channelclassics.com) purportedly were all inspired by French poetry, a link that seems tenuous at best and in some cases non-existent, but when there’s playing as rapturous and ravishing as this, who cares?

The 1919 Sonata by Rebecca Clarke opens the CD, and what an opening it is – flowing, passionate, intense and finely nuanced playing from both players in a gem of a work that combines Debussy and Ravel influences with an English mood. The “French connection” is a quote from Alfred de Musset that Clarke wrote on the opening page.

The first of three effective transcriptions of short pieces by Debussy – La plus que lente – precedes the 2007 Suite Op. 51 by Netherlands composer Arne Werkman, its Allemande, Bravile, Pavane and Tarantella movements providing Baroque form for modern musical content. Debussy’s Clair de lune is followed by Darius Milhaud’s four-movement Sonata No. 1 Op. 2490 from 1944, another work that glances back at the Baroque style. Based on unpublished and anonymous themes of the 18th century, it has a really lovely third movement Air, later arranged by the composer for viola and orchestra. The rhapsodic and impassioned 1906 Concert Piece by the Romanian composer George Enescu precedes the final Debussy transcription, Beau Soir, providing a beautiful ending to an outstanding CD.

Both performers have technique, tone and musicality in abundance, but it’s a long time since I’ve heard such beautiful viola playing in particular, Zemstov displaying a wide range of tonal colour without any hint of the nasal quality that you sometimes encounter in viola recitals.

There’s more excellent duo work featuring viola on Threaded Sky, the new CD from the Miller-Portiris Duo of violinist Anton Miller and violist Rita Portiris (millerportirisduo.org/store). Their Divertimenti CD was enthusiastically reviewed here in May 2017, and this latest recital of short works easily lives up to the same standard.

Three works by American composer Augusta Read Thomas – her complete violin-viola duo music – form the first half of the disc. Rumi Settings was written in 2001, its four movements – Dramatic, Resonant arpeggio, Suspended and Graceful and Passionate – inspired by the 13th-century Persian poet. Double Helix from 2011 was originally for two violins; Silent Moon was premiered in 2006.

Krzysztof Penderecki’s Ciaconna in Memoria Giovanni Paolo II from 2005 was the last movement of his Polish Requiem, a work that took 25 years to complete. Originally for string orchestra it was transcribed for violin and viola by the composer in 2009, the Miller-Portiris Duo returning some of the omitted voices to the transcription here. Angel Fire by the Asian-American composer Bright Sheng has four movements, the third based on a Chinese folk song.

Finally, the very brief The Weight of Shadows from 2019, by the Iranian-American composer Mani Mirzaee, uses santoor mallets and not bows to produce sound, bouncing the light Persian hammer on the strings with a dulcimer-like effect.

Violinist Ashkenazi and accompanist and fellow Juilliard graduate Matthew Graybl first became involved with Violins of Hope in 2017, and Ashkenazi is the only violinst to hold an instrument from the collection – in this case an early 20th-century Eastern European or German violin – on long-term loan. For this CD he chose Jewish repertoire that covers the instrument’s lifetime.

Robert Dauber’s Serenade (1942) makes a beautiful opening to an excellent recital that comprises Bloch’s Nigun (1923), John Williams’ Theme from Schindler’s List, Julius Chajes’ The Chassid (1939), Sharon Farber’s recent Bestemming: Triumph, Szymon Laks’ Trois pièces de concert (1933), George Perlman’s Dance of the Rebbiten (1929), Ravel’s Kaddish (1914) and Ben-Haim’s Berceuse sfaradite (1945) and Three Songs Without Words (1952). It’s easy to understand why the Weinstein family has such trust and faith in Ashkenazi’s commitment and performance: he clearly has an emotional bond with this instrument, lending all of these short pieces a beautiful distinctive and idiomatic sound.

Niv Ashkenazi: Violins of Hope is a celebration of the artistic and educational project founded by Israeli luthier Amnon Weinstein and his son Avshalom in which instruments that were owned by Jewish musicians before and during the Holocaust are restored and played in the best concert halls by the world’s best players, the latter including Shlomo Mintz and Daniel Hope (Albany Records TROY1810 albanyrecords.com).

Invisible Ritual
Jennifer Curtis and Tyshawn Sorey
Invisible Ritual is a document of the unique synergy between composer/improvisers Jennifer Curtis and Tyshawn Sorey, under the auspices of the International Contemporary Ensemble.

Vol. 19 Complete Crumb Edition, recordings supervised by the composer, is made up entirely of Metamorphoses Book 1, Crumb specialist, Marcantonio Barone, piano.

New England Trios
Joel Pitchon, Marie-Volcy Pelletier, Yu-Mei Wei
Trios by American composers Leonard Bernstein, Ronald Perrera & Walter Piston. Bernstein’s 1937 trio – one of his earliest works – is dance-like, bluesy, jazzy.

Chinary Ung, Vol. 4: Space Between Heaven and Earth
Chinary Ung
Award-winning Cambodian/American composer Ung’s music is suffused with modal and microtonal inflections, drones, elaborate, expansive, and even a languid approach to musical-time.
World-premiere recordings of French Romantic guitar sonatas by Antoine de Lhoyer, Louis-Ange Carpentras and Alexandre Alfred Rougenon-Beaucclair are featured on Napoleonian Guitar Sonatas, with Montreal guitarist Pascal Valois (Centaur CRC 3732 naxosdirect.com).

Valois is dedicated to revival enthusiasm for the guitar’s role during the Romantic era, performing 19th-century repertoire on period instruments and employing contemporary stylistic practices, including improvised ornaments and cadenzas. One such practice here is that of not using right-hand fingernails, the bare fingertips resulting in a much softer and smoother sound. The guitar used is a French model built in the late 1820s by the Mirecourt luthier Cabasse-Bernard.

While the Carpentras Sonate brillante Op.1 (1816) and the Rougenon-Beaucclair Sonate Op.4 No.1 are both for guitar solo, in the two de Lhoyer Sonates pour la guitare avec un violon obligé Op.17 (c.1801) Valois is joined by Montreal violinist Jacques-André Houle. The violin, though, tends to distract from, rather than enhance the guitar writing, especially being set so far back in the balance – presumably not to overwhelm the softer instrument.

Valois’ playing is accomplished, clean and sensitive throughout music that offers a fascinating insight into the early 19th-century classical guitar world.

The Diogenes Quartett is the central ensemble on the new CD Max Reger Clarinet Quintet & String Sextet, being joined by clarinetist Thorsten Johanns in the Clarinet Quintet in A Major Op.146 and by violinist Roland Glassl and cellist Wen-Sinn Yang in the String Sextet in F Major Op.118 (cpo 555 340-2 naxosdirect.com). Despite the advanced tonal nature of his music, Reger had a strong affinity with earlier musical eras in addition to his deep Romantic roots, and the equivalent works by Mozart and Brahms were clearly the inspiration for his own Clarinet Quintet. Despite being completed in 1915 the work shows no influence of the Great War, a contemporary review of the October 1916 premiere referencing “the deep, holy peace of a mild autumn evening, which the last rays of the setting sun dress in gold.” Shades of Brahms indeed.

The large, complex String Sextet from 1910 is full of the features that have tended to make Reger’s music misunderstood and under-appreciated over the years, but is a deeply satisfying work with a really beautiful slow movement.

Playing throughout is of the highest quality on a terrific CD.

There’s another CD of the Franz Schubert 3 Sonatas (1816), this time with violinist Peter Sheppard Skærved and Julian Perkins on square piano (Athene ath 32308 naxosdirect.com).

Skærved always excels not only in his playing but also in his exploration of and critical approach to the original musical sources, and this CD is no different, with 12 pages of fascinatingly detailed and informative notes illuminating every aspect of the performances. The German violin is by Leopold Wilhelm I (1722-1776) with a very early Tourte bow probably from around 1770-80. The square piano is by Clementi & Co., London, 1812.

Skærved’s playing here is warmer than in some of his period performances; he’s not afraid to use vibrato, but a clear sense of period style is always present. The keyboard obviously lacks the fuller sound we might be accustomed to, but the tonal subtlety and nuance more than compensate. The performers admit to viewing the score as “a map that offers options rather than answers,” resulting in some interesting choices on repeats and frequent moments of surprise, particularly at the end of the Sonatas No.2 in A Minor where, following the short, sharp final violin chords, the piano resonance is left to die away for fully 13 seconds.

Peter Sheppard Skærved is also the first violinist in the Kreutzer Quartet, the performers on Edward Cowie: Three Quartets & A Solo, a new CD of music by the multi-disciplined English composer born in 1947 (Metier Records msv 28603 naxosdirect.com).

An author, lecturer, academic, visual artist, natural scientist, conductor and composer with two doctorates including studies in physics and mathematics, Cowie produces music which is a fusion of science, the natural world and visual arts. “I am more inspired,” he says, “by natural history than by musical history.”

Certainly the natural world is central to the quartets here: the two single-movement works, No.1 “Dungeness Nocturnes” from 1969 and No.2 “Crystal Dances” from 1977, and the four-movement No.6 “The Four Winds” from 2012, with the North, East, South and West winds representing the four seasons. It’s difficult music to describe, with an obviously contemporary sound but not completely dissonant despite a general lack of melodies and overtly tonal writing, and with a scurrying, restless feel that invokes insects and birds and is quite nocturnal at times.

The solo work GAD was written in 2017 for Skærved at his request, and addresses the composer’s almost lifelong suffering from generalized anxiety disorder.

All you need to know about the performances is that Cowie says that “no composer could ever be served, illuminated and translated by better or more brilliantly insightful players than the Kreutzer Quartet.”

Another British composer whose name and music seem new to me is represented on Robin Stevens String Quartets & String Quintet, with the Behn Quartet and cellist Timothée Botbol (Divine Art dda 25203 naxosdirect.com).

For Stevens (b.1958), the String Quintet in C Minor from 1980–81 was his first major composition, revised in 2018 for this recording. It features lush melodic writing with a truly lovely slow movement. As the composer notes, “unconscious references to, and near-quotes from, 20th-century music abound.”

In his early 30s Stevens was stricken with post-viral fatigue, a debilitating illness that kept him out of work for 17 years and limited his compositional activity to experimental miniatures. On regaining full health in 2007 he began a PhD in Composition, producing a major work in each of his six post-graduate years. The single-movement String Quartet No.1 uses “a handful of ideas, which are subjected to contrapuntal development of considerable complexity” in a work of “unremittingly dissonant harmonic language.” The String Quartet No.2, “Three Portraits” has three continuous sections – Impulsive One, God-Seeker and Arguer – followed by a brief Epilogue.

A bequest has enabled Stevens to begin recording his considerable catalogue of works; if future performances are of the same high quality as these then his music will certainly be well served.

Finally, if you’re interested in contemporary concertos for viola then you should know that the latest CD of music by the Scottish composer James MacMillan, Symphony No.4 & Viola Concerto, features soloist Lawrence Power with the BBC Philharmonic under Martyn Brabbins in a terrific performance of the concerto written for Power in 2013 (Hyperion CDA 68317 hyperion-records.co.uk).

It’s a three-movement work with an ominous, uneasy first movement, a central movement of a devotional character with a lovely main theme and occasional “primal scream” outbursts and a sparkling finale with decided hints of Barber’s Violin Concerto at the end. It’s a significant addition to the contemporary repertoire and discography.
**VOCAL**

**Beethoven – Lieder; Songs**
Matthias Goerne; Jan Lisiecki
Deutsche Grammophon 483835 (deutschegrammophon.com/en)

> A new disc featuring baritone Matthias Goerne and pianist Jan Lisiecki is a heartfeltly welcomed release in what has become a much-curtailed Beethoven anniversary year. This album showcases oft-neglected songs: music that is sometimes given a wide berth by performers opting for more standard cycles from the liedier repertoire. But unlike corners of the repertoire require unlikely artistic partners as champions and this recital is a case in point for such declarations.

Goerne (b.1967) is, doubtless, one of the most considerate, insightful and committed lieder interpreters. He has a way of letting the music breathe. It’s everything one could look for in a performative role, new的父亲梅格里 (*Cortez’s comrade-in-arms*), tenors David Ferri Durà (*Alvar*) and Luca Lombardo (*Amazily’s warrior*) into the opera. Baritone Gianluca Meregalli (*High Priest*). Conductor Jean-Luc Tingaud propels the energized score throughout the opera’s three hours, including two extended ballet sequences. In its dramatic vocal lines, bold orchestration, epic scenario, considerable length and vivid imagery (the Spaniards’ historically appropriate silver-grey armour contrasting with the Mexicans’ colourful costumes), *Fernand Cortez* anticipated the operas of Berlioz (who admired it and Moyerbeer. It’s an important – and entertaining! – operatic landmark.

