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Wednesday, January 24, 2024

(THREE)

Alex Pauk, Conductor | Naomi Sato, Shô | Zhongxi Wu, Sheng/Suona

Misato Mochizuki (Japan)  
Hommage à Robert Schumann

Unsuk Chin (South Korea)  
*Operascope* (2023)

Rita Ueda (Canada)  
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for shô, sheng/suona & orchestra

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Milica is also a composer (of the opening track of my album), a stylist, and a great designer. We are really good friends so I am far more comfortable with her than I ever was with the guys who have taken photos of me in the past. I look much more real in a photo taken by a friend with a great eye for light and style than I ever have for folks who always want to make me play violin and smile at the same time and other terrible ideas. I’m so tired of trying to make a violin look natural. It was so great to not even have one, at that golden hour in Jamaica. — Lara St. John

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Back to Front

Once in a while, writing these Openers is tough. And this is one of those times. Had life been business as usual these past five or six weeks, I’d be boots-and-all happily into the rah-rah rhetoric of the holiday season: “Go ahead, dear reader, you’ve earned a break; throw caution to the winds and get silly. And once you get past the holiday hangover, January’s and early February’s thoughtful musical offerings (also listed in this issue) will get you back on a straight and earnest track, better suited to winter survival”.

I would have indulged in a bit of “light in darkness” imagery as well, trying to make it all as ecumenically cheerful as I could: a dab of Diwali, a spritz of solstice, a candle for Hannukah, and (cue the secular snowflakes) a bit of walking in a winter wonderland. Even a chorus or two of “Little town of Bethlehem” (although the line “how still we see thee lie” will likely never sound quite the same to me again).

I am going to resist the temptation to tell you what I think you should think about the darkness we are right now plunged in. But I will commit the sin of “talking politics” at the table, and tell you how I am feeling. As a white, South African-born Jew, born seven years after the end of WW2, I have never felt more conflicted, helpless and hopeless, as I watch the torches of intractable hate being passed to the next generation, and witness the imprisoning paradox of people building walls to keep the other out, only to find that instead they have fenced themselves in.

So bring on the season’s balms and blandishments, take your consolations where you may. Hug those you can.

The back-to-fronters

I should probably have begun by giving a shout out to everyone whose tenacity, loyalty and trust had helped us get through the twists and turns of another impossibly convoluted and difficult year: staff, contributors, advertisers, you, dear reader – and, most of all, the people who by their artistry and efforts weave music-making deeply into the fabric of our cultural and community life, giving us something to turn to when words alone are either not enough, or, as in the case of the preceding, a bit too much.

So let me say something, long overdue, about our DISCoveries section.

Perhaps not so much now, but back in the day most magazines had a substantial subset of readers I would describe as “back-to-fronters.” They look at the front cover, flip the magazine over, look at the back cover, open the magazine to the inside back and look at it, and from there browse their way back to the front, allowing their eyes to be caught by stuff on the way. Of course I am talking about the rah-rah rhetoric of the holiday season: “Go ahead, dear reader, you’ve earned a break; throw caution to the winds and get silly. And once you get past the holiday hangover, January’s and early February’s thoughtful musical offerings (also listed in this issue) will get you back on a straight and earnest track, better suited to winter survival”.

For thousands of years before European settlement, T’karonto (The Meeting Place) was part of the traditional territory of many Nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit River, the Anishinaabe, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, and remains their home to this day, as it now is for many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples.

This Meeting Place lies within the territory governed by the Sewatokwa’she’ara’t (Dish with One Spoon) treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee – a Treaty which bound them to share the territory and protect the land. Subsequent Indigenous Nations and Peoples, and all newcomers are invited into this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship, respect and reconciliation. We are grateful to live and work here, helping spread the word about the healing power of music in this place.
section. My theory is that the COVID years were a shot in the arm for DISCoveries for the same reasons they did harm to our coverage of live music.

DISCoveries, under founding editor, David Olds, was launched in the summer of 2001, containing 14 reviews. In the 22 years since then, we have reviewed 10,853 titles – an average of just under 500 a year. Of those, 2324 have been reviewed since lockdown in March 2020, three and a half years ago – an average of 664 a year, even though the number of magazines we published in those years was fewer than prior to the pandemic. It makes sense, right? A lot of the artists who would normally have poured their energies into gifting us with live performance transferred that energy into creative digital streams, both in terms of process and product.

Now what we are starting to see is a kind of reverse engineering: artists with new tools gained during that three and a half year live-music hiatus, bringing those new tools into their live performance practices. It’s going to be fun to watch.

**The rah-rah rhetoric of the holiday season**

Here’s a nice little story about a listing, sitting right at the cusp between old year and new, that particularly caught my eye. But first a cautionary note: it contains details that some readers may find frivolous and of no redeeming social value, so viewer indiscretion is strongly advised.

*Salute to Vienna*, at Roy Thomson Hall on New Year’s has been, for almost as long as this magazine has been around, the flagship presentation of Attila Glatz Productions – an unapologetic celebration of Old World high society. (Film buffs, think of the moments in *A Space Odyssey* where Johann Strauss, not Richard, is waltzing things along.)

Somewhere along the line, Attila and Marion Glatz decided to add a New Year’s Eve sister show to their calendar. Titled *Bravissimo! New Year’s at the Opera* its focus is unashamedly operatic, usually with four singers in various combinations - cramming as many orgasmic arias as possible into an hour and a half, so audiences can be comfortably out of the hall in time for the midnight countdown.

As with *Salute to Vienna* a full orchestra is required for the high-note hijinks. As is customary for such road shows, orchestras are generally wrangled for the occasion. So I found myself doing a double take at this year’s *Bravissimo* listing: the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra, conducted by Johannes Debus, will be the orchestra for this year’s show.

The first thing that struck me: I couldn’t remember the COC Orchestra ever performing at Roy Thomson Hall before. And the second: it was hard to imagine the COC agreeing to a dial-it-in job just for the money, so I found myself wondering about how hand-on their involvement in the event would be.

Digging into the first question proved more complicated than I would have thought. Closest thing to a Bravissimo-style New Year’s Eve event at RTH was in 2001, with a huge cast of operatic superstars dropping in for a tune or two, and the COC’s Richard Bradshaw doing the conducting honours. But the TSO was the orchestra that night. So, indeed, this may well be the first time the COC has made the six city block journey to RTH.

As to whether the COC is into the event, artistic boosts and all, the answer is ringingy affirmative. All four singers, two Canadians and two from Europe, have ongoing ties to the COC: Carolyn Sproule, three times previously and will be back as Dog in Cunning Little Vixen; Matthew Cairns as a memorable Macduff in their recent *Macbeth*; Vito Priante as Figaro in their 2020 *Barber of Seville*; and Mane Galoyan, who will make her COC debut appearance as Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* in winter 2024. Debus and COC artistic director Roberto Mauro are shaping the show, with meticulous attention to selection of repertoire suited to the voices of their singers.

Why my delight? Simply that this kind of creative collaboration between commercial and not-for-profit artistic entities is rare, to put it mildly. God knows, it’s not the most urgent bit of bridge-building needed out there, but in times like these, any such effort is worth raising a glass to. Or two. Or three. Or .. what the hell, just pass me the bottle.

David Perlman can be reached at publisher@thewholenote.com.

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It was an inspiring moment for me – one that revitalized my love of music which can sometimes become dulled by too much media exposure. The moment I’m speaking of was listening to and watching one of violinist Lara St. John’s performances on YouTube and finding myself absolutely mesmerized by a full-on sensory experience where sound, image and raw emotion became completely intertwined, in her performance of Czardashian Rhapsody, by composer Martin Kennedy. Accompanied by pianist Matt Herskowitz, the two of them raised the roof with their joyful and outrageous performance of two Hungarian tunes, in a performance that is available on her album Shiksa released in 2015. By the end I was left breathless and full of wonder at her incredible artistry.

Gender Inequity
St. John is passionate about her vision to address gender inequity within musical institutions. Her story of being repeatedly sexually abused by her renowned violin teacher Jascha Brodsky while a teenage student at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia during the mid 1980s finally became public in a 2019 article in the Philadelphia Inquirer. As recounted by NPR, for many years, St. John’s claims were repeatedly denied and jokingly dismissed by the administration, and it was not until 2013 that the board finally agreed to hire a law agency to investigate not only St. John’s reports but other female students who subsequently came forward. The investigation found, 35 years later, that her allegations were credible and subsequently Curtis has issued an apology.

St. John has not only been public about the rampant sexual abuse she and others have faced, but also about the lack of gender equity in the principal roles within leading orchestras, as well as in the programming of works by women composers. One story she relayed to me in our conversation featured comments made by the Israeli conductor Talia Ilan who was quoted in the San Francisco Chronicle as saying that due to blind auditions, “we know that talent is equal between the two genders. But if you look at composition and conducting, only 5 to 10% of those roles are filled by women. That’s a hell of a lot of mediocre men who have a very vested interest in keeping women down.”

“Exclusion of women correlates directly with violence against women,” St. John went on to say, “and that’s something that really nobody can get behind. What I’m campaigning for is systemic
change throughout the culture.” She gave as an example the kinds of damaging comments made repeatedly by the Soviet-born conductor Yuri Temirkanov, who died this month at age 84: “Women are the essence of weakness, and conducting is the essence of strength, so women shouldn’t conduct,” he was quoted as saying. In St. John’s experience in the performing world, this mentality is pervasive. “I think the only way to get rid of this is to start screaming from the rooftops which is basically what I've done.”

Creating change
One hopeful and positive sign she spoke of is the Boulanger Initiative, an organization in the USA committed to promoting music composed by women through performance, education, research, consulting, and commissions. This includes publishing music by women from earlier centuries that has been long buried. She also cited examples of women being appointed composer-in-residence for orchestras in Chicago and Philadelphia. Hopefully this will spread to other major leading orchestras (as it already has here in Toronto).

Creating change in attitudes is also at the heart of her upcoming film documentary. After the article in the Philadelphia Inquirer was published, it was read far and wide and St. John received hundreds of letters of support, along with multiple stories of other women’s experiences in music. She decided to go on the road with her camera and conduct interviews with some of the people who wrote to her and it is these stories that will form the narrative of the film. She does all her own post production as well, having started video editing 14 years ago, initially because she couldn’t find anyone who knew how to synchronize violin properly. Many of her performances are available as music videos and can be viewed on YouTube, which I heartily recommend.

In her 21C concert on January 20, she will also be performing a solo Bach Sonata: as she says, “there’s no way anybody writes for solo violin without some kind of influence from him (i.e. Bach)”. She highlights this in the program notes she has written, pointing out similarities between Bach’s approach and how those techniques end up in the contemporary repertoire she is performing. “It will create a lot of interesting juxtapositions”, she said.

Other upcoming events include a few firsts for her. She has been invited by one of Estonia’s orchestras to perform Scottish Fantasy written in 1880 by Max Bruch. “It’s a piece you often play in your teenage years,” she said, “but I never did. Now I’ve been asked to make it more Scottish.” She’s decided to insert traditional Scottish tunes in between the movements and change some of the cadenzas in response to this request. Another first will be a performance of a Schoenberg concerto in June in Buenos Aires. And finally, back to the 21C festival, she will be performing in a work by Turkish pianist Fazil Say in his January 19th concert, along with her brother Scott St. John and others.

The Feast Continues
The feast of new music continues after the 21C Festival when Esprit Orchestra present their program on January 24 titled Three, with
works by Misato Mochizuki from Japan, Unsuk Chin from South Korea/Germany, as well as the Toronto premiere of Birds Calling...

From the Canada in You by Rita Ueda, the recipient of the 2022 Azrieli Music Prize for New Canadian Music. Ueda’s work, composed for shō, sheng/suona & orchestra was premiered at the December 2022 Azrieli Music Prizes Gala Concert.

“Other than a handful of beautiful songbirds (white throated sparrows, loons, blue jays, cardinals, etc.), many of the most iconic birds of Canada (hummingbirds, Canada geese, arctic cranes, puffins, snowy owls, etc.) are not songbirds. They generally screech, grunt, and shriek” Ueda said of the work. “Yet they are much loved by us Canadians. I thought this parallels the way Canadians take in immigrants from all over the world, regardless of where they come from.”