**Michael Schullman**

**Gaspare Spontini – Fernand Cortez**
Schmunck; Vouglardou; Lombardo; Margheri; Ferri Durà; Orchestra e Coro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino; Jean-Luc Tingaud
Dynamic DYN-37868 (naxosdirect.com)

> In 1803, the 28-year-old Gasparo Spontini, having already composed 15 operas (!) in his native Italy, moved to Paris. There, as “Gaspare,” he became a favourite of Napoleon and Josephine, who commissioned *Fernand Cortez* (1809) as wartime propaganda. The contra-historical libretto by Étienne De Jouy and Joseph-Alphonse d’Esménard depicted Cortez as a Napoleon-like heroic conqueror, benevolently “liberating” the “oppressed” Mexican people while rescuing his lover, the Mexican princess Amazily, and his brother Alvar as they were about to be sacrificed by the Mexican High Priest.

**Fernand Cortez** was a sensational hit, soon performed throughout Europe. In 1817, Spontini revised it, shifting scenes and adding the role of Montezuma. Today, however, the once-celebrated composer and his 24 operas are all but forgotten. This 2019 Florence production of the original version was its first staging in nearly two centuries.

Heading the excellent cast are steel-toned tenor Dario Schmunic (Cortez), the thrilling chocolate-voiced soprano Alexia Vouglardou (Amazily), tenors David Ferri Durà (Alvar) and Luca Lombardo (Amazily’s warrior-chieftain brother Telasco), baritone Gianluca Meregalli (*Cortez’s comrade-in-arms* Morales) and bass-baritone André Courville (*High Priest*).

Conductor Jean-Luc Tingaud propels the energized score throughout the opera’s three hours, including two extended ballet sequences. In its dramatic vocal lines, bold orchestration, epic scenario, considerable length and vivid imagery (the Spaniards’ historically appropriate silver-grey armour contrasting with the Mexicans’ colourful costumes), *Fernand Cortez* anticipated the operas of Berlioz (who admired it and Moyerbeer. It’s an important – and entertaining! – operatic landmark.

**Adam Sherkin**

**Mahler – Das Lied von der Erde**
Gerhild Romberger; Robert Dean Smith; Budapest Festival Orchestra; Iván Fischer
Channel Classics CCS SA 40020 (prestomusic.com)

> “Is it really bearable? Will it not drive people to self-destruction?” Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) asked of Bruno Walter in 1909 concerning his latest work, *Das Lied von der Erde*. In truth, few works of art are so life-affirming as this supposed “final farewell,” especially so when it receives such a compelling interpretation as we have here from the incomparable Budapest Festival Orchestra in this stunningly well-produced studio recording. Scored for large orchestra and two vocal soloists, it is in all but name Mahler’s Ninth, and, as he presaged at the time due to his ill health, possibly final symphony. The vocal soloists include the American Heldentenor Robert Dean Smith, who shows some evident strain in the heavily scored *Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde* that opens the work (not an unusual occurrence in this taxing movement). Elsewhere he is much more at ease, lending a winsome charm to the delicate *Von der Jugend* and convincingly swaggering his way through *Der Trunkene im Frühling*. The German contralto Gerhild Romberger, best known for her lieder and oratorio performances, sings with a subtle intensity and purity of tone well suited to her more intimate selections, including...
the autumnal *Der Einsame im Herbst*, a rollickingly lively *Von der Schönheit* and the prolonged and deeply moving finale, *Der Abschied*. This album brings Ivan Fischer’s estimable survey of the Mahler symphonies to a close, with the notable and deliberate omission of the Eighth and incomplete Tenth symphonies.

Daniel Foley

Zemlinsky – Der Zwerg
Philip; Tsallagova; Magee; Mehnert; Orchestra and Chorus of the Deutsche Oper Berlin; Donald Runnicles
Naxos 2.110657 (naxosdirect.com)

> Watching Alexander von Zemlinsky’s one-act opera *Der Zwerg* (The Dwarf; 1921), I was soon persuaded of his dramatically relevant gifts: attractive melodic contours, compelling dialogue and ensembles, enchanting orchestration. This DVD features strong individual and group contributions, plus Tobias Kratzer’s innovative staging. The latter includes an added Prologue with Arnold Schoenberg’s *Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene* (1930) music, adding historical and biographical context.

Given the plot of Oscar Wilde’s fairy tale *The Birthday of the Infanta*, one expects the unexpected: the Dwarf is a surprise “birthday present” to entertain the Infanta Donna Clara who ends up both playing with and mocking him. In Kratzer’s modern-dress version the Dwarf exists in two guises: a singer/composer (tenor David Butt Philip) and a speaking actor of small size (played by Mick Morris Mehnert). This choice is highly effective, with brilliant coordination between the two cast members, and also with two women leads who have to interact precisely with each. Vocally, I was taken with both Philip and soprano Elena Tsallagova as Donna Clara, while the warmth and concern her attendant Ghita (Emily Magee) conveys contrasted effectively. I recommend the women’s fine flower chorus with glittering harp and percussion near the opening; soon trendy choristers are manoeuvring their pink phones to take selfies with the Infanta! Later, music-induced feelings warm between the Infanta and the Dwarf, do not miss Zemlinsky’s soaring lyricism as vocal lines and complex instrumental harmonies entwine.

Roger Knox

Korgnold – Violanta
Annemarie Kremer; Michael Kupfer-Radecky; Norman Reinhardt; Orchestra and Chorus Teatro Regio Torino; Pinchas Steinberg
Dynamic 37876 (naxosdirect.com)

> Vienna, 1914: the exotic, erotic and ecstatic sonorities of Salome and *Der Rosenkavalier* are in the air and the Strauss–admiring 17-year-old Korgnold inhales and transforms them into his own personal style, composing both the comedy *Der Ring des Polykrates* and the tragedy *Violanta*. In 1916, Bruno Walter conducts the operatic double-bill’s world premiere in Munich; that same year, performances follow in Vienna and 11 German cities. *Violanta* opens with spooky, harmonically indeterminate ninth-chords spanning over four octaves; the suspenseful, feverish atmosphere will continue throughout the one-act opera’s 82 minutes. Soprano Annemarie Kremer is convincingly fero-cious as Violanta, persuading her husband Simone (baritone Michael Kupfer-Radecky) to murder Alfonso (tenor Norman Reinhardt), the seducer she blames for her sister’s suicide. But when Alfonso arrives, Violanta admits to herself, and to him, that she has always loved and desired him. They join in a rapturous duet before Violanta, shielding Alfonso from Simone, is pierced by Simone’s sword and dies.

Hans Müller’s libretto was set during Carnival in 15th-century Venice. Surprisingly, *Violanta* wasn’t staged in Italy until this January 2020 Turin production, needlessly updated to the 1920s by Pier Luigi Pizzi, typical of today’s breed of opera directors who simply can’t leave well enough alone. Pizzi’s set and costumes, though, are suitably lurid – black, white and blood red.

Bravo to conductor Pinchas Steinberg, who draws from the 11 vocal soloists, chorus and orchestra a truly impassioned performance of Korgnold’s impassioned, hyper-Romantic, very, very beautiful music.

Michael Schulman

Shostakovich – Symphony No.13 “Babi Yar”
Oleg Tibulko; Russian National Orchestra; Kirill Karabits
PentaTone PTC 5186 618 (naxosdirect.com)

> In the absence of a memorial marking the scene of one of the many great atrocities committed by the Nazis in WWII, Dmitri Shostakovich erected his *Symphony No.13, “Babi Yar”* (1962). Initially, Shostakovich set only the title poem by his younger compatriot Yevgeny Yevtushenko. Later, he encouraged the poet to provide more, ending up with a total of five movements, all of them chorale settings.

This is post-Stalin Shostakovich, a time when the composer allowed his musical utterances to be “modern,” encouraged by the “Khrushchev Thaw.” His choice to set a poem that more or less accuses his compatriots of anti-Semitism was nonetheless full of personal risk, given how poorly the poem had been received by critics and the Russian public. Disturbing echoes can be found when one reads the text in today’s context, as nationalists again repeat the phrases that disguise hate. The music that accompanies the part of the text echoing Anne Frank’s diary is heartrending.

On this recording the chorus, orchestra and soloist are uniformly excellent. Oleg Tibulko has the classic Russian basso voice, warm and powerful. The recording was made in a studio, but one hears a reverberant hall. At times overbearing, as one might expect given the subject matter, there are lighter moments. The second movement, for example: *Humour* is a celebration of how mirth and mockery always triumph over tyranny; it’s a scherzo where Shostakovich pulls out all his favourite tricks. The text of the other poems veers between subversion and sloganeering, treading a line between orthodoxy and rebellion. The most interesting is the final poem, *A Córere*. Its ambiguity is matched quite cleverly by the most fond and tuneful music in the symphony. Trust Shostakovich to lose the arrows of irony toward an unsuspecting target.

Max Christie

After Silence
VOCES8
Voces8 Records VCM129
(voces8aftersilence.com)

> Multiple-award winning British vocal ensemble, VOCES8, has just released a two-CD collection rife with diverse works from Bach, Mahler, Monteverdi, Byrd, Britten, Dove, Faure and more. Known for their eclecticism, the ensemble performs in a cappella format, in collaboration with a wide variety of orchestras and specialized ensembles, as well as with noted soloists. The title of this ambitious project refers to a quote from Aldous Huxley, “After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible, is music.”

The program here is divided into four sections: *Remembrance*, *Devotion*, *Redemption* and *Elemental*, with each
containing enervating, multi-influenced compositions. Produced by Adrian Peacock and under the artistic direction of Barnaby Smith, the recording utilized the stunning natural acoustics of the Chapel of Trinity College at Cambridge. St. George’s Church in Chesterton and St. John the Evangelist in Islington. The uber-gifted members of VOCES8 include sopranos Andrea Haynes and Eleonore Cockerham; altos Katie Jeffries-VINELH, Andrea Haynes in Islington. The uber-gifted members of VOCES8 include sopranos Andrea Haynes and Eleonore Cockerham; altos Katie Jeffries-VOCES8 include sopranos Andrea Haynes and Eleonore Cockerham; altos Katie Jeffries-Harris and Barnaby Smith; tenors Blake Morgan and Evan Williamson and basses Christopher Moore and Jonathan Pacey.

Remembrance begins with the sombre beauty of Orlando Gibbons’ Drop, Drop, Slow Tears, which initiates the emotional four-song exploration of the depth and nature of grief and loss. Through each track, the ensemble exercises not only magical dynamics, but a breathtaking relationship to A440 and heavenly intonation. The vocal blend and control of the respective vocal instruments here is nothing short of incomparable. Devotion examines filial, venal, sacred and romantic love as illustrated in Monteverdi’s heart-rending madrigal Lagrime d’amante al sepolcro dell’amata. Redemption and Elemental contain a nearly unbearable amount of beauty, but an exquisite track is Mahler’s Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen. In short – After Silence is perfection.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

L’Unique – Harpsichord Music of François Couperin
Jory Vinikour
Cedille CDR 90000 194 (cedillerecords.org)

The harpsichord is one of those instruments that simultaneously fascinates and confounds, its plucked-string effect and resulting sound so unlike any other keyboard instrument that it is without parallel in the realm of modern instruments. Its players, too, can be considered atypical, collecting birds’ feathers to harvest and refine the quills, thereby crafting the plectra that pick at each individual string, and exploring repertoire that has often been cast aside by the more conventional pianoforte crowd. Such is the case with the harpsichord music of François Couperin, a master of Baroque keyboard music whose works have long remained in a niche category – the Ordres performed by harpsichordists and the Masses by organists – frequently recorded but less often celebrated in wider musical circles. Vinikour’s recording demonstrates once again why this is so: Couperin’s harpsichord music is inherently and essentially crafted for that specific instrument, its unique percussiveness and relative lack of resonance.

It is this exclusive reliance on the harpsichord that makes these works so fascinating, in addition to being expressive, articulate and strikingly beautiful. Couperin’s conception of these pieces is so specific, both in the written score and resulting sound, that they simply do not work as well on any other keyboard instrument, a point reinforced by Vinikour’s measured approach to the Sixième, Septième and Huitième Ordres.

Couperin, as with much of the French Baroque, can sound frenetic and indecipherable if tempi are taken too briskly and ornamentation loses its melodic intentions. Fortunately for us, Vinikour never loses sight of the melodiousness of Couperin’s music, resulting in nearly 80 minutes of utterly delightful early music.