UTNMF

Three days later, the U of T Faculty of Music’s New Music Festival commences, running from January 27 to February 4, featuring Marjan Mozetich as this year’s Roger D. Moore Distinguished Visitor in Composition. This festival of performances, lectures, and master classes will also welcome the Gryphon Trio, the Penderecki String Quartet, John Burge, and accordionist Joseph Petric among others.

The final concert of the festival on Feb 4 will be a special event with a performance of American Andy Akiho’s monumental percussion work Pillars. The piece, written for the Brooklyn-based Sandbox Percussion quartet, premiered in December 2021 after a lengthy period of creation. The composer states that the piece was written specifically for the individual performers in the Quartet; each of the seven Pillars, or quartets are inspired not only by architecture but by the personalities of each performer. The Grammy-nominated album also includes accompanying videos for each of the Pillars.

Soundstreams

To celebrate the upcoming festive season in December, Soundstreams will once again present another iteration of their Electric Messiah performance, a stripped-down version of Handel’s Messiah. The performances this year run from December 14-17 at Theatre Passe Muraille and will deliver a mix of arias and choruses in a variety of musical styles, ranging from jazz, gospel, and hip-hop to classical. Guided by composer and synth performer Adam Scime, the five singers and additional four instrumentalists will recreate the classic narrative with its themes of love, betrayal, joy and redemption.

Soundstreams returns on February 3 2024 with a concert of vocal works performed by the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, including works by Arvo Pärt and Palestrina, and a world premiere by Canadian Omar Daniel.

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

Pillars composer Andy Akiho
I walk into the Crow’s Theatre gallery space, on a mid-November day, excited to be here to sit in on the afternoon’s rehearsal of *Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812*. The space is familiar to me from stage managing *Uncle Vanya* and *The Master Plan* here, but I have never seen it so full of stuff. There are instruments everywhere – a double bass, two cellos, a drum set, two keyboards, two accordions, a clarinet, someone with a guitar ...

I say hello to actors I know, get a big hug from one, check in with the stage management team, and find where I am to sit to watch. For months I have been hearing the buzz at Crow’s about this hugely ambitious and exciting Canadian premiere, and their first full collaboration with the Musical Stage Company.

Creator Dave Malloy’s brilliant musical adaptation of Tolstoy’s famous novel *War and Peace* began as an off-Broadway experiment in 2012 and grew into a hit production on Broadway, garnering 12 Tony Award nominations in 2017 (winning two along with many other awards). The score is eclectic, encompassing indie rock, pop, folk, electronic dance and classic Broadway, and is completely sung-through, with many of the performers (soloists as well as ensemble) playing instruments as part of the immersive staging.

The story is taken from a 70-page slice of Tolstoy’s masterpiece: the young Countess Natasha Rostova has become engaged to the...
handsome Prince Andrei Bolkonsky but Andrei's father has insisted that they wait a year before marrying. As the opening ‘Prologue’ tells us, “There’s a war going on out there, and Andrei is not here.” The unexpectedly vulnerable Natasha finds herself swept up into a new infatuation, alongside dear friend of the family, Pierre Bezukhov, in part disillusioned by his unhappy marriage, who is questioning the meaning of his life.

Chris Abraham

In the middle of the crowded rehearsal space is a black wooden platform: it turns out to be a working revolve that will move into the theatre soon, as the set is being built. Luckily for me I get to see a preview of it in action. Director Chris Abraham walks in with a quick smile and wave “hello” and work begins. Oh my, this is going to be fun! It’s the “Abduction” scene – one of the big set pieces of the show where the rake Anatole Kuragin says farewell to his “gypsy lovers” and then with his friend Dolokhov (and the company) acts out how his planned elopement with Natasha will go. Part way through – the playacting turns into the real thing, a sweeping, fabulously inventive sequence that fills the space – with the revolve magically becoming a troika in which Anatole will drive Natasha away, only ... I won’t give away any more of the plot.

As they move for sequences already rehearsed into new staging, one of my questions coming into the rehearsal is answered: would Abraham be directing a musical in the same way that he does a play? The answer is mostly “yes”, While music is the fixed element leading the creation, the actors are all given freedom by Abraham to experiment with their moves, following their characters’ needs and emotions. He then gives notes at the end of a sequence to build on what they have given him, amplifying good ideas and opening up the staging so that it works for all three sides of the audience that will surround the playing space.

I watch, for example, the creation of a magical scene where the simple addition of a chaise and the spinning of the revolve echo the turmoil in Natasha’s heart. I comment later to Abraham how thrilling it was to see this degree of collaborative creation happening at this high professional level. “The lucky thing” he replies, “is that there is a great map in the show of what the characters want, what they are going after, and the problems that they have. Once you onboard everyone with all that – and musical theatre performers are very good at committing to those kind of things – they just jump right in.”

Abraham himself seems so remarkably at home and happy directing a musical (he has mentioned on social media that it has been decades since he last worked on one) that I ask about his past experience and discover to my surprise that this was how he started out! “When I was a teenager,” he told me, “I cut my teeth doing musicals with The Markham Youth Theatre which I founded, and then left that behind in my twenties when I went to university and the National Theatre School, but you know, that was the thing I loved first.”

That being said, I ask specifically “why this musical and why now?” and the answer is a fascinating one, going back to when he fell in love with Tolstoy’s novel in university. “There was something about Pierre’s journey – about him as the moral centre of the novel, and the delicacy of his revelation about what a good life means and how that is connected to other people – that was very significant to me when I read the novel the first time,” he told me. “And then, when I saw one of the early pre-Broadway productions of NP&TGC I loved it. It did all the things I want theatre to do and I felt like it was made for me, like me personally, so I always had that in my back pocket. When the rights became available years later I felt it was an experience that I wanted to share with other people. As I said to the team on the first day, it’s almost as though the goal of the show as a piece of theatre is to build the foundations for an audience to have a transformational experience that culminates with the revelation of what it is to wake up to a new life, so that they can both understand and feel the power of that experience that Pierre has in the story.”

Another thing that this musical does extraordinarily well, he continues, “is that it allows you to have an immediate understanding of and emotional access to a whole variety of characters from a variety of points of view. Included in that is a powerful immersion of the audience in the world of desire of this portion of the novel, and the sense that Dave Malloy creates of the characters being insulated in a world of champagne and caviar while the world burns around them.”

The great comet of the story, seen at first as a harbinger of destruction as it hangs in the sky above the decadent city of Moscow becomes at the end, in Abraham’s words, “in a magical way a harbinger of life as opposed to destruction” as Pierre in his “leap of empathy to risk his comfort and his friendships in order to stand up for someone else” also gives Natasha hope for a new and better life to come.

In 2021 Crow’s and Musical Stage obtained the rights and were about to cast the show for a production at the Winter Garden Theatre when the pandemic shut it down. Now their dream is being realized in the magically immersive space of Crow’s own Guloien Theatre starting on December 5 with an outstanding cast of Canadian musical theatre stars.

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

For more Information visit https://www.crowstheatre.com/whats-on/view-all/natasha-pierre-greatcomet.

And for a taste of the show, there is a truly “charming” music video featuring Hélène (Divine Brown), Natasha (Hailey Gillis), and Anatole (George Krissa): https://vimeo.com/877215280
He sheer number of concerts in our listings is impressive enough. Even more impressive is the resonances between seemingly unrelated events once you start to dig a little deeper and start to connect the dots.

Take, as an example, Art of Time and Sinfonia Toronto, mainstay ensembles in our midst for almost as long as The WholeNote has been around. Each is in the midst of a silver anniversary, 25th season with the founding artistic directors of both groups (Nurhan Arman and Andrew Burashko) still at the helm of their respective ensembles. Both of them delight in arranging music, and in creative programming, constantly seeking to blend the familiar with the new, introducing top-flight soloists to challenge their ensembles and delight their audiences.

But this season the parallels have their limits. Art of Time has already announced that the season now underway – commencing with concerts on December 7 to 9 and culminating in May with a tribute to Joni Mitchell – will be their last. For Sinfonia Toronto, the season as announced, is business as usual, with two programs (on December 8 and January 26) falling within this WholeNote publication cycle, a further three programs in the new year, and, so far, no signs of slowing down.

Stéphane Tétreault

On December 8, Arman’s Sinfonia Toronto features cellist Stéphane Tétreault as the soloist in Robert Schumann's only cello concerto. Chosen as the first ever Soloist-in-Residence of the Orchestre Métropolitain, the acclaimed cellist performed with Yannick Nézet-Séguin during the 2014-2015 season, made his debut in 2016 with the Philadelphia Orchestra under the direction of Nézet-Séguin, and performed at the Gstaad Menuhin Festival in Switzerland. During the 2017-2018 season he took part in the Orchestre Métropolitain’s first European tour with Nézet-Séguin and made his debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. A noteworthy way to begin a career!

Arman calls Schumann’s writing in this cello concerto personal and lyrical rather than full of étude-like passages meant to display the soloist’s technical skill. Perhaps that was why the concerto was not received warmly in Schumann’s lifetime. Today it is loved for its great
melodic beauty and the interpretive artistry it reveals in the cellists who perform it.

After the Schumann, Sinfonia Toronto will perform Corelli’s Concerto Grosso, Op.6, No.8, a masterpiece written for the night of Christmas and one of the composer’s most famous works.

Jocelyn Morlock’s Nostalgia opens the program and selections from Dvořák’s Valses and Slavonic Dances close it. Written in traditional Romantic style, the work is characterized by beautiful melodies, rich harmonies and expressive counterpoint.

The highlight of Sinfonia Toronto’s January 26 concert is Mozart’s Piano Concerto No.23, Op.488. The grandeur of its second movement – which filmmaker Terrence Malick wisely chose to support his 2005 film, The New World, with its unique take on the story of John Smith and Pocahantas – is unsurpassed. The third movement is a wily rondo, witty and sublime which will put Ukrainian-Canadian pianist and composer Dmitri Levkovich in the spotlight. Levkovich studied for 11 years with legendary Armenian pedagogue Sergei Babayan who also mentored Daniil Trifonov.

Eighth and final Art of Time Holiday concert

The Art of Time’s December 7 to 9 concerts will be their eighth and final presentation of what has become an Art of Time holiday tradition, characterized, in their typically breezy fashion, as “our celebration of the holiday season with the joy and irreverence you have come to expect, featuring the best of the best taken from the last seven years.” Performers include Thom Allison, Jessica Mitchell, Jackie Richardson, Julian Richings, David Wall and Tom Wilson.

Orchestral Holiday Fare

Now that Home Alone has replaced It’s a Wonderful Life as the go-to-Christmas movie-of-choice, the holiday season has never been the same. The TSO invites all its fans to celebrate with them the return of Home Alone in Concert. Macaulay Culkin stars as a resourceful eight-year-old, accidentally left alone over Christmas, who repeatedly outsmarts a couple of bone-headed burglars. This beloved holiday film features renowned composer John Williams’ delightful score performed live-to-picture by the TSO in five screenings conducted by Constantine Kitsopoulos, December 7 to 9.

Down the QEW, the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra’s “Holidays & The Hockey Sweater” at 3pm on December 9 stands out. From Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring to Leroy Anderson’s Sleigh Ride, Abigail Richardson-Schulte’s musical treatment of Roch Carrier’s The Hockey Sweater and more, the repertoire makes for a promising afternoon.

Also on December 9, up in Markham, in a Kindred Spirits Orchestra concert titled The Greatest Show, Stravinsky’s Circus Polka, “For a Young Elephant”, composed as a short ballet production for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey’s Greatest Show on Earth, kicks things off. Do not however expect the ballet to be performed, as the original was, by several young elephants in pink tutus. TSO concertmaster Jonathan Crow then takes centre stage to perform Bartók’s Violin Concerto No. 2, whose second movement – a theme and variations – is an early example of a theme employing all 12 tones of the chromatic scale. The grand finale, Bruckner’s Symphony No. 3, showcases a masterwork of virtuosic orchestral sound for conductor Kristian Alexander to unveil. The intermission features a conversation between Daniel Vnukowski and violinist Crow.

Kitchener-Waterloo

In late September, as reported by the CBC, the Grand Philharmonic Choir (GPC) in Waterloo region announced that it would honour, directly with the musicians from the former Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony (who found themselves out of a permanent gig after the KWS declared bankruptcy), the contracts the choir had inked for the season with the KWS.

The relationship between the Grand Philharmonic Choir and the KWS goes back 75 years, GPC artistic director Mark Vuorinen pointed out – in fact the symphony was actually founded to accompany the choir in the great oratorios, and they have had a very symbiotic relationship over the decades. In the second concert of the GPC’s season, on December 9, the choir and KWS members will perform a rarely heard gem: Bach’s Christmas Oratorio, where the composer’s celebration of Christmas sparkles with joy and optimism.

A week later, on December 16, the Mississauga Symphonic Orchestra’s cheerful “Holiday. A Merry Little Christmas” kicks off at 7pm. Also on December 16, the Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society presents the Penderecki String Quartet celebrating another famous birth. It’s Beethoven’s birthday and the Quartet will be playing two of the master’s finest: Op.18, No.6 and Op.131. The former can be...
seen as Beethoven’s goodbye to his youth, the latter is simply one of the greatest string quartets ever written. The Pendereckis have been marking this birthday for years and have just emerged from a period where they played all 16 string quartets. It will undoubtedly be a memorable recital.

**Alliance and Verona String Quartets**

Kicking off 2024 as we concluded 2023, two string quartet concerts caught my eye, for quite different reasons: the Verona String Quartet at Music Toronto on January 18, and the newly minted Alliance String Quartet, at Alliance Française Toronto Toronto, on January 19.

Verona: Mentored along their way by the Cleveland, Juilliard and Pacifica Quartets, and billed as “a string quartet for the 21st century,” the Verona Quartet, now quartet-in-residence at Ohio’s Oberlin Conservatory, “champions the rich breadth of the string quartet repertoire from the time-honoured canon through contemporary classics.”

Their concert here includes Puccini, Britten, Mozart and Verdi and is, somewhat cryptically, titled “All Roads Lead to Rome”. It’s certainly true of Verona itself (600 kilometres but less than three hours from Rome by train), but also, in one way or another, it speaks to all the works on the program, each of which links to one or another Italian city. Puccini’s *Crisantemi* was written (in one night) in memory of his friend, the Duke of Aosta. Britten’s String Quartet No. 3 was drafted in Venice, late in his life (and draws on themes from his *Death in Venice* composed two years earlier). Mozart’s String Quartet No. 3 is one of his six Milanese quartets, so named because he wrote them, age 16 and 17, during the year he spent in Milan working on his opera *Lucio Silla*. And Verdi’s *String Quartet in E minor*, the only surviving chamber work in his repertoire, was composed in 1873 in Naples, during a production of *Aida*. If the performance is as playful as the curation, we are in for a treat.

**Alliance:**

The Alliance String Quartet comes to its name by happenstance as much as by design. “It was during the pandemic,” violinist Mayumi Seiler explained. “I decided to take the opportunity to advance my French language skills, so I went to Alliance Française Toronto on Spadina Road, becoming aware of the lovely little concert hall they have, and their performance series. I was hungry to perform with musicians I love and respect; Alliance Française was interested in having us perform, and we had to call it something – “Alliance” felt like a name that reflected the relationship with the venue but even more so, the strong bond among us as musicians.”

Cellist Rachel Mercer and Seiler go back the furthest, Seiler says. “I ran a chamber music series here for about 14 years, called Via Salzburg, starting in the late 1990s, and Rachel was from the very beginning our principal cellist; Min-Jeong Koh was once a student of mine and now we are colleagues at the Glenn Gould School; Rémi has been a fellow mentor at Toronto Summer Music, is a close friend, and a musician I admire. And his French is better than mine!

January 19 is described on the AFT website as the “inaugural” concert of the Quartet, but Seiler is cautious. “The reality is that we are four established musicians with busy and complicated schedules who love and respect each other and are looking forward to making the most of this opportunity. And then … we’ll see.

Repertoire for the concert consists of the Ravel *String Quartet*, Beethoven’s *String Quartet Op.18, No.6*, and “a beautiful work for string quartet by Canadian composer Stefan Hintersteinerger, titled *The Growing Season*.”

**Paul Ennis** is the managing editor of *The WholeNote*. 
For a classical work that features in only 19 of the 123 concerts in this issue’s listings that involve a choir (or choirs), Handel’s Messiah still commands a lot of Christmas concert attention. (I think the rule is I am allowed to say “Christmas” if I use “Messiah” in the same sentence.)

Continuity: One part of its enduring appeal around here has to do with the major ensembles who have been offering it up every year, religiously you might say, for decades, in multiple performances. Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and Choir are staging three regular performances, December 14, 15, and 16, with their chart-topping (and sometimes heart-stopping) Sing-along Messiah the following evening, with Tafelmusik Chamber Choir’s Ivars Taurins in his perennial role as Herr Handel calling the orchestral shots.

Not to be outdone, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra weighs in from Dec 17 to Dec 23, with five performances over a six day span, accompanied by the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir – a reversal of the original relationship between the TSO and TMChoir. Arguably the TSO would not exist were it not for the fact that the TMChoir, founded 30 years before the current iteration of the TSO, needed a reliable house band for the grand performances of the great oratorios that the newly opened Massey Hall, Toronto’s rival to Carnegie, lent itself too.

(A brief aside: the phenomenon of the choir as chicken, with the symphony orchestra as egg, had another profoundly important, and
sorely missed, incarnation in this part of the world: the oratorio-driven needs of Kitchener-Waterloo’s Grand Philharmonic Choir led directly to the formation of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, and the symbiosis between the two led in turn to the building of Kitchener’s Centre in the Square – one of the region’s best big concert halls.

Change; another of the Messiah’s enduring fascination has to do with the extent to which the more the work stays the same, the more it is capable of change. At the level of the big symphonic-scale productions, a lot of the buzz, and the one-upmanship, revolves around who is conducting the work in any given year. But, even more so, around who the four soloists in a given year are going to be. “Did you see KW-S has Ben and Suzie and Daniel and Teddy this year?!” That kind of thing.

At a less frivolous level, though, part of the work’s enduring appeal has to do with changes of artistic personnel but with the capacity of the work itself to morph and change. It somehow renders itself performable on every imaginable scale, adjustable to a whole spectrum of motivations for presenting it, from high art to the visceral need of communities, including communities of faith, to come together and immerse in joyful noise during the winter’s darkest days.

The brief list of what’s on offer this year gives a taste of this diversity, but before getting there, one last thought. Handel, unlike Bach, was a musical entrepreneur, with showmanship built into him the way a shark has cartilage instead of bone. Very early audiences in England actually never forgave him for making a public spectacle of what, in all decency, should have been private devotion. But thinking of his Messiah as purely theatrical misses the point. Harpsichordist/conductor Trevor Pinnock tells the story of an English aristocrat in attendance at a performance complimenting Handel on the “entertainment.” “I should be sorry if I only entertained them,” Handel replied.

David Perlman can be reached at publisher@thewholenote.com.
JOIN READERS FROM
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Handel's Messiah,
told with the
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that only David W.
Barber can provide
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30th-anniversary
dition.

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NOT THE MESSIAH:
CHORAL MUSIC UPcomings
There is almost NO date between Dec 1-23 when you will not find a
seasonal choral concert in our listings. And some days when you will find
ten or more. So below, we've included a few that are after January 1,
to whet your appetite and get you browsing. But for January be sure to
keep checking our updated listings online at thewholenote.com

Jan 14 | Vesnivka Choir. Ukrainian Christmas Concert. Vesnivka Choir; Toronto
Ukrainian Male Chamber Choir. The concert will include traditional and contem-
porary Ukrainian Christmas Carols (Kolyadky) and New Year songs (Schedrivky).
Joined by guest artists Zoloti Struny - a vocal ensemble of young musicians who play
the bandura. This is Ukraine's national instrument—a plucked-string instrument that
combines elements of the zither and the lute. (Toronto)

Jan 20 | SoundCrowd. Billy Joel vs Elton John. Arrangements of songs by “The
Piano Man” and “The Rocket Man”, performed by this large-scale (up to 80 singers)
a cappella vocal ensemble, go head-to-head. And the audience gets to decide the
winner! (Toronto)

Jan 26 | VIVA Singers. Flying Machine. Sounds intriguing, yes? This is a performance
by their SATB Chamber Singers. (Toronto)

Feb 03 | Soundstreams. Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir returns to
Soundstreams for the sixth time. Led by its founder Tõnu Kaljuste, the EPCC is in the
top rank of the world’s greatest vocal ensembles, famous as the foremost interpreters
of music by their beloved countryman Arvo Pärt. Works by Pärt, Palestrina and the
world premiere of Omar Daniel’s Antarktos Monodies. (Toronto)

Feb 07 | Royal Conservatory of Music. Vocal Concerts Series. Los Angeles Master
Chorale, staged by Peter Sellars. Schütz’s Musikalische Exequien (Music to Accompany
a Departure) was composed during the terrible ravages of the 30 Years War, and it
was dedicated to the memory of one of his dearest friends. The music speaks with
both quiet emotion and enormous depth of feeling. (Toronto)

Compiled by WholeNote Staff

THE TRINITY
BACH PROJECT
Making Choices that Count
DAVID PERLMAN

A s a writer one is sometimes tempted to treat the
moment one becomes aware of the existence of
something remarkable as a definitive moment
in its coming into being – as though it were somehow
one’s personal discovery. Now in only its second season
the Trinity Bach Project (new to me) already has 17
performances under its belt and looks well set to carry on.

In December 2023 and January 2024 alone, TBP will present
seven performances of four distinct programs: Bach and Christmas
(December 8 and 9); Bach and Schütz (January 9 and 27); Chamber
Baroque and Handel’s Gloria (January 11); and
Heart, Mouth, Deed, Life
(January 19 and 20).

It takes more than raw enthusiasm, beginners’ luck, passion and
tenacity to maintain a pace like that. It takes an instinct for making
the right choices, an understanding of what makes the musical
ecosystem tick, and a healthy dose of self-awareness as to one’s own
best place in that ecosystem. I connected with Nicholas Nicolaidis,
TFP’s Music Director to ask about that.

WN: You could choose worse places than Bach to start, in terms of
building musical bridges of one kind or another – between music of
different periods, for example.

NN: we’re not only bridging from Bach backwards in musical
time to early composers like Schütz and Tallis, but also forward to
Romantic composers like Mendelssohn and Rheinberger. Our core
value is presenting the works of artists who were creating the best
sacred choral music they could imagine. Naturally we consider Bach
to be the best of the best. The process of creating such music hasn’t
stopped with these greats, however. TBP has already engaged young
Canadian composers to prepare works for a New Sacred Music
program next season – artists who are working “in the spirit of Bach”
to bring sacred texts to life as powerfully and beautifully as they can.

EARLY MUSIC

THE WHOLENOTE

COMING UP!

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Compiled by WholeNote Staff
You also seem to have found a way of balancing vocal and instrumental forces on an ongoing basis, suited precisely to the needs of individual programs. You must have a loyal and flexible core to work from.

We work with a pool of around 16 premier singers to build a choir of eight to twelve for each program and performance. Within that pool a consistent core has been present from the very start, but top-level singers in the GTA are busy with many commitments, so we’ve developed what you might call an “open-concept” ensemble.

On the orchestral side, we have a handful of excellent organists to choose from program by program, and our orchestral director, violinist Michelle Odorico, does an amazing job of gathering the instrumentalists each cantata requires. A number of these players have become regulars through the 19 concerts TBP has presented since last October. Cellist Felix Deák, for example, has played in all but one! We’re featuring Felix performing movements of Bach’s unaccompanied cello suites throughout our ongoing program series called “Bach and Schütz” (Nov 23, Jan 9, Jan 27, and Apr 20 in various locations).

So, how does all this work in terms of things like regular rehearsal days – pretty tough to arrange I imagine, when so many musicians go gig to gig?

In the 2023/24 season, TBP’s second, we’re continuing last season’s strategy of polling the choir to arrange an intensive burst of rehearsals before each new program. A set weekly rehearsal day will definitely be an option for 2024/25, but as a new initiative in the region we’ve relied on project-based rehearsing to be able to access the singers we need. Rather than forcing them to choose between TBP and other ensembles, we’ve built our schedule to avoid conflicts with Tafelmusik, Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, the Elora Singers, and so on.