Matthew Whitfield

Froberger: Complete Fantasias and Canzonas
Terence R. Charlston
Divine Art DDA29204 (naxosdirect.com)

So rarely does it happen that performer, composer, instrument and instrument maker(!) equitably join in artistic synthesis. This new record, featuring period instrument specialist Terence Charlston, is a fine specimen of expertise and craftsmanship, with each of the above components keenly harmonized.

Today, there remain aspects of Johann Jacob Froberger’s art that are unknown to the public at large. The Middle Baroque composer’s contrapuntal works, in particular, are relegated to small circles of listeners and scholars – neglected, despite their ingenuity. Charlston understands this all too well. He looks not only to the impressive compendium, the Libro Secondo (an autograph manuscript dating from 1639), but to a fitting choice of instrument: a copy of a South German clavichord, the MIM 2160, as reconstructed by contemporary keyboard maker, Andreas Hermert.

Charlston has chosen this instrument for its timbral possibilities and expressive range, even citing a lute-like tonal profile. Infamous for pianissimo playing, the clavichord in general has long been commended for its intimate, (even private) character, lyrical and sensitive in its response to the player’s touch. Bemusingly, it even boasts vibrato, of a kind.

But not a single note of this disc ever sounds too private or too furtive. In the hands of Charlston, his clavichord soars and expands before our very ears. Through this incantation of counterpoint, in turns both exotic and familiar, Charlston reveals a depth of humanity on par with the great polyphonic achievements of J.S. Bach.

Adam Sherkin

Beethoven – The Piano Concertos
Stephen Hough; Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra; Hannu Lintu
Hyperion CDA68291/3 (hyperion-records.co.uk)

Performing – and recording – the complete cycle of Beethoven’s piano concertos is a remarkable achievement for any pianist, at any stage in their creative life. But a recent release from Hyperion Records offers a singular synthesis of extraordinary solo playing, exceptional conducting and exquisite orchestral performance. Breathing vibrant, surprising avidity into all of this is Stephen Hough, with his customary eloquence.

Hough is a tireless artist, devoted to his craft and to the betterment of our 21st-century musical world. At this autumnal stage in his career, he is beloved and with good reason: his inheritance is of that rare and reverent keyboard tradition dating back to Beethoven’s time.

Presumably, the British pianist has been performing these piano concertos since his youth and yet, much of the disc’s material suggests a re-envisioned approach, a wide-eyed zeal for such canonic works, always tempered, deferential and selfless. Hough brings his experience to bear: such thrilling artistry glistens through every last note – and silence – on the record. We the listeners are gladdened beneficiaries.

Highlights include both final movements of the Second Concerto in B-flat Major, Op.19 and the Fifth (“Emperor”) in E-flat Major, Op.73, where Hough’s superb taste and jovial character are on full display, he relishes such jauntiness with embellishments and good-natured glee. (In fact, he composed his own cadenza for the first movement of the second concerto.) Also of remarkable note is the Allegro moderato (first movement) of the Concerto No.4 in G Major, Op.58. Hough’s carefully synchronized reading of this music is a departure from the norm and a welcome one at that! His lyrical lines skip and soar, coper and cajole with earnest delight. After all, isn’t this music at once both so very humane and cosmic?

Admirably, Stephen Hough is donating 100 percent of sales from this new album to the charity Help Musicians. An active and noted writer, he recently released an anthology of essays, Rough Ideas: Reflections on Music and More (2019). It is published by Faber & Faber in the UK and by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in North America.

Adam Sherkin

L’Unique – Harpsichord Music of François Couperin
Jory Vinikour
Cedille CDR 90000 194 (cedillerecords.org)
Liszt; Thalberg – Opera transcriptions and fantasies
Marc-André Hamelin
Hyperion CDA86320
(hyperion-records.co.uk)

This remarkable new issue from Hyperion records could be subtitled “Tribute to Italian Opera” because all four masters, Bellini, Donizetti, Rossini and Verdi are well represented. In the heyday of the Second Empire, Paris was the centre of the universe for presenting grand opera and these composers had success after success, conquering the public with beautiful melodies. There were also some of the greatest pianists around who wrote paraphrases or fantasies inspired by these melodies and thereby spread the wealth, making these operas ever more popular.

Case in point: the rousing tune Suoni la tromba e intrepido from Bellini’s I Puritani was so popular that a certain countess invited some of the best pianists of Paris to compose and perform variations on it, asking Liszt to organize and contribute to the contest. Some of the other invitees were Chopin, Czerny and Sigismund Thalberg (Liszt’s principal rival in virtuoso piano). The contest featured rapid alternations of figuration, headlong scales in thirds for one hand or two and hair-raising leaps and many other virtuoso technical feats in each participant’s unique style. Liszt cleverly prepares the ground so the theme emerges gradually from an ominous (minor key) mood into the major key glorious fortissimo theme. He also concludes the set with his own Molto Vivace quasi prestissimo and wins the contest easily.

Four more paraphrases follow: from Donizetti’s Don Pasquale (Thalberg), Verdi’s Ernani (Liszt), Rossini’s Moise in Egitto (Thalberg) and Bellini’s Norma (Liszt) performed with astounding virtuosity and true Romantic abandon by Marc-André Hamelin. The Canadian pianist of world renown performs on a Steinway grand and let me assure you it will sound as if the piano were in your living room.

Janos Gardonyi

Senyszyn Plays Chopin & Liszt Concertos
Yaroslav Senyszyn; Oliver von Dohnányi
Albany Records TROY1777
(albanyrecords.com)

Frédéric Chopin and Franz Liszt are two of the great pianistic giants of the 19th century. Their contributions to the solo and concerto genres redefined the limits of writing and performing for the piano, resulting in almost 150 years of unbroken popularity and affection from both artists and audiences alike. This disc of Chopin and Liszt concertos features the “Number Twos:” the former’s Concerto No.2 in F Minor, and the latter’s Concerto No.2 in A Major, both interpreted by Canadian pianist and Simon Fraser University professor Yaroslav Senyszyn, with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra.

Chopin and Liszt were masters of harmonic and melodic craftsmanship, extending and extending the reaches of chromaticism and lyricism to create strikingly beautiful material, such as that contained on this recording. Both concertos are lush and expressive – Romantic in the best possible way – requiring a depth of pathos and flash of expressiveness. Liszt’s multifaceted character and personality at the heart of which was an unbridled virtuoso genius. Liszt’s attraction to Palestrina and early polyphony, and the extraordinary opulence of Ottoman Empire culture is well-documented here as is his attraction to spirituality and asceticism later in life.

To remain true to all of the above and interpret the often diabolical intricacies of Liszt’s music requires uncommon virtuosity and wisdom. Filjak has both qualities in spades. The young pianist has the technical prowess to deal with Liszt’s pyrotechnics and yet knows how to enter the introspective core of Miserere d’après Palestrina – one of a set of ten works based on the poems of Alphonse de Lamartine – and the Ballade No.2 in B Minor. Her revelation of the mesmerizing range of tones of Deux Légendes is brilliant. Filjak emerges as a complete Lisztian, turning what in other hands sounds merely exhibitionistic into a discursive stream of consciousness of the highest order.

Raul da Gama

Rimsky-Korsakov – Capriccio Espagnol; Russian Easter Festival Overture; Scheherazade
Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra; Vasily Petrenko
LAWO LWC1198 (naxosdirect.com)

Some years ago, the owner of a new record company asked an experienced A&R man, “How do you know what to make?” The answer? “Look for the composition that has the most recordings and make one more.” It seems that advice is still being heeded, not only in repertoire but also with conductors.

Three so often recorded staples are given new life in these performances directed by Vasily Petrenko who is not to be confused with the Petrenko in Berlin, Kirill. Vasily has...
been conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra since 2009 and conducts and records with other orchestras earning enthusiastic reviews. He now has 52 CDs out there, including 16 devoted to Shostakovich.

The immediate exuberance of the Alborada opening of Capriccio Español is a real attention-getter and sets the level of enthusiasm expected from the orchestra throughout the program. The Russian Easter Festival moves from Saturday’s religious zeal to Easter Sunday’s celebrations. I certainly did not expect to linger on any passages in Scheherazade and yet listening to this familiar favourite afresh was an unexpected pleasure. This finely detailed performance demonstrates why Rimsky-Korsakov was regarded by his peers as Russia’s supreme orchestrator.

As to be expected, the sound is state of the art.

Bruce Surtees

Mahler – Symphony No. 2 “Resurrection”
Chen Reiss; Tamara Mumford; Münchner Philharmoniker; Gustavo Dudamel
Unit Edition 802808 (naxosdirect.com)

▶ Filmed in Barcelona’s incredibly ornate Palau de la Música Catalana, this DVD commemorates a singular performance of Mahler’s “Resurrection” Symphony presented on June 27, 2019. Mahler envisioned this massive work as a sequel to his first symphony, though it took an unusually long time by his standards to complete. It opens with an epic funeral march, originally a freestanding tone poem titled Totenfeier (Funeral Rites) from 1888. Following a pause (Mahler stipulated a seldom observed five full minutes), the lighter second and third movements provide a striking contrast to the extreme tension of what has gone before. The third is a darkly ironic Ländler while the second is a hardly ironic Scherzo. Dudamel’s direction here is stylish, supple and very Viennese. Things take a truly cosmic turn in the finale of the work (conceived in 1894) with the appearance of mezzo-soprano Tamara Mumford introducing her emotive Ullrict vocal solo, setting the stage for a truly cataclysmic conclusion which storms the gates of heaven itself in a riveting performance featuring the multiple choirs (situated some three stories above the orchestra on either side of a sadly non-functioning organ), thunderous brass passages both on stage and off and the soaring exhortations of soprano Chen Reiss, all united in a thrilling promise of a life beyond death.

The crack video team employs a phalanx of six cameras, with many shots resorting to extreme close-ups, as the stage is crammed with over 100 musicians and an audience of some 2,000 rapt souls in attendance. The sound is quite vibrant owing to the many ceramic and glass surfaces of the venue.

The Munich Philharmonic plays tremendously well and, most impressively, Dudamel conducts the entire 90-minute performance from memory! It’s quite the occasion, and a celebration that we shall not likely see again for quite some time.

Daniel Foley

Soleriana – Joaquín Rodrigo Chamber Orchestra Works
Orquesta de la Comunidad Valenciana; Joan Enric Lluna
IBS Classical IBS-82020 (ibsclassical.es)

▶ Through the lens of the CD is Soleriana – not only the title of the first work represented, but also a noun of gracia profunda, one used frequently by Rodrigo to describe “purity of the Spanish cultural heritage, undiluted by European influence.” Although Rodrigo was closely identified with European neo-classicism of the 1930s, he imbued his works with many indigenous elements of traditional Spanish forms, particularly dances. This recording presents works composed between 1926 and 1953, and is performed by the noted Orquesta de la Comunidad Valenciana, under the skilled baton of Joan Enric Lluna. The exquisite recording performance took place in front of an enraptured audience at the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia.

The title work is comprised of Entrada, where tender bassoons and oboes are joined by complex Baroque patterns utilizing all the colours of the ensemble; the regal, stirring Fandango; Tourbillon with its superb use of vigorous, passion-filled and insistent cellos and basses; and Pastoral, which is almost spiritual in its musical purity. Imagery of stunning, natural sites is embedded in the music, and the final movement, Passepied, features delicious entanglements of strings and woodwinds.

Two additional pieces are both breathtakingly beautiful celebrations of musical dance motifs and structure: Tres Viejos Aires de Danza and the closing, Zarabanda Lejana y Villancico. This fresh, invigorating and masterfully performed project is both an acknowledgment of an overlooked artist and a marvelous celebration of Spanish culture.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

Erik Satie – Vexations
Noriko Ogawa (1890 Érard Piano)
Bis B18-2325 (naxosdirect.com)

▶ Erik Satie – a true forerunner of the Impressionist school or an accomplished but eccentric dilettante? Nearly 100 years after his death, the composer from Normandy – bearded and bespectacled – continues to be a source of controversy. His music always demonstrated a particular diversity of styles, all of which reveal a strikingly original musical personality – and this Bis recording of Vexations performed by pianist Noriko Ogawa on an 1890 Érard instrument, is yet another example of his eclecticism.