Tell me about your project name; the “Trinity” for your Dec 8 and 9 Bach and Christmas is Little Trinity Anglican Church on King St E., so I assumed that Little Trinity is home base for the project?

No, although a number of us do have connections to that congregation. “Home base” is Trinity College Chapel at the U of T, not Little Trinity Anglican. For the record, though, the name of our ensemble, “Trinity Bach Project,” is not formally linked with either of these institutions – more of a happy coincidence you could say.

And then, of course, there’s “big Trinity” I suppose you could call it – Trinity-St. Paul’s on Bloor St. W. with its decades of connection to early music. I noticed you are taking Heart, Mouth, Deed, Life there on January 20 and 21, with Elisa Citterio as guest artist in Bach’s A Minor violin concerto. It’s TBP’s first performance there, right?

Yes, it will be our first set of performances there, and also Elisa’s first return to Trinity-St. Paul’s since moving on from Tafel.

For details, see our listings or visit trinitybachproject.org:

David Perlman can be reached at publisher@thewholenote.com.
**EARLY MUSIC UPCOMING**

**Dec 1** | Fridays at 12:30 Concert Series: Musicians of Tafelmusik. Tafelmusik musicians join faculty from the DWFM Early Music Studio for this popular annual performance featuring Baroque chamber music by lesser-known composers as well as beloved masters. Don Wright Faculty of Music, Western University. Free. LIVE & LIVESTREAM. (London)

**Dec 1** | Bach’s Christmas Oratorio (Weihnachtsoratorium) BWV 248. Toronto Choral Society. Bach: Christmas Oratorio (Weihnachtsoratorium) BWV 248. Stephanie Kim, soprano; Veronika Anissimova, alto; Dion Mazerolle, baritone. (Toronto)

**Dec 8** | Medieval Christmas. Toronto Consort. A serene and heartfelt Yuletide program combining music with projected images taken from the treasure trove of medieval paintings, book illuminations, and stained glass. Medieval Christmas is presented in a darkened, candle-lit hall designed to transport you, unplug you from the world outside, and send you home feeling some joy. (Toronto) Also on **Dec 9** (2pm & 8pm). (Toronto)

**Dec 9** | Bach: Christmas Oratorio. Grand Philharmonic Choir, and Musicians of the KWSymphony. Molly Netter, soprano; Lillian Brooks, mezzo; Asitha Tennekoon, tenor; Stephen Hegedus; bass-baritone; Mark Vuorinen, conductor. (Kitchener)

**Dec 9** | Christmas in the Renaissance. The Tallis Choir. Tallis: Videte miraculum; Guerrero: Pastores loquebantur; Palestrina: Hodie Christus natus est. (Toronto)

**Dec 13** | Journey Together. Toronto Chamber Choir. Christmas-themed music by Bingen, Bach, and Biebel. With Bach Children’s Chorus; Charissa Bagan, guest director. (Toronto)

**Dec 19** | The Diapente Book of Carols. Apocryphonia. A selection of holiday favourites from the 14th to the 17th century, sung by Toronto’s only Renaissance vocal quintet: Jane Fingler, soprano; Peter Koniers, countertenor; Alexander Cappellazzo, tenor; Jonathan Stuchbery, tenor & continuo; Martin Gomes, bass. (Toronto)

**Dec 20** | Puzzle Me This. North Wind Concerts. Works by Bach, Da Rore/Dalla Casa, Geysen, Anonymous, and others with ACTA Recorder Quartet: Avery MacLean, Colin Savage, Tatsuki Shimoda, and Alison Melville. (Toronto)


**Feb 2** | Fantasticus. Tafelmusik. Originating in Italy in the 17th century, the “stylus fantasticus” featured unfettered improvisations, dramatic contrasts, and the passionate give-and-take of friends in musical conversation. Lina Tur Bonat, guest director and violin Also **Feb 3** (8pm) & **Feb 4** (3pm). (Toronto)

**Feb 4** | Disappearing Act. Rezonance Baroque Ensemble. Virtuoso works by composers overlooked by the history books. Concerti by Maddalena Sirmen, Joseph Bologne, and others. (Toronto)

Compiled by WholeNote Staff

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**TA FEL MUSIK* 4 5**

**PASSIONS REVEALED**

Aisslinn Nosky, guest director & violin

Canadian violinist and friend of Tafelmusik Aisslinn Nosky returns to direct a program revealing the peaks and valleys of the human emotional landscape.

**Feb 23–25, 2024**

Jeanne Lamon Hall, Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre

On sale now at tafelmusik.org/tickets
December is usually filled with the return of shows we think of as old family favourites so it is exciting when new candidates for that status take a step into the spotlight. One such is new holiday musical Chris, Mrs. making its world premiere debut in December at Toronto’s beautiful Winter Garden Theatre December 5-31.

The title is in part a play on the of Santa Claus as “Kris Kringle”, but that thought is a bit of a red herring, in what is a contemporary story of an advertising executive and single dad, Ben Chris, who in a final visit to his late parents’ lodge (which he is planning to leverage for a promotion) runs head first into family opposition from his brother Charlie, teenage daughter Claire, and troublemaking twins Samuel and Samantha. After discovering a ring in their father’s suitcase, the twins write to Santa for assistance. Enter Holly, a seasonal employee at the lodge. Between Charlie’s nostalgic nature and Holly’s Christmas cheer, it soon becomes a holiday no one will forget.

If this sounds to you like a Hallmark movie plot you’re not wrong as I found out chatting by email with the musical’s creators, Canadian couple Katie Kerr (book & lyrics) and Matt Stodolak (score) who are also behind the new company presenting this show: Boldly Productions.

KK & MS: It was a happy accident. We began writing just before the pandemic, so we initially envisioned the show for the stage. We wanted to create a fun and exciting family musical experience. Once things locked down, film was the only industry that was still in production, so we began to pivot the stage version into a film script. In doing so, the parallels between the traditional Hallmark tropes and our holiday musical rom-com became more obvious. Now that theatre...
Katie, were you inspired by your Come From Away experience?
KK: My time at Sheridan College and the Canadian Musical Theatre Project changed the course of my professional career. In my final year I had my heart set on being in the Main Stage production of Chicago. When I read that I had been cast in the new works piece in the G Basement, my heart dropped. Who at that point had ever heard of Come From Away? But my experience in that show opened my eyes to a world I had never thought to explore. I fell in love with the development and exploration of new works. It absolutely inspired me to become a writer and to believe that incredible things can be built in a basement.

Can you tell us more about the musical structure of this show and your musical influences?
KK & MS: In terms of influences our strongest comes from Stephen Sondheim: “Content dictates form; Less is more; God is in the details.” In this show we have the unique opportunity to write for three generations since the story has young kids, teenagers, and adults. Our approach to this was to think about what the sound of each generation is; what artists do they listen to and feel tell their story. For example, the teenage love song in the show has an early Taylor Swift influence. The “I Want” song for our female lead, Holly has a flavour of Alanis Morissette. So using those song books as a jumping off point to translate as a vehicle for musical theatre was the driving force behind the musical world of Chris, Mrs.

With it’s tuneful songs, light but warm-hearted script, and cast of 17 talented Canadian actors Chris, Mrs. promises to be a delightful way to celebrate the holidays. For more details please visit: www.chrismrs.com/ Trailer: www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6CxiQ6UkBs&t=1s

Top to bottom: Stewart Adam McKensy as Tommy Albright and Alexis Gordon as Fiona MacLaren in Lerner and Loewe’s Brigadoon, at the Shaw Festival.

It’s A Wonderful Life: (l-r) Caitlyn MacInnis as Sally Applewhite & Amy Matsio as Lana Sherwood.

The 2019 cast of A Huron County Christmas Carol
Slava’s Snow Show: Back in Toronto the internationally acclaimed visual and musical clown-inspired extravaganza Slava’s Snow Show is celebrating its 30th anniversary of touring internationally with a short stay at the Elgin Theatre. I’m looking forward to seeing this for the first time as my inner child was captivated by this description: “a sea of magical bubbles floating through the air, an unlikely shark swimming in a misty sea, being tangled up with the performers in a gigantic spider’s web, and an out-of-this-world snowstorm that turns the theatre into a life sized snow globe.” https://slavasnowshow.com/en/

And beyond
January seems so far away right now but I can’t wait to see the Ontario premiere of Edmonton’s Catalyst Theatre’s fierce musical triumph The Invisible – Agents of Ungentlemanly Warfare, a gripping musical story about the untold, true life events of undercover female agents in World War II packed with a thrilling film-noir-meets-graphic-novel scenic design, and a powerful score. At London’s The Grand Theatre Jan. 16-Feb 3. grandtheatre.com/event/the-invisible

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

An Indigo Christmas...
NGUZO SABA & THE BLACK MADONNA

Fri. Dec. 15
2023 | 8pm
St. Andrew’s Church
73 Simcoe St., Toronto

Voices of the Diaspora...
HAITIAN VOICES

Sat. Feb. 17
2024 | 8pm
Grace Church-on-the-Hill
300 Lonsdale Rd., Toronto

THE Nathaniel Dett Chorale
25 YEARS
Connecting Through Afrocentric Music

TICKETS: $45 adult | $39 senior | $15 student
Free for 12 and under
ORDER NOW at nathanieldettchorale.org
Given the precariousness involved in the retail and service industries, it is something of a miracle when new grassroots venues emerge. It is not as though larger ventures – such as the nascent Allied Music Centre at Massey Hall – are without risk; presenting live music is always a tricky proposition. Large, established organizations, however, have the benefit of development departments, of long-cultivated reputations within the community, and, typically, of owning the physical space in which they host concerts. For small establishments, the math looks quite a bit different.

An independent restaurant, for example, might decide that a weekly jazz night is a great idea: music will add to the ambience, the band will bring in customers who might not otherwise dine there, and the restaurant will gain valuable support within the community. In practice, however, any number of issues can arise. Perhaps the manager’s idea of jazz is Frank Sinatra singing “Fly Me To The Moon,” not John Coltrane playing “Giant Steps;” perhaps the band does bring in new customers, but they’re mostly university students who don’t have the budget for more than an appetizer and a glass of water; perhaps the restaurant, realizing after a month or two that they are losing money, must then cancel the series, much to the chagrin of the band’s family and friends. Everyone involved has acted with the best of intentions, but the series was not sustainable.

Having witnessed this cycle many times over, in Toronto and elsewhere, it has been a distinct pleasure to see the success of two unique venues that have emerged from the pandemic with an ongoing commitment to hosting live music.

Sellers & Newel Second Hand Books first opened at 692 College Street in November, 2011. The Sellers & Newel Literary Society – both the name of a performance series and the eponymous mailing list that gets sent out to those looking to keep up to date with the performances – was started in 2015, and quickly grew from there. The shows themselves take place right in the bookstore, against a backdrop of books, vintage chandeliers, and concert posters from past performances. It is a small space, and can only accommodate 30-40 patrons; fittingly, the ensembles that play there are typically small, with an emphasis on duos and trios. On Friday, December 8, Sellers & Newel will host its 12th Anniversary Show, which will feature the trio of guitarist Dan Pitt, saxophonist Brittany Pitt, and vocalist Laura Swankey, playing adventurous, exploratory music.

Bebop Joe’s – formerly Antikka – is a coffee shop and record store located at 960 Queen Street W. Like Sellers & Newel, it is a space that does not automatically suggest itself as a live-music venue, but it has cultivated a presence for itself as a regular presenter of concerts, with an emphasis on small ensembles playing jazz and indie music. On select weekday evenings and on weekend mornings/afternoons, catch the likes of vocalist/trombonist Charlotte McAfee-Brunner and guitarist Jared Higgins, guitarist Tak Arikushi, and singer-songwriter Brigit McDermott.