The set reputedly dates from the early 1890s. Typically, Satie provided no information about it, the only source being a scribbled single-page manuscript discovered after his death. From the outset, it’s clearly evident that this is music like no other. The score begins with a single-line 18-note theme which is then repeated, this time used as a bass line for two voices above it moving in tritone harmony. Following a repeat of the single-line theme, the harmonization is then inverted. According to Satie’s instructions, the sequence is to be repeated 840 times! Nevertheless, Ogawa has opted for a more manageable repetition of a mere 142, bringing the length of the performance to a practical 80 minutes. She successfully varies her interpretation through shifts in dynamics and articulation, and in all, delivers a poised and sensitive performance. The result is music which is haunting, unsettling and after a while, possibly even hypnotic.

So, is the final result mesmerizing or futile? Indeed, that would be up to the listener to decide. If you’re seeking something light and melodic to relax to on a summer’s evening, this isn’t it. On the other hand, the ambiance created is perfect for quiet reflection or meditation – all we need are the candles and incense!

Richard Haskell
Kairos 0015002KAI (kairos-music.com)

Ensemble Kyiv; Luigi Gaggero

Samuel Andreyev – Iridescent Notation
(carolineleonardelli.com)

Serenata
works that highlight an artistic voice of

conscientious research culminates in this all-
solo, Italian-based harp-repertoire release
featuring composers from the 19th and early
20th centuries, a time when the modern
version of the concert harp was being intro-
duced. The compositions touch on such
influences as fantasies, studies, suites, clas-
cical, opera arias and folk/popular music.
Léonardelli performs them all with subtlety,
virtuosity and incredible dedication.

Title track Serenata Op.51 No.6 (1910) by Alessandro Longo is an uplifting clas-
cical harp work with contrasting high notes
and lower pitched lines, glissandos and
slight rubatos at the ends of phrases. Luigi
Tedeschi’s slower Etude Impromptu Op.37
(1906) is stylistically more Romantic with
high clear pitches and sensitive melodic
movement. Giovanni Caramiello bases his
Rimembranza di Napoli Op.6 (1877) on two
Neapolitan folk songs. The detached effect
going into the infamous song Santa Lucia, with its high-pitched ringing middle song
section, will make one want to listen to the
harp instead of trying to sing along! Two
Gaetano Donizetti opera arias are featured,
one arranged by Albert Zabel and the other
by John Thomas. Both become harp arias
without words while remaining very true to
Donizetti’s original works. Virgilio Mortari’s
two pieces feature more contemporary
colours and chromatic melodies.

Léonardelli is an expressive, smart, devoted
harp soloist. Both harp fans and those new
to this instrument will enjoy her performances.

Tiina Kilk

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY

Samuel Andreyev – Iridescent Notation
Dina Pysarenko; Maren Schwier; Ukho
Ensemble Kyiv; Luigi Gaggero
Kairos 0015002KA1 (kairos-music.com)

In this latest release from
Canadian composer
Samuel Andreyev
(b.1981), the virtu-
osic Ukrainian
Ukho Ensemble
Kyiv and guest solo-
ists expertly deliver a collection of chamber
works that highlight an artistic voice of
obvious contemporary importance – a voice
well beyond its years in maturity and control
of expressive intent.

This disc begins with the title-track work, a
piece in seven movements for soprano and
ensemble, with text by well-known English-
Irish poet Tom Raworth. Here, the strong
ensemble writing expertly punctuates elegant
beacons that complement the soaring soprano
part remarkably well. The extended techniques
(unusual ways of playing the instruments)
used throughout are decidedly modernist
in their application, but the utility of these
procedures is not used merely for surface
effect: the resultant atmosphere heightens
the quality of the text setting through highly
creative musical pronouncements. A big
standing ovation must go to soprano Maren
Schwier for an incredible display of vocal acro-
batics and control of colour, in what is quite a
challenging work for the voice.

With a collection of works that make use
of many impressive jagged gestures that never
seem to disappoint despite their frequency,
there is a brilliant moment of contrast on the
disc in a piece titled Nets Move Slowly. Yet, this
piece is mysterious and elegant as it unfolds
throughout pulsing hypnotic panoramas.
Expectations are not redirected through punchy
instrumental interjections, but through abrupt
eye shifts in mood – a quality that
produces beauty through lucidity.

With a collection of successful and sophis-
ticated works, it is no wonder Andreyev
continues to make his mark on the contem-
porary music world. We all look forward to
more exciting music from this young talent.

Adam Scime

Belvedere
Jon Siddall
Independent (jonsiddall.com)

I’ve returned to that approach. The music
develops, but slowly, or maybe hardly at
all.” Siddall’s music could also be tagged
minimalist or experimental ambient, genres
that Siddall has deep roots in: his teachers
have included leading maverick composers
James Tenney (York University, Toronto),
Terry Riley and Lou Harrison (California).

Siddall plays four of the Belvedere tracks
on electric guitar, electric bass, mandolin
and electric piano. The fifth track, Hello
Snowflake, is played on the gamelan degung
of West Java, Indonesia performed by the
eight musicians of Gamelan Si Pawit, Siddall’s
Vancouver group.

Degung, a kind of tuned percussion
ensemble, also features a solo suling (bamboo
ring flute). In this score however, Siddall
chose not to use the suling and kendang set
(barrel hand drums), but rather adds two
ku caps (plucked West Javanese zithers).
The result: exclusively struck and plucked sounds
which naturally decay each at its own rate,
evoking a non-pulsed, unhurried, contempl-
ative mood.

Siddall’s rock guitar background shines
through in Bliss Curve and in the spacious
Belvedere for electric guitar trio. Clementine
Mandala, for vintage Fender Rhodes (elec-
tric piano), is constructed of a long ascending
melody performed at different speeds, super-
imposed in various ways, a texture common
also in gamelan music.

The composer writes evocatively, “Belvedere –
this is a vista, a beautiful view [to leisurely
contemplate]. This album ... invites immer-
sion into that space. It’s music for dreamers,
music to dream with, music with which to
awaken calm.”

Andrew Timar

Quinsin Nachoff – Pivotal Arc
Nathalie Bonin; Molinari String Quartet;
Quinsin Nachoff; JC Sanford
Whirlwind Recordings WR4761
(quinsin.com)

Composer and saxophonist Quinsin
Nachoff has been merging formal
composition and an expansive jazz
vocabulary since

group on his 2006 debut Magic Numbers.
However, the blurring of traditionally distinct
musical categories has reached its high point in
the three compositions heard on Pivotal Arc.
The CD’s major work is Nachoff’s Violin
Concerto for soloist Nathalie Bonin, a
46-minute work in the traditional three-
movement format. Fusing elements of Berg
and Stravinsky and occasionally reminis-
cent of William Russo’s music, the work is
written in a heterodox personal idiom for an
ensemble that includes the Molinari String
Quartet, seven brass and woodwinds, and a
jazz-based rhythm section with bassist Mark
Helias, drummer Satoshi Takeishi and vibra-
phonist Michael Davidson providing special
propulsion. Conducted by JC Sanford, the
performance brims with life, with Bonin
bringing a special animation to its tango and
Balkan-sulfused elements and a cadenza that
mingles composed and improvised materials.

Nachoff’s String Quartet is filled with dense
harmonies and sudden explosions, eschewing
any immediate references to the elements of
jazz. Each of the four movements is based on
a different lead voice, the device contributing
to each segment’s distinctive quality. The
concluding Pivotal Arc, more traditional in
its harmonic language, is also the piece that
mixes improvisation to the fore, from Helias’
elegiac arco solo to Nachoff’s own tenor saxophone ornamentation, precise, expressionist, thematic by turn, whether etched in abrasive split tones or soaring highs.

Stuart Brooker

Chamber Works by Walter Kaufmann
ARC Ensemble
Chandos CHAN 20170 (chandos.net)

This, the first-ever CD devoted to the music of Walter Kaufmann (1907–1984), is the latest in the Music in Exile series by Toronto’s ARC Ensemble (Artists of The Royal Conservatory), showcasing unheralded composers who fled Nazi Europe. In 1934, the Czech-born Kaufmann left Germany, becoming director of European music for Bombay’s All India Radio, composing, conducting, playing viola and piano in chamber ensembles and researching Indian, Nepalese, Bhutanese and Tibetan music. Moving to Canada in 1947, he served as the Winnipeg Symphony’s first music director (1948-1958) before teaching ethnomusicology at Indiana University.

Although Kaufmann composed prolifically throughout his career, including six symphonies and over 20 operas, each piece on this disc dates from his years in India. String Quartets Nos.7 and 11 receive visceral performances from the stellar foursome of violinists Erikia Raum and Marie-Arund Hart, violist Steven Dann and cellist Thomas Wiebe, Raum and pianist Kevin Ahfat collaborate in Violin Sonata No.2; clarinetist Joaquin Valdepeñas and Ahfat perform Sonatina No.12 (originally for violin and piano); violinist Jamie Kruspe and cellist Kimberly Jeong join the ensemble in Septet for three violins, viola, two cellos and piano.

These are substantial works, in which plaintive solemnity alternates with emphatic, syncopated dances, all heavily imbued with Indian modal, melodic and rhythmic sequences. I found this engrossing mix of European and Asian traditions richly rewarding and hope that this superb CD will inspire more recordings of Kaufmann’s music. I’d love to hear them.

Michael Schulman

In Lights Starkly Different
Drew Whiting
Innova Recordings innova 032 (innova.mu)

American saxophonist Drew Whiting’s wide-ranging musical expertise performing on soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophones, combined with his interest and dedication to contemporary electronic music, make his release featuring seven recent sax/electronics compositions memorable.

In Lights Starkly Different, composer Robin Julian Helfetz created loud and hyper-digital sounds using REPlayPLAy software and later processed with GRAM Tools. Chance and notation drive the piece as the tenor saxophone’s fast flourishes and tones ground the background electronic crashing, echoes and intense atonal effects. More unsettling sounds in Ed Martin’s Break, as Whiting plays bari-tone loud/soft contrasts, wailing atonality and pitch slides against intense electronic washes and crashes. In Ötzi (named after a 5,000-year-old mummy) composer Alexis Bacon’s recorded rocks and metal noises make ecstatic clicks, crashes and walking sounds against the tenor sax.

For The Fallen, by Judith Shatin, has its slower, lyrical, emotional soprano sax lines lock into electronics created from recordings of Italy’s Capana dei Caduti (Bell for the Fallen). Love the multiple contrapuntal saxophone lines in John Mayrose’s Random Access, as Mayrose uses live electronics to layer Whiting’s alto sax (stored in RAM) for effects. In Jeff Herrriott’s As brightness is smeared into memory, the reflective romantic soprano sax part is closely connected to electronic washes. Nathan Edwards’ Saudade Study, with tonal ambient tenor sax and delay/reverb effects is sad, thought-provoking emotional mood music.

This is contemporary music at its best as Whiting breathes and plays saxophone in contrasting intensities and styles with diverse electronics effects.

Tiina Kilk

Forward Music Project 1.0
Amanda Gookin
Bright Shiny Things BSTC-0135 (brightshiny.ninja)

It is the highest level of artistry that can realize a message, a story or an emotion while seeming to have not performed it at all. This was my takeaway from my introduction to cellist Amanda Gookin.

Forward Music Project 1.0 is a collection of seven pieces for solo cello and electronics ranging in length from five to 12 minutes by seven culturally diverse women composers. I rarely found myself thinking of the stunning level of execution; I was so immersed in the inspired delivery of these seven miniatures of art.

Beginning with Natalie Joachim’s Dam maven yo, a picturesque blending of the voices of Haitian women lovingly embraced with cello, to the dynamic and powerfully joyous final track of Jessica Meyers’s Suvvere, each work outlines themes of the cross-cultural injustice and suffering of women. From one track to the next I was moved by the stunning technique that beautifully unified the collection. Gookin keeps the unique and accessible collaboration on message by including the voices of the composers themselves, available as short descriptive intros in their own voices on YouTube, thus keeping this album refreshingly free of ego. But the music itself warrants attention regardless of the storytelling.

“For mothers. For sisterhood. For brave storytellers and quiet listeners. I sing, I gasp, I fight. I breathe life into the work of these fearless artists. I founded Forward Music Project for you. And you are not alone.”

I was woefully ignorant of Amanda Gookin before this inspired listen, but I have surely become among her greatest fans. A significant and most welcome collaboration for the times.

Cheryl Ockrant

Mark Abel – The Cave of Wondrous Voice
David Shifrin; Fred Sherry; Hila Piltmann; Sabrina-Vivian Höpcker; Dominic Cheli; Carol Rosenberger; Sarah Beck
Delos DE 3570 (naxosdirect.com)

California-based composer Mark Abel explains in the liner notes that his father was a “devotee” of such classical chamber music composers as Mozart, Brahms, Beethoven and Dvořák, which clearly influenced his emotionally driven compositions grounded in modern and classical styles. Abel is renowned for his vocal works. His exciting song cycle Four Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva features four Russian poems translated to English for the first time by Alyssa Dinega Gillespie. Soprano Hila Piltmann sings with dramatic clarity, musicality, tuning and high pitches. Carol Rosenberger (piano) and Sarah Beck (English horn) support with technical/musical control as the words and music are one.

Diverse tonal and stylistic storytelling is featured in Abel’s chamber works. Intuition’s Dance features Rosenberger and clarinetist David Shifrin playing contrasting happy bounce faster, and slower spooky lyrical sections. Cellist Fred Sherry joins them in the three-movement Clarinet Trio in which they each are almost soloists, especially in Taking Flight, with its energetic pulsing opening, and upbeat jazz-flavoured closing.

Another wordless musical story suggesting “the subconscious mind’s journey through the course of the day” is The Elastic Hours, performed by violinist Sabrina-Vivian Höpcker and pianist Dominic Cheli. What Friday Brought opens with a positive end-of-the-work-week mood until stuff happens with moody tremolos, and held notes.

September 2020 | 49

2601_Discovers_Master.indd 49

2020-08-26 12:33:57 AM
Saturday’s Circumference is a driving tonal duet featuring intermittent happy toe-tapping and slower reflective sections. Abel is a compositional master of intriguing contemporary music.

**JAZZ AND IMPROVISED**

**Life is a Gong Show**
**Songs of Tales**
**Roots2boot Recordings (roots2boot.com)**

A bewitching collaboration born from the minds of four talented jazz musicians from across Canada, this debut CD is a simple yet complex musical hodgepodge of eclectic rhythms and meandering melodies brought together by great musicianship. Saxophonist and keyboardist Petter Cancura; Jean Martin on drums, vibraphone and electronics; lesse Zubot on violin, bass, congas and synths; and Gordon Grdina on oud, guitars and bass, together produce a very apparent likeminded flow of creativity and expression. What really makes this album stand out is the instrumentation featuring the pairing of saxophone and violin that often play main melodic strains together; the tracks take on a unique modernistic quality yet still with a touch of authenticity. Throw the electronics into the mix and you have a truly pleasurable avant-jazz-pop-jazz album.

The record starts off with a picturesque opening track, Traure, which calls to mind a scene from a western with a classic cowboy stardown which reflects the fact that partial inspiration for this album is taken from film music. Burning Bright takes on another tone altogether, leaning more towards jazz with rhythmic complexity, sax and vibraphone melody and a hint of uncertainty stirred in. The album ends with Mary Go Round, a track that conjures up the image of a vast expanse, a melancholic and haunting violin and acoustic guitar theme bringing the scenic musical journey to a close. A truly interesting and inspiring album.

**Borjoner**
**Aimee-Jo Benoit and Trio Velocity**
**Independent (aimeejobenoit.com)**

Famed vocalist Aimee-Jo Benoit’s newest release featuring Trio Velocity can be described as “an album of loosely arranged...tunes closest to the heart of the [artist’s] musical journey.” The tracks are a collection of songs written by renowned musicians from various corners of the musical universe, ranging from Kurt Cobain to Paul McCartney and Burt Bacharach. Benoit’s unique soft-yet-defined timbre combined with instrumentation featuring upright bass, drums and piano enables these arrangements to have an interesting and refreshing twist. Each track has its own story to tell and the vocalist herself expresses her love of storytelling by “using a variety of vocal techniques to convey the narrative inherent in [each] song.”

Benoit’s interpretation of Cobain’s All Apologies stands out for highlighting the main recognizable riff while replacing the melancholic tone of the original song with a much more positive one through the use of Sheldon Zandboer’s soft and melodic piano theme. This Flight Tonight is an energetic and pleasing interpretation of Joni Mitchell’s classic tune carried forward by Simon Fisk on bass and Robin Tufts on drums, within which you can hear hints of Mitchell’s timbre peaking through in Benoit’s vocal styling while she still makes the tune completely her own. For those in search of a refreshing take on modern classics with just the right amount of character mixed in, this album is a perfect listen.

**Rise and Shine**
**Grant Stewart Quartet**
**Cellar Music CM110419 (cellarlive.com)**

A discussion I frequently have with fellow jazz musicians regarding what percentage of a musician’s time is best allocated towards paying homage to the tradition, versus innovating. I’m generally of the camp that stresses innovation and modernity, but I have much respect for those who masterfully devote themselves to keeping a more classic style of improvised music alive, with the caveat that this is executed in the most genuine and immaculate way possible.

What could be a better way to accomplish this goal, than to record at the Meccasque Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey locale that has accommodated countless sessions for Prestige, Blue Note, Impulse and CTI, among other record labels? Jazz is a style of music that frequently negates the technicalities of where it’s recorded (“it’s all about the notes, man!”) but a listener would be hard pressed not to notice the unique sound Rudy Van Gelder’s studio imparts, even today, four years after the late engineer’s passing. The thought crossed my mind how perfectly both Grant Stewart’s musicianship and the aforementioned studio fit the mandate of Cellar Music – “timeless, swinging, heartfelt, and resonant.”

Returning to my earlier musings on tradition versus innovation, it strikes me that there is a certain level of commitment necessary to make a recording in 2020 that harkens back to the jazz of the 50s and 60s sound “timeless.” Grant Stewart, along with his stellar band and excellently balanced repertoire, demonstrate this commitment to its fullest extent, making Rise and Shine a treat to listen to.

**Ted Parkinson**

**Night Devoid of Stars**
**Daniel Hersog Jazz Orchestra**
**Cellar Music CM051119 (cellarlive.com)**

Three words come to mind when listening to Night Devoid of Stars: sophisticated, assured and grooving. Daniel Hersog is based in Vancouver, as are most of the excellent musicians in his orchestra, but the album features two special guests: New York saxophonist Noah Preminger and pianist Frank Carlberg (director of the New England Conservatory Jazz Composers’ Workshop Orchestra). Hersog’s compositions contain many textures and techniques, incorporating contrapuntal movement between horn sections, extended passages with flute and muted brass voicings, other times opening up for feature soloists. The opening song, Cloud Break, begins with a four-note rising fanfare which is thrown around between brass and wind sections, takes on a minor variation and some counterpoint that leads into a free-wheeling trumpet solo from Frank Turner that is both loose and swinging. Motion begins with some fine gospel piano from Carlberg, and after the band enters to state a theme, he embarks on a solo grounded in solid rhythm with just enough notes to impart feeling and innuendo without hubris. After a brief ensemble interlude, Preminger lays down a solo that demonstrates why he won a Downbeat award. He begins with a sparse and wistful melody, his lines become more fluid, and he and Carlberg perform some off-rhythmic riffing, and then he throws in a few angular and aggressive patterns before the band’s outro and Carlberg’s calm ending.

Night Devoid of Stars is full of complex and surprising moments like these. In fact, the title has to be slightly ironic because there are many stars on this album: Hersog’s compositions and arrangements, his featured guests and the very fine jazz orchestra.

**Kati Killaspea**

**Cellar Music CM110419 (cellarlive.com)**
Stil I Rise  
Derrick Gardner & the Big dig! Band  
Impact Jazz IJ002 (derrickgardnermusic.com)

Derrick Gardner’s musical journey began in Chicago, where both his parents were musicians and educators, moved to New York for more study, then around the world as he played in the Count Basie Orchestra and other groups. Since 2011 he has held the Babs Asper Chair in Jazz Trumpet at the University of Manitoba’s School of Music in Winnipeg. For Still I Rise, an album he composed and gathered, he met musical friends and family from the past two decades (from the United States, several players local to Winnipeg and others, like Curtis Nowosad who was originally from Winnipeg but has been making a name for himself in New York).

Soulful Brother Gelispie, is dedicated to drummer Randy Gelispie, and contains excellent solos from guitarist Kasey Kuritz, Mark Gross on soprano sax and Nowosad on drums. Melody for Trayvon (dedicated to the teen slain in a “neighbourhood watch fiasco” in 2012) is slower and pensive, reminiscent of Mingus’ tone and tempos, leaping registers and shifting temps, all delivered with a kind of playful aplomb. There’s more of the same in Laubrock’s Whistlings, music in which dexterity is not an end but a gateway to new terrain, soprano saxophone and piano so close as to suggest a single musician.

Much of the music here is simply beautiful, but often in fresh ways. Laubrock produces sonorities of rare lustre, while Davis’ clouds of limpid notes blur Debussy and Second Viennese School. Their inventiveness and sense of detail are evident in Davis’ Flying Embers in which Laubrock’s quiet long tones and subtly shifting pitches fuse with the sustained hum of the piano strings. Laubrock’s Maroon moves toward form: initially baldic, it moves through a sustained free exchange, eventually arriving at two distinct voices, a lyric saxophone and an insistently percussive, mechanistic piano.

Ted Parkinson

Blood Moon  
Ingrid Laubrock; Kris Davis  
Intakt CD 345 (intaktrec.ch)

German saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock and Canadian pianist Kris Davis met more than a decade ago as newcomers to the New York jazz world. They soon developed a trio, Paradoxical Frog, with drummer Tyshawn Sorey and have collaborated in various projects, including Laubrock’s Antí- House quintet and her orchestral Contemporary Chaos Practices. In recent years, each has achieved considerable prominence, recording frequently and topping international jazz critics polls. This state-of-the-art dialogue at chamber music dynamic levels demonstrates why.

Davis’ opening Snakes and Latitice introduces a partnership of virtuosos as they fly through a complex series of glissandi and tremolos, leaping registers and shifting temps, all delivered with a kind of playful aplomb. There’s more of the same in Laubrock’s Whistlings, music in which dexterity is not an end but a gateway to new terrain, soprano saxophone and piano so close as to suggest a single musician.

Much of the music here is simply beautiful, but often in fresh ways. Laubrock produces sonorities of rare lustre, while Davis’ clouds of limpid notes blur Debussy and Second Viennese School. Their inventiveness and sense of detail are evident in Davis’ Flying Embers in which Laubrock’s quiet long tones and subtly shifting pitches fuse with the sustained hum of the piano strings. Laubrock’s Maroon moves toward form: initially baldic, it moves through a sustained free exchange, eventually arriving at two distinct voices, a lyric saxophone and an insistently percussive, mechanistic piano.

Stuart Broomer

Inside Rhythmic Falls  
Aruán Ortiz w/Andrew Cyrille; Mauricio Herrera  
Intakt CD 339 (aruan-ortiz.com)

Atrium’s solo CD Cuba(n)ism explored the dual vision of painter Wilfredo Lam; Inside Rhythmic Falls extends recent trio recordings but does so with a difference: it’s a percussion trio, setting the piano in conversation with two very different drummers: Andrew Cyrille, best known perhaps for a decade-long partnership with Cecil Taylor, but whose 60-year career began by recording with Coleman Hawkins and includes explorations of his Haitian roots; and Mauricio Herrera, who sings and plays Cuban vernacular percussion, some reaching back to Africa: changüí, bongos, catá and cowbells.

The music is filled with a special mystery and a rare vitality: the former raises queries about methodology; the latter silences them. The cross patterns of Lucero Mundo include speech-like vocals as well as the calm elaboration of complex rhythms, while Martimbula’s Mood is suffused with hypnotic ambiguity. Conversation with the Oaks is abstract musing, a la Taylor and Hill, with Cyrille supporting multiple paths; the concluding Para Ti Nengón celebrates hybridity, adding three vocalists for a popular Cuban song.

Stuart Broomer
**Irrationalities**

Petros Klampanis

Enja Yellow Bird YEB-7797
(petrosklampanis.com)

The personal, profound and eloquent utterances grow organically into and out of this extraordinary music by contrabassist Petros Klampanis together with the brilliant young pianist Kristjan Randalu and the drum wizard, Bodek Janke. Irrationalities has luxuriant and mystical music, played with intimately expressed feelings and emotion.

All three musicians have proven their versatility on numerous occasions and their coming together here again, at the bassist’s behest, to play his atmospheric music seems to be a divinely fortuitous event. The music that ensues on the recording is something to die for. It is fastidiously conceived and sensuously played. Not a single semiquaver is out of place as Klampanis, Randalu and Janke traverse what seems like one musical epiphany after another.

The performance on Seeing You Behind My Eyes is enigmatic. The two parts of Temporary Secret are beguiling and Blame It On My Youth is simply breathtaking. A rare kind of intimacy and shared enjoyment is all over the performance. Compositions are idiomatically interpreted and every improvisational phrase is seized as if to capture the most ephemeral aspects of musical creation – and that too, with consummate ease.