Koerner: Speaking of larger venues, there are a number of interesting shows happening in December that one can experience from some of Toronto’s most comfortable seats. Koerner Hall continues to bring in some of the best and brightest of American jazz talent, with shows by Jon Cowherd, Samara Joy, Christian McBride, Joshua Redman, and Brad Mehldau all on the schedule for this season. (A headlining project from Brian Blade would have rounded out Redman’s famous 1990s quartet.) On December 8, Koerner Hall plays host to vocalist Holly Cole, who leads a holiday show entitled “A Swinging Christmas.” Performing material featured on her two Christmas albums, Cole is joined by longtime collaborator Aaron Davis as pianist, musical director, and string arranger, as well as bassist George Koller, woodwind specialist John Johnson, drummer Mark Mariash, and a string ensemble of students.
from the Glenn Gould School, the Royal Conservatory’s post-secondary training program. One day later, on December 9, Terence Blanchard’s E-Collective hits the stage, with the Turtle Island Quartet. Blanchard – trumpeter, bandleader, and film, television, and opera composer – will be a familiar name to many WholeNote readers, as will his bandmates, guitarist Charles Altura, pianist Taylor Eigsti, bassist David Ginyard, and drummer Oscar Seaton Jr.

At Roy Thomson Hall, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra is staging a run of Holiday Pops concerts from December 11 to 13. Conducted by Steven Reineke, the shows will feature vocalists Molly Johnson and Billy Newton Davis, supported by the rhythm section of pianist Robi Botos, bassist Mike Downes, and drummer Davide Direnzo. The show will also feature a “Holiday Chorus” made up of students from the Etobicoke School of the Arts, which is sure to be a formative experience for the high-school students involved.

Non-holiday notables: Some other notable concerts are happening this holiday season, none of which happen to be holiday shows. On November 30 and December 1, the legendary saxophonist and flutist Lew Tabackin takes the stage at Jazz Bistro, playing with the local rhythm section of pianist Mark Eisenman, bassist Pat Collins, and drummer Morgan Childs. At The Rex, rising-star trumpeter/vocalist Madeleine Ertel leads a quartet for a four-night residency, between November 29 and December 2, with the support of violinist Aline Homzy, drummer Aiden McConnell, and Dan Fortin (on November 30 and December 1) and Julian Anderson-Bowes (on November 29 and December 2) splitting bass duties. At the Jazz Room in Waterloo, brothers Jonathan and Andrew Kay lead a fusion ensemble of saxophonist Pat LaBarba, bassist Roberto Occhipinti, table player and percussion Dhaivat Jani, and drummer Adam Teixeira play The Coltrane Sutras, a “trans-cultural re-imaging of the music of John and Alice Coltrane.”

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

Peter Sellers, outside his College Street bookstore, which has been “moonlighting” as a music venue since June 2015.

FROM UP HERE

Brampton, Braun, Broadsway & Beyond

SOPHIA PERLMAN

For those reliant on public transit, Brampton may seem impossibly north. From this writer’s current location, it’s 1,063 km south.

With that in mind, it seems fair to say that Brampton On Stage’s wonderfully diverse programming (music and otherwise) across five venues in that city make a compelling argument for downtowners to take the 45 minute ride from Union Station on the Kitchener or Brampton/Orangeville GO lines.

Lovers of jazz, cabaret, humour and storytelling should take particular note of a pair of Brampton concerts in this issue’s listings, whether you are looking for a departure from your usual holiday programming or resisting the generic musical tyranny of seasonal banks and supermarket aisles. First, Adi Braun and her quartet bring “Noir” to the Lester B Pearson Theatre on Thursday December 14. The music of the Film Noir Era is perfectly suited to Braun’s signature style, which sits beautifully in the nebulous zone between jazz and cabaret and a significant step removed from holiday cheer.

On the other hand, my own reluctance to embrace the season in any way softened a little, even teetering toward “Christmas in November” when I discovered that Toronto-based trio Broadsway were bringing their Most Wonderful Time of the Year...Maybe a little closer to Santa Claus (and me!) with stops in Sault Ste Marie and Kirkland Lake (4 ½ hours and 5 ½ hours southeast respectively from here, if you have a car). Ironically, if you don’t drive, it’s probably easier to plan a trip to Brampton!

Broadsway is the jazz-cabaret supergroup of Diane Leah, Heather Bambrick and Julie Michels, and they will return south from here with stops in Toronto and North York before wrapping up at Brampton’s Rose Theatre on Thursday December 19. Each of these women is a powerhouse, whether you are looking for a departure from your usual holiday programming or resisting the generic musical tyranny of seasonal banks and supermarket aisles. First, Adi Braun and her quartet bring “Noir” to the Lester B Pearson Theatre on Thursday December 14. The music of the Film Noir Era is perfectly suited to Braun’s signature style, which sits beautifully in the nebulous zone between jazz and cabaret and a significant step removed from holiday cheer.

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Sophia Perlman grew up bouncing around the jazz, opera, theatre and community arts scene in Toronto. She now eagerly awaits the arrival of her monthly WholeNote to Hornepayne, Ontario, where she uses it to armchair-travel and inform her Internet video consumption.

Wwww.wholenote.com

December 2023 & January 2024 | 27
KOERNER HALL 2023.24 CONCERT SEASON
SEASON SPONSOR: BMO

KOERNER HALL 2023.24 CONCERT SEASON
SEASON SPONSOR: BMO

Academy Chamber Orchestra
SAT., DEC. 16, 7:30PM MAZZOLENI CONCERT HALL
FREE (TICKET REQUIRED)
String students from The Phil and Eli Taylor Performance Academy for Young Artists come together as the Academy Chamber Orchestra to perform a special concert.
Free tickets available starting from 10am on Fri., Dec. 8, 2023.

The Robert W. & G. Ann Corcoran Concerto Competition Finals
TUES., JAN. 23, 7:30PM KOERNER HALL
FREE (TICKET REQUIRED)
Students of The Glenn Gould School compete for the opportunity to perform a concerto with the Royal Conservatory Orchestra during the 2024-25 concert season.
Free tickets available starting from 10am on Tues., Jan. 16, 2024.

The Glenn Gould School Vocal Showcase
SAT., JAN. 27, 7:30PM MAZZOLENI CONCERT HALL
TICKETS: $20
Hear the shimmering voices of The Glenn Gould School's voice students as they perform an evening of art songs and opera excerpts.

Mayumi Seiler, violin, with Jeanie Chung, piano
SUN., JAN. 28, 2PM MAZZOLENI CONCERT HALL
TICKETS: $25
Violinist Mayumi Seiler performs two monumental sonatas, Schubert’s “Grand Duo” and Schumann’s No. 2 in D Minor, with pianist Jeanie Chung.
Generous support provided from The Michael and Sonia Koerner Fund for Classical Programming
Taylor Academy Showcase Concert
SAT., FEB. 3, 4:30PM
MAZZOLENI CONCERT HALL
FREE (TICKET REQUIRED)
The Phil and Eli Taylor Performance Academy for Young Artists presents a concert by the leading young classical musicians in Canada. Hear the stars of tomorrow!
Free tickets available starting from 10am on Fri., Jan. 26, 2024.

Los Angeles Master Chorale, staged by Peter Sellars
Music to Accompany a Departure
WED., FEB. 7, 8PM KOERNER HALL
TICKETS START AT ONLY $65
A deeply personal yet uplifting meditation on what it means to say goodbye to those we love.
Series generously supported by an anonymous donor.

Isabelle Faust, violin, Alexander Melnikov, piano, and Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello
SAT., FEB. 10, 8PM KOERNER HALL
TICKETS START AT ONLY $40
Violinist Isabelle Faust, cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras, and pianist Alexander Melnikov take us on a fascinating journey through a thrilling repertory of piano trio ‘hits’ by Beethoven, Brahms, and Elliott Carter.
Generous support provided from The Michael and Sonia Koerner Fund for Classical Programming.

Brad Mehldau: 14 Reveries
SAT., JAN. 27, 8PM KOERNER HALL
“The most influential jazz pianist of the last 20 years” (The New York Times)
Brad Mehldau plays a solo night of new jazz works commissioned by The Royal Conservatory, Wigmore Hall (London), Carnegie Hall, and Cal Performances (UC Berkeley).

Laurie Anderson
FRI., APR. 5, 8PM KOERNER HALL
One of America's most renowned and daring creative pioneers returns for another magical night.

Kronos Quartet: Five Decades
THURS., MAY 9, 8PM KOERNER HALL
Celebrate the legacy and impact of one of the most illustrious and influential groups of our time.

Joshua Weilerstein conducts the Royal Conservatory Orchestra Kanon Shibata, cello
FRI., FEB. 9, 8PM KOERNER HALL
TICKETS START AT ONLY $25
Joshua Weilerstein will lead cellist Kanon Shibata and the Royal Conservatory Orchestra in a program of works by Edward Elgar and Gustav Mahler.
Part of the Temerty Orchestral Program.

Fazıl Say and Friends
FRI., JAN. 19, 8PM KOERNER HALL
Turkish pianist Fazıl Say performs an evening of his own works for solo piano, voice, and chamber ensemble featuring Turkish-Canadian mezzo-soprano Beste Kalender, Lara and Scott St. John (violins), Barry Shiffman (viola), and Winona Zelenka (cello).

21CAfterhours: Indígena
SAT., JAN. 20, 10PM TEMERTY THEATRE
Curated and conducted by Brian Current, the students of The Glenn Gould School perform ground-breaking works by contemporary composers.

Bridget Kibbey with the Calidore String Quartet and Mervon Mehta, narrator
SUN., JAN. 21, 3PM KOERNER HALL
The “Yo-Yo Ma of the harp” (Vogue), Bridget Kibbey joins the acclaimed Calidore String Quartet and Mervon Mehta for an ecstatic evening including a new commission for harp and quartet by Sebastian Currier and Edgar Allen Poe/André Caplet’s The Masque of the Red Death.

Isabelle Faust, violin, Alexander Melnikov, piano, and Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello
SAT., FEB. 10, 8PM KOERNER HALL
TICKETS START AT ONLY $40
Violinist Isabelle Faust, cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras, and pianist Alexander Melnikov take us on a fascinating journey through a thrilling repertory of piano trio ‘hits’ by Beethoven, Brahms, and Elliott Carter.
Generous support provided from The Michael and Sonia Koerner Fund for Classical Programming.
LIVE OR ONLINE

Friday December 1

12:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Fridays at 12:30 Concert Series: Musicians of Tchaikovsky's Sleeping Beauty. keith.hunter@utoronto.ca.

7:00: Burlington Performing Arts Centre. State Ballet Theatre of Ukraine: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Burlington Performing Arts Centre - Main Theatre, 440 Locust St. Burlington. www.burlingtonpac.ca/events/snow-white or 905-568-1600. From $64.50.

7:30: Small World Music. Kakka - An Evening of Folk. 305-7469 www.Flatomarkhamtheatre.ca. $88 (regular); $55 (student); $15 (ages 5-10). Free evenings under 4. Also 7pm.


10:00: Hamilton. 2:30: Church of the Redeemer: Pax Christi Chorale. www.hamilton.ca. $25 via Eventbrite. $35 (regular); $20 (student); $15 (ages 5-10).

12:30: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 3. www.tso.ca. $98 (regular); $72 (student); $20 (ages 5-10).

7:00: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Small World Music Centre, Artscape Young-adian Artists. Darling Cora; Mohsin Jaman; John Johnston, double-bass; Dennis Song, drums. Durbar Indian Restaurant, 2469 Bloor St. W. 416-782-4441. Free. Reservations strongly recommended.

7:00: Small World Music. Folk Contemporary Expressions of Asian Canadian Artists. Darling Cora; Mohsin Jaman; Arlene; Yenn Ken; Janice Lo Lee; host; Small World Music Centre, Artscape Young-adian Artists. Darling Cora; Mohsin Jaman; John Johnston, double-bass; Dennis Song, drums. Durbar Indian Restaurant, 2469 Bloor St. W. 416-782-4441. Free. Reservations strongly recommended.

7:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. West-ern University Wind Ensemble Concert. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 151 Richard St. N., London. 519-661-3767 or www.music.uwo.ca/events. Free.


7:30: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Tchaikovsky’s Sleeping Beauty. Hauperdink: Prelude to Manuel and Grétry; Marjan Mazzetti; Bassoon Concerto; Tchaikovsky (compiled by Emelyanychev); Suite from The Sleeping Beauty. Michael Sweeney; bassoon; Maxim Emelyanychev, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $41. Also Nov 29-30am. Nov 30-3pm, Dec 3-3pm.