This music is natural and inspired. Klampanis’ powerful virtuosity rumbles with gravitas from the very first bars that he plays. Unusual, even through the darkest tones of his bass, is the manner in which he is able to make it all work, while offsetting Randalu’s wispy elegance and quiet charm and Bodek’s whispered gentility throughout.

**Raul da Gama**

*Live in Willisau*

James Brandon Lewis; Chad Taylor

Intakt CD 342 (intaktrec.ch)

Heir to unabashed reed/drums experimentation, Americans James Brandon Lewis (tenor saxophone) and Chad Taylor (percussion) equally emphasize links to the jazz tradition on this exemplary Swiss festival set. Lewis, whose gripping ability to invest animated improvisations with multiple variations on extended reed techniques from call-and-response vamps to inlating glissolalia, is substantially encouraged by Taylor’s coordinated strategies. The drummer’s substantial rhythmic sophistication is further extended with jolts of mbira (thumb piano) plinks when the program warrants it.

In essence that means that the nine-track set gets more gripping as it evolves. Alongside socking drum beats, the saxophonist ratchets through every manner of altissimo cries and subterranean horns, melismatic slurs and mockling phrases as the two redefine a Coltrane line and their own originals. Later Mal Waldson’s obscure Watakushi No Sekai, positioned with cymbal crakles and reed-shattering sparks is interpreted as movingly as is a quietly genial version of Duke Ellington’s famous Come Sunday. Finally the two respond to vociferous audience acclaim, with an encore of a reconstituted Over the Rainbow, featuring hide-and-seek divulging of the melody among stuttering reed split tones and percussion clip-clops. But the concert’s most telling track and an acknowledgment of departed improvisational masters, is a screaming near-R&B version of Willisee featuring drum shuffles and yakkity-sax variations. This same tune was performed on the same stage in 1980 with equal energy and skill by its composer, tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, in a duo with drummer Ed Blackwell.

**Ken Waxman**

*Delicacies in the Garden of Plenty*  
Sarah Peebles; Kyle Brenders; Nilan Perera Independent  
(secondharvestca.bandcamp.com)

Four adept improvisation arbiters from four countries assembled for a program of unadulterated improvisation at the Jazz Cerkno festival recently and A uǐš is the enraptured result. The title means “and you go” in Slovenian, which sums up the mutual respect and lack of arrogance each displays towards the others’ talents.

Tenor saxophonist Evan Parker was present at the birth of the genre more than 50 years ago; French bassist Joëlle Léandre and Catalan pianist Agusti Fernández arrived a little later. All have been in fruitful partnerships with one another as has Slovenian percussionist Zlatko Kaučič, whose 40th anniversary as a musician was being celebrated. Throughout this single 45-minute improvisation the four are always in sync, yet constantly projecting individual tropes: Parker’s circular breathing expressions; Léandre’s dramatic command of pressurized twang and arco sweeps; Fernández’s judicious key positioning that encompasses internal string plucks and kinetic keyboard agitation; and Kaučič’s prudent theme patterning that bolsters without bombast.

The piece’s texture unfolds with collective logic at the same time as acerbic peeps and sympathetic echoes evolve from single sound strands to multiphonic emphasis. Yet the transitions, as well as focused solos and duos, arrive and depart with such subtle competence that narrative flow is never disrupted. Rapturous applause at the finale demonstrates not only why the performance is another exemplar of free music but also confirms each quartet member’s immense and ingenious talents.

**Ken Waxman**

*POT POURRI*
constructed in the recording studio for our listening pleasure.  

Andrew Timar

Of Shadows
Kamancello
Independent (kamancello.com)

► Last year I reviewed Kamancello II: Voyage. I noted that the portmanteau word Kamancello was invented to serve as the name of the Toronto-based bowed-string instrument duo of Kurdish-Iranian kamanche player and composer Shahriyar Jamshidi, and classically trained Canadian cellist and composer Raphael Weinroth-Browne. Weinroth-Browne is also a member of the progressive metal band Leprous. And his motoric metal cello chops occasionally emerge in his Kamancello contributions.

Describing their music as “East-meets-West,” rendering “improved performances [that] transcend genres and cultural boundaries,” they take us on another epic musical journey on their new six-track album Of Shadows. As on the previous outing, improvisation is front and centre. The duo proudly states as much on its Bandcamp page – “recorded live at Union Sound Company in Toronto … all of the music on this album is fully improvised and unedited” – lending the musical dialogue an organic quality. Yet there are also well-developed modal-melodic frameworks and formal structures shaping the improvis into a coherent musical narrative.

Individual tracks in Of Shadows often commence quietly without pulse, then slowly develop a polyphonic texture through a fluent dialogue between these two sensitive musicians building themes and dramatic tension. Listening to this new album reinforced an appreciation of the timbral differences between the mellow deep cello sound and that of the thinner, higher tessitura kamanche, distinctions effectively exploited by the duo. Yet again, it was the perfect music to accompany my inner journey this evening.

Andrew Timar

Sounds of Brazil
Angela Turone; Chris Platt
Independent (chrisplattmusic.ca; angelaturone.com)

► Angela Turone and Chris Platt, like so many of us around the globe, have become smitten with Brazilian music. Although there is a deep, rich musical culture in that country that goes beyond bossa nova, that well-known style is the focus of the Toronto-based duo’s debut album, Sounds of Brazil. Bossa nova has a light, breezy air to it which belies the complexity of the music and the skill required to master it, which Turone and Platt do, with a little help from some friends.

Turone beautifully handles all the piano playing and singing – much of the latter in Portuguese – and her warm, pure vocals really suit the style. Platt does all the deft guitar work, most prominently on nylon string. The duo covers standards by Jobim, de Moraes and others – several from the classic Getz/Gilberto album, which essentially introduced bossa nova to North America – with a few jazz standards and lesser-known gems too. There’s plenty of collaboration with local talent, including ethnomusicologist and keyboardist, Gordon Sheard, who produced the album. Andrew Downing’s cello work shines on many tracks, in particular on the haunting Chega de Saudade. On the sprightly Doralice, everyone’s agility is on display, in particular Chase Sanborn on trumpet and John Nicholson on flute doubling Turone’s vocal gymnastics. The standout, for me, is Lendas Brasileiras by Guinga. Gorgeous. The final tune – featuring percussionist Helio Cunha – ventures into samba territory and since that style epitomizes the renowned pre-Lent celebrations in Rio, A Festa Do Divino, is a fitting closer to this fine album.

Cathy Riches

Soul Singer
John Finley
Vesuvius Music (johnfinleymusic.com)

► Vocalist and composer John Finley’s impressive career includes more than 50 years of navigating the heady waters of blues, popular music, gospel and soul. During that time, not only has Finley established himself as a compelling and vibrant performer, but also as a fine composer and noted crafter of hit tunes. He has shared the stage with an array of top-flight artists, including the Rolling Stones and The Temptations. After an extended stay in LA, Finley returned to his native Toronto in 2018 and subsequently released perhaps the finest recording of his soulful career.

Brilliant producer/arranger Lou Pomanti is a driving force behind this project, having co-written two tunes and performed on piano, organ and keyboards. The fine cast of musicians also includes Marc Rogers on bass, Larnell Lewis and Davide Direnzo on drums, John Findlay and Sam Pomanti on guitar, William Carn on trombone, William Sperandei and Tony Carlucci on trumpet and Alison Young on Saxophone.

Nearly all 11 compositions on this album were penned or co-penned by Finley, and first at bat is Let Me Serenade You. Gospel motifs saturate this soulful, By-driven tune and Finley’s well-lived-in, elastic tenor swoops and dips through this joyful track, replete with exquisitely placed horn lines and swinging, rhythmic, background vocals. Other highlights include GO, an uber-cool journey into a deep cave of funk and also the enervating closer, Who Will The Next Fool Be? – a languid, down-home blues tinged with just the right amount of ennui, vigour and regret by Finley. This exceptionally conceived, produced, written, arranged and performed album is one of the most musically and emotionally satisfying recordings that I have had the chance to experience this year.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

Breath & Hammer
David Krakauer; Kathleen Tagg
Table Pounding Records (tablepoundingmusic.com)

► Alchemy is an attempt to turn base metal into gold. That’s a bit like what clarinetist David Krakauer and pianist Kathleen Tagg have done with this release. Issuing a call for raw material, in the form of song ideas, from their various musical friends, they then gave each a treatment blending electro-acoustic effects. You wouldn’t know it from listening, but each track is a mosaic of multiple electronic bits.

The Hammer is Tagg, an adept performer/engineer of the prepared piano who uses her experience in contemporary extended techniques to expand the instrument, unlocking its potential for sounds well beyond convention. Breath is supplied by Krakauer, who is possibly best known for his mastery of the klezmer style, although that is just one of the several musical hats he wears. Per The Wall Street Journal: “Krakauer... moves so seamlessly between different genres... you’d almost think there’s no appreciable difference between jazz, klezmer and formal classical music.”

You might categorize this as a jazz-coloured klezmer album, the experience elevated or transformed by virtue of the novel sounds produced by the two musicians. Both engage in beat-boxing, bouncing bops of sound out of the bodies of their instruments. Tagg gets inside the lid and draws a spectrum across the strings beyond the bridge, sending shivers up the spine. Soft-shoe breath effects alternate with pop bottle hoots in the intro of Rattlin’ Down the Road. Demon Chopper is great rapid-fire fun. Listen and wonder: “How’d they do that?”

Max Christie
Something in the Air
Novel instrumental partnerships create out-of-the-ordinary sonic agendas

KEN WAXMAN

Just as innovation in jazz, notated and popular music rewrote precepts about harmony, melody, pitch and rhythm during the 20th century, so were the shibboleths about instruments’ interconnections remade. With even newer attitudes in the 21st century, pairing two instruments’ supposedly dissimilar timbres is no longer outrageous, but can lead to appealing sounds.

Consider for example, Invisible Ritual (Tundra Records TUN 014 newfocusercordings.com) that joins Americans Jennifer Curtis (violin) and Tyshawn Sorey, who plays percussion and piano. Curtis’ background includes playing old-timey music and membership in the contemporary chamber group ICE. Sorey composes for ensembles such as ICE as well as giggling as a jazz drummer with the likes of Myra Melford. The pair stretch boundaries only slightly during expected chamber music violin-piano configurations here. But while there’s a near cocoon feel when the pianist sticks to prudent and deliberate patterning and the fiddler sweetens textures to the quasi-baroque, other sequences such as Invisible Ritual III and Invisible Ritual V are invested with dynamic animation. A heavier touch encompassing key clip and clinks from the piano adds swing intimations further propelled by impetuous violin glissandi and, especially on the second tune, triple-stopping variations and col legno taps. Contrast is more markedly defined when percussion is involved. Starting with a folksy exposition, gong-like reverberations and arco string strokes add to the reflective mood. The same sort of savvy is brought to faster numbers. Kinetic steepclashes are propelled by chunky drum rumbles and cymbal echoes from Sorey as Curtis, jumping from strained squeaks to pizzicato cato to arco, often during the same line. As he slaps cymbal and snares, she heads into hoedown territory and then turns to tough tremolo plucks on the fiddle, references the heads as they create new distinctive melodies. There’s even a point on Invisible Ritual VIII where the blend threatens to create a Balkan-style dance rhythm. Versatility and cooperation is most obvious on Invisible Ritual IV, where Sorey’s heat stretching and ruffs complement Curtis’ dynamic moves back and forth from spiccat to arco, often during the same line. As he slaps cymbal and snares, he heads into hoedown territory and then turns to tough tremolo sweeps to face down the ferocious clip-chop percussion challenge.

As the pressure from tremolo pump organ runs and currents blown from the saxophone without key motion augment, textures bleed together into a solid mass. Eventually though, programmed samples of what could be the sound of waves hitting the shore plus mechanized clanks, whistles and whooshes from the synthesizer penetrate the solid sound block, while preserving calming drone electronics. Although recorded in a residence in rural Sweden which gives the disc its title, the profound control exhibited here doesn’t reflect the rustic location, but contemporary minimalism.

Another variant of unusual keyboard-woodwind pairing occurs on Cell Walk (Songlines Records SGL 1631-2 songlines.com) between Wayne Horvitz’s piano and electronics and Sara Schoenebeck’s bassoon. Both are American and have worked in the circles around John Zorn and Anthony Braxton. Trying to avoid the expectations raised by these formal chamber music instruments though, the tracks, recorded in Vancouver and Brooklyn, include both compositions and improvisations. Not that the separation is obvious. Most tunes, no matter the tempo, depend on Schoenebeck’s flexible expansion of the low-pitched double reed’s characteristics and their symmetry with Horvitz’s fluid, but sometimes standard keyboard contours. Mostly the briefest tracks are gentler, vivace and buoyant, intermission riffs for the darker compositions. Some, like the title track, an almost church-like dirge, are legitimately gloomy, since the mournful melody was composed by Horvitz to honour the recently deceased Cecil Taylor. Others, such as No Blood Relation, are more calculating, as piano patterns vibrate alongside the bassoon’s heavy tones. After the turnaround, she supplyly recaps the theme. Well reasoned, Ironbound gets its pressurised motion from the bassoonist’s disjoint colouring that increases tension at the same time as the pianist ranges over the keyboard to maintain horizontal pacing while creating multiple theme variations. Tougher and more notable are The Fifth Day and especially We Will Be Silk. Longest of the set, the first tune is mid-range and concentrated, with Reed snarls and piano clinks harmonized as they repeat the melody that climaxes during a section where Schoenebeck’s slurs and Horvitz’s elevated key tinkles move the interpretation along unexpected avenues without losing the theme. A flat-out improvisation, We Will Be Silk is built on contrasts between the bassoonist’s hard nasal strains and the pianist’s internal string and soundboard plucks and clicks. Since this improvisation’s finale is as clear and solid as any other track, it would have made the session more imposing if the program had been looser to produce more tracks like it.

Although they’re from the same instrumental family almost no one has previously created a duo matching the tiny piccolo violin and the giant octohass until The Touchables came along. On The Noise is Rest (Conradsound CNRD 328 conradsound.com) Norwegian, fiddler Ole-Henrik Moe and bassist Guro Skumsnes Moe range through eight improvisations that not only reach the far boundaries of treble and bass tones, but also easily create textures that squeeze past what’s expected from string sets. Mixing wood-rending pulls, taut string pressure and spiccato drones, the two also maintain a discordant continuum throughout. Often the piccolo shrills reach such elevated pitches that it could be electronic voltage being pushed into the improvisations. Ocean-liner-whistle vibrations from the octobass regularly descend to such a sunken state that passing tones bond into multophonics, filling every crevice of the audio space. A track such as Peace Ghost, which in itself is wilder and louder than those that precede it, includes such sharp, shimmering violin timbres that the resulting echoes are almost brass-like, whereas Byatullalabandbird’s slick mid-range bass glissandi sound with such fluidity that the closest resemblance would be to low-pitched reed split tones. By the final Deserted Desert, wide-ranging col legno strokes and pointillist screeches from both instruments combine with triple-stopping piccololetto shrills and moderated arco string buffing from the
octobass. Eventually a calming climax is attained as tension-diffusing air currents complete the arrangement.

If the other CDs highlight unexpected and unprecedented extended acoustic techniques, the Viennese duo on Jardin des Bruits (Mikroton CD 91 mikroton.net) extend the intonation still further. That’s because the electric guitar interludes of Burkhard Stangl are mated with the sounds of Paris streets and subways that were recorded, collated and modified by turntablist dieb 13. Over the course of 20 (!) tracks that range from a few seconds to nine minutes dieb uses found sounds such as human voices, footfalls, car horn blasts and the regularized thump of road traffic as leitmotifs. Alternately he weaves the textures into an outpouring of crackles, static and voltage tremors to aurally reflect certain areas around the French capital. Simultaneously he alters their sonic properties by replaying the sounds at various speeds as well as adding vinyl-sourced noises. Meanwhile Stangl’s warm finger-style plucks add the human element. Not that the guitar approach is Arcadian though, except on tracks like Jardin des Plantes where soothing strings intersect with the noises of children. The truthfully titled Noisy Track on the other hand is almost eight minutes of Stangl mobilizing his most distorted Hendrix-styled fuzz tones that catapult timbres within the accelerating stylus-on-turntable crackles and buzzes created by dieb. Reaching a crescendo of Hawaiian-styled fretting, guitar lines cut through the static and then slowly fade. Elsewhere, the two variants of Geziyne (stagnant water) unravel with single treble notes from the strings alongside avairy and insect-like whistles and chirps. Throughout, collision with sampled gongs, rumbles, clatters and screeches and well-thought-out, descriptive string patterns confirms that an illuminating sound picture can be built up from onomatopoeic suggestions. Plus the disc provides one more instance of unforeseen duos creating exceptional programs.

Old Wine, New Bottles
Fine Old Recordings Re-Released

The late Isaac Stern exhibited the highest level of musical taste and a charisma on stage, qualities that uniquely come through in his recordings, particularly those from his early years. The young Stern was a highly first-class violinist and virtually one of the best in history. He had a lush, beautiful incandescent sound, perfect intensity and power. He concentrated on music for its own sake and generally did not present fireworks displays although he was perfectly capable of doing so. On Isaac Stern – The Complete Columbia Analogue Recordings we find him featured more in the repertoire of the likes of Mozart, Schubert and Brahms. He was also deeply involved in chamber music which was a big part of his activities. As a young man he was one of the busiest musicians anywhere and was in high demand as a guest artist by the likes of the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Boston Symphony, and distinguished conductors such as Bruno Walter. He was also to be heard in chamber music festivals including the now legendary Casals Festival in Prades. Stern regularly appeared with the most respected musicians such as Dame Myra Hess, William Primrose and David Oistrakh. His early (November 1951) recordings with Sir Thomas Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic playing the Brahms and Sibelius Violin Concertos remain the most impressive performances compared with anyone else, even his own later recordings of these works. His programs were the epitome of serious musical thinking and were influential on violinists who followed. As an example, programs by such artists as Kreisler, Elman and even Heifetz could include concertos in which the orchestral part was played by the accompanying piano. This convention was eliminated in Stern’s recitals, setting an example, and today it is gone.

Stern was born in Kremenets, Ukraine in 1920 and was brought to San Francisco as an infant. His mother was a singer and he began musical studies at home. He studied violin with Naoum Binder and Louis Persinger, making his debut at the age of 11 with the San Francisco Symphony. His New York debut was on October 11, 1937. His tour of Russia in 1956 was a triumph. There was a story going around many decades ago that I first heard in Australia. It concerns a group of young string players in San Francisco playing for pleasure in their home. A passerby who turned out to be Isaac Stern, heard them and asked if he might join them. He did. True or apocryphal, it is a nice story.

As a centenary tribute, Sony has issued Stern’s analogue recordings in a 75-CD set containing all those wonderful Columbia mono and stereo riches, carefully and knowingly prepared from the original sessions. Checking the dates on the genesis of each disc, Stern’s first recording was on April 26/30, 1945 in Columbia’s New York studios playing Beethoven’s Violin Sonata No.7 in C Minor, Op. 30 No.2. The pianist was Alexander Zakin, Stern’s accompanist from 1940 to 1977. On the same disc is Mozart’s Violin Concerto in G Major, K216 recorded with Stern also conducting a chamber orchestra on March 28, 1950. This is the most musically exquisite performance one could ever hope to hear.

These are all irreplaceable performances from his vast recorded repertoire of the most beloved concertos, sonatas, melodies etc. and here are just a few reminders: five CDs from the Casals Festival at Prades featuring, in various combinations, Dame Myra Hess, Alexander Schneider, Paul Tortelier, Milton Thomas, John Wummer, Eugene Istomin, Milton Katims and Madeline Foley. Lalo’s five-movement Symphonie Espagnole in D Minor is conducted by Eugene Ormandy coupled with the Max Bruch Concerto No.2. There are Prokofiev’s First and Second Violin Concertos conducted by Leonard Bernstein, and the Brahms Double Concerto with Leonard Rose, Bruno Walter conducting the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of New York before they became the New York Philharmonic.

So well-remembered is the trio of Isaac Stern, Leonard Rose and Eugene Istomin who recorded the complete Beethoven trios between 1965 and 1970 and the complete Brahms trios in 1964-70. Here they all are in pristine sound. Also the Stravinsky Violin Concerto with the composer conducting, from 1961. Even in this syncopated, jaunty piece the signature Stern sound beams. Add the “Concert of the Century” in Carnegie Hall on May 18, 1976 featuring Bernstein and the NY Philharmonic, Rostropovich, Horowitz, Fischer-Dieskau and the Oratorio Society of New York.
Many music lovers of a certain age may not remember the first time they heard Stern. Perhaps it was in a movie theatre in 1946 watching *Humoresque* as the driven violinist John Garfield and Joan Crawford play out their tragic love story. Audiences were treated to several repertory pieces woven into the plot. Stern recorded all the performances in addition to filming close-ups of the fingering and bowing from all angles which were edited into the film. Moving on... In 1960 Stern was a leader in the successful drive to save Carnegie Hall when the famous NYC institution was threatened by demolition. He then served as president of the hall's new governing body at that time.

*Isaac Stern: The Complete Columbia Analogue Recordings* (*Sony Classical 972.425 isaacsternlegacy.org*), comprise 75 CDs with each recording in a replica of its original jacket, in a sturdy box with a 214-page hardcover book that includes a biography and details of each recording and an index by composer. A set to be treasured!

**Profil** has issued a ten-CD set of notable performances conducted by Jascha Horenstein, *Jascha Horenstein Reference Recordings* (*Profil Edition Hänssler PH19014 naxosdirect.com*). Horenstein was born in Kiev in 1898 and died in London in 1973. His family moved to Vienna in 1911 and in 1916 he was studying at the Vienna Academy of Music, including composition with Franz Schreker. In 1920 he went to Berlin and became an assistant to Wilhelm Furtwängler. In the 1920s he conducted the Vienna Symphony and the Berlin Philharmonic. He became music director of the Düsseldorf Opera in 1929, getting out in 1933 ahead of the Nazis. He moved around, travelling as far as Australia before settling in New York in 1939. In 1947, he returned to Europe and conducted in Paris, Vienna, Bamberg and also Baden-Baden, the home of the Südwestfunk Broadcasting Company whose SWF Symphony Orchestra was second to none. In his last years he was conductor of the LSO.

Perhaps because he was not connected to any one orchestra, the major record companies effectively had no interest in preserving his performances or they would have done so. In the 1960s and 1970s many avid in-the-know music lovers and collectors relied upon smaller independent companies to deliver Horenstein recordings. Vox issued a few, as did Unicorn, Music and Arts, and Koch, and the BBC issued some of their own. For this edition, Profil has selected 22 first-class Horenstein recordings.

Outstanding performances include Liszt’s *A Faust Symphony* with the choral ending; also Wagner’s *A Faust Overture* both from the SWF orchestra and chorus. Other highlights include the *Eroica* with the Vienna Pro Musica and an extraordinarily powerful *Death and Transfiguration* with the Bamberg SO. No less impressive are the Mahler First and Third Symphonies and *Kindertotenlieder* (Heinrich Rehkemper) and the Bruckner *Eighth*. A list of the works would be too long but here are the composers: Bruckner, Mahler, Hindemith, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Ravel, Bartók, Janáček, Wagner, Brahms, Liszt, Beethoven and Richard Strauss. Orchestras are the LSO; Pro Musica, Wein; SWR Symphony, Baden-Baden; Colonne Concerts Orchestra, Paris; Orchestre Radio Symphonique, Paris; the Berlin State Opera Orchestra; the ORTF and the Bamberg Symphony. Soloists are Claudio Arrau, David Oistrakh, Vlad Perlmutter and Ivry Gitlis.

Horenstein conducted every work as if it were the most interesting and important composition ever before him. He demonstrated a concentration and focus that breathed new life and dimension into the most familiar works. The tuttis are organic. His commanding performances are persuasive and consistently engaging.

---

**REMEMBERING**

**LEON FLEISHER**

(July 23, 1928 – August 2, 2020)

The Music is the Star

PAUL ENNIS

Leon Fleisher devoted his life to the piano, first as the foremost American pianist of his generation. The much-lauded collection of LPs he recorded in the 1950s and 60s was capped by a matchless collaboration with George Szell and the Cleveland Orchestra. Then, in 1965, he found it difficult to use the fingers of his right hand, a condition diagnosed as focal dystonia, restricting his repertoire to pieces written for the left hand. But his musical reach grew in other ways – conducting and teaching.

Based in Baltimore at the Peabody Institute from 1959 on, he also taught at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia (1986–2011) and in Toronto, where he was one of the cornerstones of the Glenn Gould School, occupying the Ihnatowycz Chair in Piano. In his late 60s, Fleisher regained the use of his right hand with botox and rolling treatments and resumed limited concertizing and recording (as detailed in the 2006 Oscar-nominated short film, *Two Hands*, available on YouTube).