Saturday December 2

1:30: Pax Christi Chorale. Children’s Messiah. Experience Handel’s masterpiece through the eyes of a child. Children’s Messiah introduces young audience members to a great choral masterwork and the joys of the collective live musical experience in this 60-minute, family-friendly, casual concert. Pax Christi Chorale; Pax Christi Chorale Soloists; Student Choristers; Elaine Choi, conductor. Church of the Redeemer, 182 Bloor St. W. www.paxchristichorale.org. Pay what you can. Donations accepted for the Church of the Redeemer’s The Common Table program. Also 4pm.


4:00: Pax Christi Chorale. Children’s Messiah. 1:30pm. Pax Christi Chorale. Children’s Messiah. 1:30pm.


7:30: Flato Markham Theatre. The Man-hattan Transfer: Farewell Tour. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. 905-305-7469 www.flatomarkhamtheatre.ca. $88 (regular); $88 (prime); $15 (YTX). Also 8pm.

7:30: Hamilton. 2:00: University Symphonic Band Concert. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 151 Richard St. N., London. 519-661-3767 or www.music.uwo.ca/events. Free.

8:00: Flato Markham Theatre. The Man-hattan Transfer: Farewell Tour. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. 905-305-7469 www.flatomarkhamtheatre.ca. $88 (regular); $88 (prime); $15 (YTX). Also 8pm.


LISTINGS AT THE WHOLE NOTE.COM

Event listings are free of charge to artists, venues and presenters.

This issue contains event listings from December 1, 2023 to February 7, 2024.

IN THIS ISSUE

• Live and/or livestream (date-specific daily listings for performances, workshops, etcetera)
• Directory of alternative venues (mainly clubs mostly jazz)
• Ongoing, On Demand and Other (not tied to a specific date)

HOW TO LIST

1. Use the convenient online form at thewholenote.com/applyinglistings
2. Email listings to listings@thewholenote.com.

Please note, we do not take listings over the phone.

REGISTER FOR THE WEEKLY LISTINGS UPDATE

at thewholenote.com/newsletter

All other inquiries about WholeNote listings should be addressed to John Sharpe, Listings Editor at listings@thewholenote.com.

PlACEMENT

Listings are received every day and published in all media for which they are received in time.

• WEEKLY LISTINGS UPDATE (e-letter & online)
• JUST ASK (searchable online listings database)
• PRINT (see list of 2023/24 publication dates on page 9).

DEADLINES

Weekly Listings Update and Just Ask: Eligible listings received by 6pm Tuesday, each week, will be included in the following Sunday’s e-letter, and simultaneously posted to our searchable online listings database.

Print: Our next print issue, Volume 29 no.4 covers February and March 2024. The listings submission deadline for that issue will be Tuesday January 9. Please note: the Weekly listing e-letter typically looks 2-3 weeks ahead; the Just Ask database is searchable as far into the future as we have listings. Listings received for the Weekly Update prior to an upcoming print deadline do not need to be resubmitted unless there are changes.

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● 7:00: Singing Out. Holiday Reflections. See 3pm.


● 7:30: Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra. Holiday Memories. Bel Canto Choir (Michael Morgan, director); SPO Women’s Choir (Yeping Chao, director); Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra; Ronald Royer, conductor.

● 7:30: St. Paul’s Anglican Church. Holiday Harmonies. Franz Strauss: Nocturne for Horn; Tchaikovsky: Nutcracker Suite; Pergolesi: Magnificat; Christopher Dedrick: The Night Before Christmas; Leroy Anderson: A Christmas Festival; and other holiday favourites. Elke Elbe, horn; Take Note Chamber Choir; Ian Clarke, 1st violin; Anna Hancoek, 2nd violin; Leise Werner, violas; Barb Dickson, cello; Diana Parker Hood, double-bass; Michael Bercer, music director.

● 7:30: The Salvation Army. Christmas with The Salvation Army. Camp Staff Band, Canadian Staff Singers, and NEON. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St.

● 7:30: Toronto Celtic Choir. The Very Best Time of Year. Schubert: Mass No.2 in G and works by John Rutter and from diverse traditions. Includes a Christmas carol sing-along. Katelyn Bird, soprano; Toronto Celtic Choir; Toronto Sinfonietta; Matthew Jaskiewicz, music director. Knox Presbyterian Church, 650 Spadina Ave. 547-685-9700 or www.torontoconcertchoir.ca. $30; $15(students).

● 7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. University of Toronto Wind Ensemble: Games and Fantasies. Dominic Ghiglione, trombone; Gillian Mackay, conductor. MacMillan, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-408-0206. $30; $20(sr); $10(st). U of T students admitted free with a valid TCard, space permitting.


● 8:00: Brampton On Stage. Brampton Concert Band: Christmas at The Rose. Rose Theatre, 1 Theatre Ln. www.brampton.ca/online or 905-874-2800. From $20.


● 8:00: Flato Markham Theatre. The Manhattan Transfer: Farewell Tour. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. 905-305-7499 or www.flatomarkhamtheatre.ca. $88(regular); $91(prime); $15(Y/NC). Also 3pm.

● 8:00: Greater Toronto Philharmonic Orchestra. Romanticia. Wagner: Overture to Tannhäuser; Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto in D Op.35; Tchaikovsky: Symphony No.4 in Op.36. Eden Silverberg, violin; Oliver Balaburski, conductor. Calvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave. www.gto.ca or 647-238-0115. $25-$30. Also 5pm.


● 8:00: Margaret Bill & Gillian Uncountable Spheres + Goddess of Edges. CDs releases. Annette Studios, 566 Annette St. 416-871-8078. $30. Ticket price includes both CDs.


Fritz Kreisler and his Epoch
December 3rd, 2023 at 3:00 p.m.

FEATURING:
Sheila Jaffe, violin; Andrea Ludwig, mezzo soprano; Inna Perks, piano; Ernesto Ramirez, tenor; Boris Zarankin, piano; Ilana Zarankin, soprano.

Artistic Directors: Boris Zarankin & Inna Perks

For more details and to purchase tickets
www.offcentremusic.com
LIVE OR ONLINE | Dec 1, 2023 to Feb 7, 2024

HANDEL'S MESSIAH
Sunday, December 3, at 3:30pm
Basilica of our Lady Immaculate
28 Norfolk Street, Guelph
theidosongs.com

Lydia Adams, Conductor
Fri, Dec 8, 2023 @ 7:30pm
Yorkminster Park Baptist Church

EMLER ISETER SINGERS

MESSEY
BY G.F. HANDEL

OVER 100 RESOUNDING VOICES
with VIVA Chamber Singers,
Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto,
Linda Tsatsanis, Hillary Tufford,
Michael Colvin, and Jorell Williams
416-217-0537 elmerselersingers.com

of the Earth; Vaughan Williams: The Truth from Above; Britten: A Hymn to the Virgin; Streford: There Is No Rose; O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, and other carols. Choir of St. Thomas’s Church, Elizabeth Ander- son, director; Manuel Piazza, assistant director; 383 Huron St. 416-978-2233 or www.stthomas.on.ca. Freewill offering.


• 8:00: Hugh’s Room Live. Ashley MacIsaac. See 2pm.

Monday December 4

• 7:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Contemporary Music Studio Concert. Von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767 or www.music.uwo.ca/events. Free.

Tuesday December 5


• 8:00: Encore Symphonic Band. Monthly Concert. Featuring music celebrating the Christmas season with vocalists. Trinity Presbyterian Church York Mills, 2737 Bayview Ave. www.encoreband.ca. $10.

Thursday December 7


• 11:00am: Encore Symphonic Band. Monthly Concert. Featuring music celebrating the Christmas season with vocalists. Trinity Presbyterian Church York Mills, 2737 Bayview Ave. www.encoreband.ca. $10.

• 7:30: Toronto Mendelssohn Choir. Festival of Carols. See Dec 5.

• 7:00: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Saturday Organ Recital. Peter Bayer, organ. Cathedral Church of St. James, 106 King St. E. 416-364-7865 or www.stjamescathedral.ca/recitals. Free. Donations welcome.

• 7:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Choral Concert: Les Choristes & Western University. St. Joseph of Nazareth Church, 1585 Yonge St. 416-978-3750 or www.music.utoronto.ca/events. Free.

• 7:30: Toronto Mendelssohn Choir. Festival of Carols. See Dec 5.

• 7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Guitar Orchestra and Guitar/Flute Class. Rob MacDonald, director. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750 or www.music.utoronto.ca. Free.

• 8:00: Hugh’s Room Live. Susan Aglukark and Her P·h·e·a·m - Upping Christmas Tour. 236 Broadway Ave. www.hughroomlive.com or www.showpass.com/susan-aglukark-k-2. $45.


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December 7 at 8pm

GRYPHON TRIO
ECHO: Memories of the World
with Marion Newman Nege'ga, mezzo-soprano and čačumḥi aaron wells, actor
music-toronto.com

7:30: Symphony of Music.使え's Messiah by G. F. Handel. Elmer Iseler Singers; VIVA Chamber Singers; Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto; Linda Tsatsanis, soprano; Hillary Tufford, mezzo; Michael Colvin, tenor; Jorell Williams, baritone; Orchestra; Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, 1585 Yonge St. www.elmersielersingers.com/events/handels-messiah-2023. $55, $50(zo); $55(under 30).

7:30: Queen's Performing Arts. The Christmas Carol Church on the Queen's. 1536 The Queen'sway, Etobicoke. www.tickets.queensu.ca/events. asp?eventId=49 or 226-213-4811. $12; Free(3 and under). Also Dec 9(3pm), 10(3pm).


7:30: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Film Screening: Home Alone In Concert. Resonance Youth Choir (Bob Anderson, director).
LIVE OR ONLINE  | Dec 1, 2023 to Feb 7, 2024

- **8:00: Toronto Consort. Medieval Christmas.** Presented in a darkened, candle-lit hall designed to transport you into the mesmerizing world of the Middle Ages. Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, Jeanne Lamon Hall, 427 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or www.torontoconsort.org. $25; $15 (student). Also Dec 10 (6pm). See Dec 8.

- **10:00am: Encore Symphonic Concert Band.** Christmas Concert. Trinity Church Choir and Musicians complemented with the Encore Concert Band. Trinity Presbyterian Church York Mills, 2737 Bayview Ave. www.encoreband.ca. $10.

- **11:00am: Xenia Concerts. An Adaptive Concert.** A Pulse Music Collective 70. Meridian Hall, 1 Front St. E. 416-896-3295. $5. Also at 2pm.

- **2:00: Avenue Road Music and Performance Academy.** Martin Matteau Concert Series: Composers on Vacation - Carmen Crescizan & Meagan Milatz, Piano-Cello Recital. Works by David Popper, Manuel de Falla, and Johannes Brahms. Avenue Road Music and Performance Academy, Gordon Lightfoot Concert Hall, 460 Avenue Rd. www.averueroadmusic.com or info@averueroadmusic.com. 416-926-0285. Free. Donations are welcome. Seating is limited so pre-registration is required. Salon concert setting. Reception to follow.

- **2:00: Toronto Consort. Medieval Christmas.** See Dec 8. Also Dec 8 (9pm).

- **2:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** Film Screening: Home Alone In Concert. See Dec 7. Also Dec 9 (7:30pm), 10 (7pm).

- **2:00: Xenia Concerts/Alzheimer Society of Toronto.** An Adaptive Concert with Pulse Music Collective 70. See Dec 9 (11am).


- **2:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music.** PianoFest (3-day festival). See Dec 8. Also Dec 10 (12:30pm).

- **3:30: Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestras.** Holidays & The Hockey Sweater; Bach: Jesus, Joy of Man’s Desiring; Coley-Taylor: Christmas Overture; Jingle Bell Swing! (arr. Christopher Eastburn); Suresh Sinrgaratnam: Excerpts from Snow Angel; Waldeuteufel: Skaters’ Waltz; Anderson: Sleigh Ride; Tchaikovsky: Excerpts from Snow Angel; Waldteufel: Skatetown; Anderson: Sleigh Ride; Tchaikovsky: Excerpts from Snow Angel; Palestrina: Hodie Christi Nata est. Metropolitan United Church, London; London Symphony. Metropolitan United Church, 488 Wellington St. London, 226-270-0910 or www.londonsymphonia.ca. $70 (premium); $52 (adult); $22 (student). See Dec 9 (7:30pm), 10 (7pm).