One measure of the man can be gleaned by the memorable masterclasses he gave during his frequent visits to Toronto (of which I was fortunate to audit 27, between November 2014 and April 2019). They were inspirational and memorable, strewn with anecdotes and words of wisdom. All in the service of bringing the notes on the page, the composer’s intentions, to the fore. “In our celebrity-based culture we are not the stars. We are indispensable, [we’re] needed to bring the music to life,” he said. “[But] the music is the star.”

Fleisher always sat in the front row of Mazzoleni Hall, aisle seat on the left side, with the score on a music stand in front of him. When a student finished their presentation Fleisher stayed seated, silent for a long moment. He then asked the student if they had any concerns about what they had just played – anything that Fleisher might help with. I remember one student voicing concern about his nerves prompting Fleisher to illustrate a case of nerves by one of the greatest composer/pianists of the 20th century.

Fleisher was five years old at the time and had been taking piano lessons for six months. His mother took him to hear Rachmaninoff at the War Memorial Concert Hall in San Francisco. After the concert, his mother dragged him backstage to meet the great musician, who suffered from nervous tension whenever he was onstage. Fleisher’s...
The thing – Brahms’ music flows at a specific personal rate – it flows more co-
sidered that everything he taught me was lodged in my cerebellum and

innumerable ways of expressing his

other comments reflected Fleisher’s playful mind: he once
described Beethoven’s markings in the fourth movement of his quarta

to do it more beautifully. It’s a memory, very fragile. If you do too
much it will disappear – be very still.”

Another tack he took with a student was to ask “To what extent were
you successful in doing what you tried to do?” – an opening
gambit designed to encourage scrutinizing the score and elevating
the student’s performance. He never missed a chance to make one of his
favourite points: “Music is a horizontal activity that goes through all
sorts of adventures – everything has to be part of the entire arc – it is
filled with vertical events like beats in a bar – the danger is that it is
filled with coffin nails.”

Fleisher’s pedagogy was filled with aphorisms. “Playing beautifully
is not necessarily beautiful music.” Or “A metronome is a machine;
has nothing to do with music.” And “Romantic means playing
long notes short and short notes long.” He always deferred to the
score. “You are the actor; the music is the director.” And paradox-
ically (discussing Schubert’s Sonata D958): “In time you can build the
structure with slight rhythmic distortions. Great art in a sense always
involves healthy distortion.”

Memory was clear: “He was very tall, short haircut, face lined like
the map of Russia.” In a heavy Russian accent, Rachmaninoff asked

Fleisher’s conclusion: “There are bad nerves and good nerves. How
much of what I want to do will I be able to communicate? That’s the
good nerves.”

At one masterclass I attended, on November 29, 2014, Fleisher was
into the second piece of the morning masterclass when Brahms’ Piano
Quartet in C Minor Op.60 triggered a recollection: “I had the pleasure
once – and it really was a pleasure – of playing this with three guys
named Jascha [Heifetz], Grisha [Piatigorsky] and William [Primrose].”
What did he remember? That there was no piano in the green room
in the hall in San Francisco, which upset Fleisher, prompting
Piatigorsky to calm his nerves: “Leonski, warming up before the
concert is like doing breathing exercises before dying.”

The next day after listening to Rebanks Fellow Jean-Sélim
Abdelmoula play Beethoven’s penultimate piano sonata, Op.110,
Fleisher mused: “It suddenly occurred to me that Beethoven has
innumerable ways of expressing his final journey into heaven. I’m
getting to that point myself,” he said. “How does one face the end of
this life and the beginning of the next?”

When Fleisher was nine, the legendary pianist Artur Schnabel
invited him to be his pupil, first in Lake Como, Italy, then in New
York. “For ten years I studied with one of the great teachers of the
20th century – for two years after, I was absolutely lost until I discovered
that everything he taught me was lodged in my cerebellum and
it was just a matter of uncovering it,” he said. “One of the ways to do
this is by singing the notes and the rhythm (and deciding whether the
consonant is soft or hard). Singing gives you a much clearer idea of
what you're facing.”

For 60 years Fleisher continued a musical legacy traceable directly
back to Beethoven through Schnabel and Schnabel’s teacher Theodor
Leschetizky who studied with Carl Czerny, Beethoven’s pupil.

Schnabel references were plentiful in Fleisher’s masterclasses, espe-
cially when discussing music by Beethoven and Schubert. Looking
back over my records, I see that on April 21, 2017, a student playing
Brahms’ Intermezzi Nos. 4-6, Op.116 triggered Fleisher’s analytical
instincts before he settled into a surprising Schnabel anecdote: “We
work in two dimensions simultaneously: sound – loud and soft and
everything in between – and time, which can be strict or with a degree
of flexibility. I think time is the more difficult dimension to work in
because the pulse can easily become mechanical sounding. A curious
thing – Brahms’ music flows at a specific personal rate – it flows more
like lava than water. And there’s a richness and a warmth to it.”

And then the anecdote: “My teacher, Schnabel, let it drop very casually one day in
a lesson, that he had known Brahms. Brahms had a habit in
Vienna on Sunday of going into the Vienna woods with a
basket for a picnic. The little Schnabel went along one
day. Brahms asked, ‘Are you
hungry?’ before [commencing
eating]. And after he asked,
‘Have you had enough?’ –
and that was his conversation
with Brahms.”

At that point, Fleisher got up and moved to the piano,
accompanying the student in the upper octaves of Brahms’
fourth intermezzo, but with
his left hand. It was truly
inspirational. And with his
singing, he coached a much
better performance. “Good.
That was a good sound. And
now the memory of something
so fragile – when a phrase is repeating it’s not necessarily an echo but
a chance to do it more beautifully. It’s a memory, very fragile. If you do too
much it will disappear – be very still.”

To experience Fleisher’s inimitable approach, watch his March 31,
2004 masterclass on YouTube from Well Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall,
with the 17-year-old Yula Wang playing Schubert’s Sonata No.19
D958 when she was a student at the Curtis Institute.

Paul Ennis is the managing editor of The WholeNote.
I think it’s becoming clear that, at least here in North America, the unimaginable is going to be a reality.

There just aren’t going to be any major live performing arts events for us to go to for a year. Maybe longer. The Toronto Symphony has cancelled its entire planned season; Music Toronto the same. The COC has cancelled its productions at least until January, as has the National Ballet. No Nutcracker in Toronto for the first time since 1955.

But the shade of the pandemic hasn’t just denied us opportunities to witness performances. Beyond all the artistic and financial consequences of the virus, three major musical organizations in Toronto in the midst of institutional renewal have had those plans severely upended. Gustavo Gimeno will have to wait a year before he can conduct the TSO as its new music director from the podium in Roy Thomson Hall. The next general director of the COC, to replace Alexander Neef in September 2021, might not have a season to produce for some time, and the fascinating new spirit that Elisa Citterio has brought to Tafelmusik has been forced into relative hibernation just as it was blossoming. The virus burrows deeper and deeper into our lives as it continues unabated.

And so it is becoming clearer that the long-term effects of the disease are taking on increasingly radical proportions. We have underestimated the significance of the pandemic repeatedly since it first made its appearance. We continue to do so, and I shudder to think what will happen when a second wave of the virus comes smack up against our regular flu season. With each passing day, the potential for the virus to seriously disrupt and change central aspects of our lives increases. We’re not going back to normal, I think. That normal is a thing of the past.

So what might that mean for classical music?

Potentially a great deal. We have forgotten through numb repetition that the conventions of classical music we adhere to and revere are more or less arbitrary: that they have changed over the centuries a great deal, and are always a response to relatively mundane conditions surrounding music’s performance spaces, audience composition, economics – the complete day-to-day enterprise of getting it made. A pretty cogent argument can be advanced that the symphonic and operatic music we love and cherish today, mainly that of the late 18th and 19th centuries, was created because of an increase in size of performing venues, an increase in size which was itself a response to the changing economics of classical music and the need for larger middle-class audiences to replace disappearing aristocratic patrons.

This in turn led to new instruments of increased volume, new techniques of playing (to impress other than the cognoscenti) eventually new forms of composition. It’s a complicated and subtle chain, but a very real one, even it flies in the face of our Romantic ideas about genius and inspiration. Form follows function, as they say. Or, to be Marxist about it – the means of production of music, based on the economics of the production of music, create the music itself. Not the other way around.

So, with that in mind, what happens if the ramifications of COVID-19 create another revolution in the way we listen to and pay for classical art, not just for a season or two, but forever. What happens if those palaces of music – our symphony halls and opera theatres, with their 2,000 closely packed seats and relatively small lobbies, become complete white elephants? How will we pay for our symphonic and operatic art? And what kind of art will we need if the spaces where it is performed become more intimate, and the expected price to pay for access to those spaces substantially higher? What do we perform? What do we write? What instruments do we need for these conditions; what instruments no longer work? What techniques do we teach students to play them?

And more significantly, what role will the music play in society altogether? Although we are losing the power of this trope as we march through the 21st century, it’s clear that classical music in the 19th and 20th centuries was the music most emblematic of the rising bourgeoisie, the middle class. For that class, classical music was presented as an all-encompassing, powerful art form, symbolized by opera and the symphony orchestra (both of which were extremely populist in the late 19th century) that was intended to provide a highest-common-denominator unifying aspect to society. And that identification of classical music with the middle class continued right through to the invention of mass 20th-century technologies.

We forget now (if we ever knew it) that classical music was right at the heart of the emerging populist recording and radio industries in the first decades of the 20th century. The first million-selling record
was by Caruso; the NBC Symphony was a staple fare of radio listening for all of North America several times a week in the 1930s and 40s (it’s how my parents, for example, and others of their generation, learned to love classical music, by listening to it on the radio – after Amos ‘n’ Andy and before The Lone Ranger). The massive classical hall was the symbol of this unifying power of classical music. So what happens when those venues disappear, if they do? What happens to that unifying ability of classical music?

Yes, you can argue that the above-mentioned unifying, big-tent social mandate has been lost to classical music for some time now, and it’s a valid argument. But what takes its place? Who do we now think classical music is for? Which is another way of asking what do we think classical music is for?

I have no answers to any of these questions, and it’s possible that my imagining their necessity will be entirely misplaced. Maybe a vaccine for COVID-19 will save the day, the threat will be eliminated, and we all happily go back to our former lives and habits, with this past year just a weird collective hallucination. But even if that is the case, I’m pretty sure that the experiences we’ve been going through over the past few months are going to have some impact on the classical world, beyond the immediate cancellations and displacements. Maybe international travel becomes permanently changed, so that the highly international nature of top-tier classical soloists and conductors is compromised. Maybe the many – some successful, some less so – virtual concerts will spark some new ideas for audience creation and interaction within the classical world. Maybe some other, completely unanticipated aspects of the performing conditions of the past few months will spark something interesting.

I have to admit I’m sort of hoping for at least a mini-revolution. I’ve hated the ultra-conservative nature of the classical world ever since I first discovered it in my early teens. To me the world of classical music is, and has always been, a revolutionary, explosive, intellectually and emotionally devastating art form – demanding a complete and frightening commitment from the listener, with the possibility always just around the corner, in the next phrase, or bar, or movement, of a complete, refitting, disturbing revelation.

If COVID-19 forces us to recover that game-changing nature of classical music, it will be a miraculous transformation – one good thing, among a host of horrible ones, about it. Until then, I guess we’re stuck with our virtual offerings, the occasional outdoor concert, and a deep yearning to go back to the symphony, ballet and opera. Whether we ever will is, I think, up for grabs. ☩

Robert Harris is a writer and broadcaster on music in all its forms. He is the former classical music critic of the Globe and Mail and the author of the Stratford Lectures and Song of a Nation: The Untold Story of O Canada.

FOUR OF A KIND!
25th Anniversary request copies

100 sets only of our “COVID QUARTET” are available for purchase (because we are also feeling the pain!)

So what is The WholeNote worth to you right now?

• $ 24.1 That’s just $1 for each issue, since the very beginning.
• $ 26 That’s $1 for each of our 25 seasons so far, and one for luck.
• $ ?? You decide.

Help us make sure the beat goes on.

To request your set: priceless@thewholenote.com
WholeNote Media | Music, alive. Since 1995 | thewholenote.com
The beat goes on.
Ours.
Yours.

The WholeNote
HalfTones
thewholenote.com
kiosk.thewholenote.com

Instagram @the_wholenote
Facebook & Twitter @TheWholeNote

WholeNote Media
Music, alive.
Since 1995

Please see page 59 - FOUR OF A KIND