- **7:00: Grand Philharmonic Choir.** Bach: Christmas Oratorio. Musicians of the KWSymphony, Molly Netter, soprano; Lilian Brooks, mezzo; Asitha T ennekoon, tenor; Stephen Hedgepeth, baritone; Mark Vuorinen, conductor. Centre in the Square, 10 Queen St. N., Kitchener 519-578-3570. From $10.

- **7:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony.** Bach: Christmas Oratorio. Musicians of the KWSymphony, Molly Netter, soprano; Lilian Brooks, mezzo; Asitha T ennekoon, tenor; Stephen Hedgepeth, baritone; Mark Vuorinen, conductor. Centre in the Square, 10 Queen St. N., Kitchener 519-578-3570. From $10.

- **7:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Orchestra.** Sing Along Messiah. Audience members will have the opportunity to sit among the WCS choristers by section, or with friends and family. Bring your score and join in the fun, or just come & enjoy the wonderful music. Brian Jackson, guest conductor; Emily McPherson, assistant conductor; Clare Marion, piano. The Spire/Sydenham Street United Church, 82 Sydenham St., Kingston. www.kingsingtonchoraleociety.ca. $30 (adult/kr); $20 (stud); Free(16 and under).

- **7:30: Kokoro Singers.** Wintersong. Festive songs of the holiday season. Brenda Uchimaru, director; St. James’ Anglican Church, 520 Ellis Rd., Cambridge, 226-270-9763. Cash at the door: $20; $15 (10-18); Free(under 12). Also Dec 10 (3pm - Burlington).

- **7:30: London Symphony.** Christmas Oratorio. Experience the joy and wonder of the holidays with music from The Mculey Boys; Choirs of Metropolitan United Church, London; London Symphony. Metropolitan United Church, 488 Wellington St. London, 226-270-0910 or www.londonsymphonia.ca. $70 (premium); $52 (adult); $22 (student). See Dec 10. Also Dec 10 (3pm - Burlington).

- **7:30: London Symphony.** Christmas Oratorio. Experience the joy and wonder of the holidays with music from The Mculey Boys; Choirs of Metropolitan United Church, London; London Symphony. Metropolitan United Church, 488 Wellington St. London, 226-270-0910 or www.londonsymphonia.ca. $70 (premium); $52 (adult); $22 (student). See Dec 10. Also Dec 10 (3pm - Burlington).

- **7:30: Mississauga Chamber Singers.** Ceremony of Carols. Carols of the Common: A Ceremony of Carols, Eric Whitacre’s Glow, and other works. The Mculey Boys; Choirs of Metropolitan United Church, London; London Symphony. Metropolitan United Church, 488 Wellington St. London, 226-270-0910 or www.londonsymphonia.ca. $70 (premium); $52 (adult); $22 (student). See Dec 10. Also Dec 10 (3pm - Burlington).


- **7:30: Toronto Christmas Symphonia.** Film Screening: Home Alone In Concert. See Dec 7. Also Dec 10 (2pm).

- **7:30: Trinity Bach Project.** Bach and Christmas. See Dec 8.

- **7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music.** University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Emily Rocha, soprano; Uli Mayer, conductor; MacMillan Theatre, Edward Johnson Building, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-408-0208. In person: $30; $20 (sr); $10 (st). Livestream: $10. U of T students admitted free with a valid TCard, space permitting.


- **8:00: Art of Time Ensemble.** To All A Good Night 8 Dec - Dec 7.

- **8:00: Greenbank Folk Music Society.** Noah Zacharin and The Points of Light. Selections from Point of Light CD and others. Noah Zacharin, guitar & voice; Gary Craig, drums; John Dymond, bass; Burke Carroll, pedal steel. Greenbank Hall, 19965 Highway #12, Greenbank. 905-865-8351. $35.

- **8:00: Kindred Spirits Orchestra.** The Greatest Show. Stravinsky: Circus Polka - For a Young Elephant; Barak: Violin Concerto No.2 BB 117; Bruckner’s Symphony No.3 in d WAB 103. Jonathan Crow, violin; Daniel Vnuzkowski, host; Kristian Alexander, conductor. Flato Markham Theatre, 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham, 905-767-8511, $30-$40; $22.50-$30 (sr); $15-$20 (full time student or 18 and under). 7pm; Silent auction in support of music education and the arts (closes after the intermission). 7:10pm: Prelude pre-concert recital. 7:20pm: pre-concert talk. Intermission discussion and Q&A with Jona- than Crow and Daniel Vnuzkowski. Post-concert reception.

- **8:00: Nagata Shachu.** Kiyoashi Nagata 40th Anniversary Concert, Al Green Theatre, 750 Spadina Ave. Kiyoashi.eventbrite.ca. $35-$45. 8:30-$35 (sr/under).


8:00: Toronto Consort. Medieval Christmas. See Dec 8.

Sunday December 10


2:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Loreena McKennitt’s Under A Winter’s Moon. A mixture of carols and tales and the oral traditions found in many cultures, interwoven with strands of the natural world revealed through Indigenous stories. Cedric Smith, actor; Jeffrey “Red” George, artist & flute; Caroline Lavelle, cello; Members of The Bookends; Loreena McKennitt, harp. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 and www.rcmusic.com/performance. From $85. A limited number of Rush Tickets is available starting 3 hours before all performances by phone only, Also 7pm.

2:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Film Screening: Home Alone In Concert. See Dec 7.


3:00: Orchestra Toronto. A Winter Festival. Tchaikovsky: Selections from The Nutcracker; Vaughan Williams: Folk Songs of the Four Seasons. Canadian Children’s Opera Company; Michael Newnham, conductor. George Weston Recital Hall, Meridian Arts Centre, 5040 Yonge St. 416-467-7142 or www.ticketmaster.ca/a-winter-festival-toronto-ontario-12-10-2023/event/10005EB0AEA0228A. From $14. Pre-concert chat at 2:15pm.

THE GREATEST SHOW

Saturday, December 9, 2023, 8 pm

Flato Markham Theatre

STRAINSKY, Circus polka

BARTÓK, Violin concerto No. 2

BRUCKNER, Symphony No. 3

The Kindred Spirits Orchestra

Kristian Alexander | Music Director

Yorkminster Park
Baptist Church

Carols by Candlelight
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 4:30 P.M.
A traditional candlelight choral presentation.

Nine Lessons & Carols
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 4:30 P.M.
Following the historic tradition of King’s College in Cambridge.

Yorkminster Park
Baptist Church

1585 Yonge Street | YorkminsterPark.com
LIVE OR ONLINE | Dec 1, 2023 to Feb 7, 2024

- **3:00:** Queensway Performing Arts. The Christmas Hit! See Dec 8.
- **4:00:** Aurora United Church. Carols by Candlelight - Sing Nowell! Arrive early for the singing of your favorite Christmas carols. Aurora United Church Chancel Choir; Aurora United Church Handbell Ensembles; Albury Gardens Brass Quintet; Tim Birtch, trumpet; Wesley Bells, violin. Trinity Anglican Church, 79 Victoria St., Aurora. 905-737-1935. Free-will offering. Also 7:30pm.
- **4:00:** Toronto Classical Singers. A Christmas Gift. Finzi: In terra pax; Haydn: Missa Sancti Nicolai, Mass No.6 in G Hob.XXII/6 *Nicolaissene (Nicholas Massa). Lesley Bouza, soprano; Sandra Boyes, mezzo; Stephen McClure, tenor; Bruce Kelly, baritone; Toronto Classical Singers & Players; Jurgen Petrenko, conductor. Christ Church Deer Park, 1570 Yonge St. 416-986-8749, $30.
- **7:00:** FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. The Music of A Charlie Brown Christmas. See 2pm.
- **7:00:** Royal Conservatory of Music. Lorreine McKinnon's Under A Winter's Moon. See 2pm.
- **7:30:** Aurora United Church. Carols by Candlelight - Sing Nowell! See 4pm. Back.
- **7:30:** Cuckoo's Next Folk Club. David Bradstreet with Carl Keesee. Chaucer's Pub, 122 Carling St., Ottawa. 613-599-5022, Free.
- **7:30:** Toronto Beach Chorale. Christmas Impressions. Saint-Saëns: Oratorio de Noël (Christmas Oratorio). Op.12: Berlioz: The Shepherds' Farewell from L'enfance du Christ Op.25 H.130; Christmas carols from the French tradition. Toronto Beach Chorale; Jennifer Krabbé, soprano; Rachel Miller, soprano; Rachel Miller, mezzo; Deborah Overtes, tenor; Charles Davidson, tenor; Matthew Cassilis; bass; harp, organ, and string orchestra; Marvin W. Fick, conductor. Kingston Road United Church, 975 Kingston Rd. www.torontoebbchorale.ca. $30; $15(youth).

Monday December 11


Tuesday December 12

- **1:00:** St. James Cathedral. Tuesday Organ Recital. Nathan Jeffery, organ, Cathedral Church of St. James, 106 King St. E. 416-384-7865 or www.stjamescathedral.ca/recitals. Free. Donations welcome.
- **7:30:** Confluence Concerts. Dreams of Home. HNNO Duo, Hellconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave. www.bemusednetwork.com/events. $25. Pre-concert chat at 6:45pm.
- **8:00:** Toronto Symphony Orchestra. 75O Holiday Pops. Molly Johnson, vocalist; Etobicoke School of the Arts Holiday Chorus; Steven Reineke, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $62. Also Dec 13.

Wednesday December 13

- **12:15:** St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church. Noon Hour Series: Douglas Haas Legacy Concerts. Renaissance School of the Arts Flute Choir; Wendy Wagler, director. 54 Queen St. N. Kitchener. 519-578-4430 or www.standrewskw.com. Free. Lunch available for $10 or bring your own.
- **7:30:** Toronto Welsh Male Voice Choir. Christmas Concert. Calvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave. 416-489-9094 or www.welshchoir.ca. $45. $35 advance tickets until Dec 1.
- **8:00:** Toronto Symphony Orchestra. 75O Holiday Pops. See Dec 12.
Friday December 15

7:00: **Jazz at Durbar**. Medium Curry, Hot Jazz. Jazz standards, Chick Corea, Wayne Shorter; Bill Evans tunes. Matt Pines, piano; Eddie Castro, double-bass; Michael Massaro, sax; Dennis Song, drums. Durbar Indian Restaurant, 2469 Bloor St. W. 416-762-4441. Free. Reservations strongly recommended.


7:30: **Soundstreams**. Electric Messiah. Midori Marah, soprano; Rebecca Cuddy, mezzo; Elizabeth Shepherd, mezzo; Daniel Cabena, countertenor; Korin Thomas-Smith, baritone; and others; Chelsea Dav Hilke, stage director; Adam Scime, music director & sound design. Theatre Passe Muraille, 16 Ryerson Ave. 416-504-1292 or www.soundstreams.ca. From $25. Also Dec 16(7-30pm), 16(2pm & 7:30pm), 17(2pm).

8:00: **Brampton On Stage**. Adi Braun Quartet: Noir. An evening of delicious and dangerous music from the era of Film Noir. Adi Braun, vocals; Adi Braun Quintet. Lester B. Pearson Theatre, 150 Central Park Dr., Brampton. 905-874-2800. $15-$39.

8:00: **TO Live**. Digging Roots with Lacey Hill. Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. www.tolive.com or 416-366-7723 and 1-800-708-6754 or boxoffice@tolive.com. $20.

Friday, December 15, 2023

7:30: Tafelmusik. Handel: Messiah. Rachel Redmond, soprano; Cameron Shahbaz, countertenor; James Reese, tenor; Enrico Lagasca, bass-baritone; Tafelmusik Chamber Choir; Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra; Ivans Taurins, director. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 275 Bloor St. W. www.tafelmusik.org/handelmessiah or 416-408-0208. From $50. Also Dec 15 & 16.

7:30: **Soundstreams**. Electric Messiah. Midori Marah, soprano; Rebecca Cuddy, mezzo; Elizabeth Shepherd, mezzo; Daniel Cabena, countertenor; Korin Thomas-Smith, baritone; and others; Chelsea Dav Hilke, stage director; Adam Scime, music director & sound design. Theatre Passe Muraille, 16 Ryerson Ave. 416-504-1292 or www.soundstreams.ca. From $25. Also Dec 16(7-30pm), 16(2pm & 7:30pm), 17(2pm).

8:00: **Brampton On Stage**. Adi Braun Quartet: Noir. An evening of delicious and dangerous music from the era of Film Noir. Adi Braun, vocals; Adi Braun Quintet. Lester B. Pearson Theatre, 150 Central Park Dr., Brampton. 905-874-2800. $15-$39.

8:00: **TO Live**. Digging Roots with Lacey Hill. Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. www.tolive.com or 416-366-7723 and 1-800-708-6754 or boxoffice@tolive.com. $20.
of Christmas music for the whole family. Jacqueline Mokrzewski, piano; Michael Morgan, director. Scarborough Bluffs United Church, 3739 Kingston Rd., Scarborough. 647-831-3245 or www.belcantosingers.ca. $25; $5/student. Also at 7:30pm.

- **3:00:** The Choir, Candis, St. Anne’s Anglican Church, 276 Gladstone Ave. 416-588-2466. From $10. Also Dec 17(1pm).

- **4:00:** Hamilton Children’s Choir. In The House With Nobody Else. Guest: Tom Wilson, narrator. Central Presbyterian Church (Hamilton), 165 Charton Ave. W., Hamilton. www.eventbrite.ca/e/in-the-house-with-nobody-else-tickets. $30(preferred); $25(adult); $20(st); $15(st/alumni); $10(child under 12); Free(child under 2). Also at 7pm.

- **4:00:** Mississauga Symphony Orchestra. Holiday: A Merry Little Christmas. Mississauga Symphony Orchestra; Mississauga Symphony Youth Orchestra. Living Arts Centre, Hammerson Hall, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga. www.mississaugasymphony.ca or 905-306-6000. $25. Matinée for Young Families(4pm) & Concert for All Ages(7:30pm).


- **4:30:** Church of the Holy Trinity. The Christmas Story. See Dec 9. Also Dec 17(4:30pm); 27(7pm); 29(4:30); 24(1:30pm).

- **7:00:** Brampton On Stage. A Whole New World: The Musical Magic of Alan Menken. Be Our Guest, Part Of Your World, Friend Like Me, Under The Sea, Colors of the Wind, Go The Distance, Suddenly Seymour, and A Whole New World. Lester B. Pearson Theatre, 150 Central Park Dr., Brampton. 905-874-2800. From $29.

- **7:00:** Hamilton Children’s Choir. In The House With Nobody Else. See 4pm.


- **7:00:** Univox Choir. Goodness Matters. Choral works representing goodness throughout the world. Ola Gjeilo: Dreamweaver; Rosephanye Powell: “To Sit and Dream” and “I Dream a World”; and other works. Univox Choir; Joshua Tamayo, piano; The Dreamweaver Orchestra; Malcolm Cody MacFarlane, conductor. Christ Church Deer Park, 1570 Yonge St. www.univoxchoirs.com. $25; $30(with a $5 donation); Free(under 12). Intermission will include a Bake Sale with donations supporting the choir.


- **7:30:** Bel Canto Singers. Haber-Dashing Through The Snow. See 2:30pm.

- **7:30:** Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra. Handel's Messiah. Bach Elgar Choir. Melrose United Church, 86 Homewood Ave., Hamilton. 905-526-7756; boxoffice@hpo.org. $20-$45. Also Dec 17(3pm).

- **7:30:** Mississauga Symphony Orchestra. Holiday: A Merry Little Christmas. Mississauga Symphony Orchestra; Mississauga Symphony Youth Orchestra. Living Arts Centre, Hammerson Hall, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga. www.mississaugasymphony.ca or 905-306-6000. From $35. Matinée for Young Families(4pm) & Concert for All Ages(7:30pm).

- **7:30:** Niagara Symphony Orchestra. NSO Now 2: Brad’s Home for the Holidays. Kaylee Harwood, soprano; Sayer Roberts, tenor; Laura Secord S.S. Choir; FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, Partridge Hall, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 905-688-0722; boxoffice@firstontariopac.ca. $75(regular); $100(diamond); $52(arts worker); $4635 under 15; $25(student- university college); $24(youth 18 and under). Also Dec 17(3:30pm).


- **7:30:** Soundstreams. Electric Messiah. See Dec 14. Also Dec 17(2pm).

- **7:30:** Tafelmusik. Handel: Messiah. See Dec 14.
Sunday December 17

7:00am: Encore Symphonic Concert Band. Christmas Concert. Featuring music to celebrate the Christmas season with vocalists, Trinity Presbyterian Church York Mills, 2377 Bayview Ave. www.encoreband.ca. $10. 

2:00: Flato Markham Theatre. A Swingin’ Christmas with Toronto All Star Big Band. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. 905-305-7469 or www.flatomarkhamtheatre.ca. From $80. 

2:00: Soundstreams. Electric Messiah. See Dec 14.

2:00: Tafelmusik. Sing-Along Messiah, Rachel Redmond, soprano; Cameron Shahbazi, countertenor; James Reese, tenor; Enrico Lagasca, bass-baritone; Tafelmusik Chamber Choir; Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra; Ivars Taurins, director. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 279 Bloor St. W. www.tafelmusik.org/sing-along or 416-408-0208. From $59. General admission. Seating by vocal section.


3:00: Dundas Concert Band. Annual Christmas Concert. Anderson: Sleigh Ride; Prokofiev: Troika; Sounds of Christmas; Christmas Eve/Sarajevo 12/24; Tchaikovsky: Scenes from The Nutcracker. St. Paul’s United Church (Dundas), 29 Park St. W., Dundas. 905 523-9500. Free. Donations gratefully accepted. Receipts will be given for $10 or more.

3:00: Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra. Handel’s Messiah. See Dec 15.

3:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Messiah. Handel: Messiah. Lauren Snouver, soprano; Kristzina Szabó, mezzo; Colin Ainsworth, tenor; Joshua Hopkins, baritone; Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (Jean-Sébastien Vallée, artistic director); Dame Jane Glover, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $41. Also Dec 19 (8pm), 20 (8pm), 21 (8pm), 23 (8pm).


4:30: Church of the Holy Trinity. The Christmas Story. See Dec 9. Also Dec 22 (7pm), 23 (4:30), 24 (1:30).

7:00: Brampton On Stage. A Next Generation Leashy Christmas. Rose Theatre, 1Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-874-2800. From $20.

8:00: That Choir. Carolers. See Dec 16 (3pm).

Monday December 18

7:00: Peterborough Singers. Handel’s Messiah, Lesley Bouza, soprano; Lillian Brooks, mezzo; Joshua Wales, tenor; Graham Roginson, bass; Ian Sadler, organ; Paul Owat, trumpet; Douglas Sutherland, trumpet. Emmanuel United Church, 534 George St. N., Peterborough. 705-745-1820 or www.peterboroughsingersons.com. $40; $10 (st).

7:30: The Edison Singers. ‘Tis the Season. Join us for a joyous celebration of the music of Christmas! The Edison Singers; Noel Edison, conductor. Court House Theatre, 26 Queen St., Niagara-on-the-Lake. www.theedisonsingers.com/performances or 226-384-9000. $45; $25 (st/18 and under). Also Dec 20 (Brampton) & Dec 22 (Ella).

Tuesday December 19

1:00: St. James Cathedral. Tuesday Organ Recital. Jean-Paul Feo, organ. Cathedral Church of St. James, 106 King St. E. 416-364-3840. Free admission. 

7:00: A Cappella Christmas. Apocryphonia. A selection of holiday favourites from the 14th to the 17th century sung by Toronto’s only Renaissance vocal quintet. Diapente Renaissance Vocal Quintet: Jane Fingler, soprano; Peter Koniers, countertenor; Alexander CapPELLazzo, tenor; Jonathan Stuchbery, tenor & continuo; Martin Gomes, bass, St. Olave’s Anglican Church, 360 Windermere Rd.


905-688-0722 or boxoffice@firstontariopac.ca. $55; $49(members).

905-305-7469 or www.firstontariopac.ca.


905-688-0722 or boxoffice@firstontariopac.ca. $55; $49(members).


905-688-0722 or boxoffice@firstontariopac.ca. $55; $49(members).
**Sunday December 31**

- **11:00am: Flato Markham Theatre. Bal-
  lent Jorgen The Nutcracker: A Canadian Trad-
  ition. See Dec 30. Also 3pm.

- **7:00: Atilla G nz Concert Productions. Bravissim!
  New Year’s at the Opera. Han G Liang, soprano; 
  Glynis Shrift, mezzo; Anthony Alves, tenor; 
  Emanual Villanueva, baritone; Canadian Opera 
  Company Orchestra; Johannes 
  Debus, conductor. St. James Cathedral, 
  273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or work 
  music.utoronto.ca. Free. Also Jan 12 
  & 15.

**Monday January 1**

- **2:30: Atilla G nz Concert Productions. Salute to
  Vienna New Year’s Concert. Katha 
  rin Rieger, soprano; Thomas Weinha-
  pel, baritone; Budapest Dance Ensemble; 
  International Balloon Dancers; Strauss 
  Symphony of Canada; Irene Kollar, 
  conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 
  www.salutetovienna.com or 416-872-4255.

**Tuesday January 2**

- **8:00: Burlington Performing Arts Centre.
  Sing-a-long Christmas.
  Film screening with lyrics across the screen.
  20-minute pre-show and fancy-dress competition with
  Rainer Noah, host. Burlington Performing Arts Centre 
  Main Theatre, 440 Locust St. Burlington. 
  www.burlingtonperformingartscentre.ca/events/sing-a-long-grease 
  or 905-668-1600. From $34.50. Includes complimentary sparkling wine, 
  costume contests, fun packs and photo booth to
  memorialize the night.

**Wednesday January 3**

- **7:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. The 
  Merry Widow. See Dec 29. Also Jan 2.

**Saturday January 6**

- **7:00: Toronto Gilbert & Sullivan Society.
  Annual Songfest. All welcome. Performing
  companies from around the city sing excerpts of
  their upcoming shows – G&S and
  others. St. Andrew’s United Church, 117 Bloor 
  St. E. Sheryl at 416-616-1462. Free(members);
  $5(non-members). All welcome.

- **7:30: Li Delun Music Foundation. New 
  Year’s Concert 2024. J. Strauss II: Overture
  to La forza del deserto; J. Verdi: Overture 
  to La forza del deserto; J. Strauss II: Overture 
  to Der Zigeunerbaron; J. Strauss II: Overture 
  to Der Zigeunerbaron. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of 
  Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750 or 

**Friday January 12**

- **7:30: Confluence Concerts. Dichterliebe:
  Whose Love? Reimagining of Robert Schu-
  man’s romantic song cycle in its pure form, 
  from a gender inclusive perspective. Teja 
  Kasahaara, vocalist; David Eliaik, piano. 
  Hollis Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave. www.bemused
  network.com/events. $25. Also Jan 13.

- **9:00: Fallsview Casino Resort. Legends in
  Concert. See Jan 10. Also Jan 14(3pm & 7pm), 
  15(3pm), 16(3pm), 17(3pm & 8:30pm).

- **9:00: University of Toronto Faculty of 
  Music. Canadian Women’s Brass Collective. 
  Free. Donations welcome.

**Saturday January 13**

- **7:30: Barrie Concert Association. Sheng 
  Cai, Piano. Tchaikovsky: Grand Sonata Op.37; 
  Rachmaninoff: Sonata No.2 in f-sharp Op.36; 
  André Mathieu’s “Spring” and “Summer” from Saisons canadiennes. 
  Hiway Pentecostal Church, 50 Anne St. N. Barrie. www.barrieconcerts.org. 
  $45. LIVE & LIVESTREAM.

- **7:30: Confluence Concerts. Dichterliebe:
  Whose Love? See Jan 12.

- **8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. 
  Trifonov Plays Brahms. See Jan 10.

**Wednesday January 10**

- **7:30: Fallsview Casino Resort. Legends in 
  Concert. Fallsview Casino Resort, Avon 
  On, 3850 Fallsview Blvd, Niagara Falls. 
  www.ticketmaster.ca. Free. Also Jan 11(3pm 
  & 8:30pm), 12(3pm), 14(3pm & 7pm), 15(3pm), 16(3pm), 
  17(3pm & 8:30pm).

- **8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. 

- **8:30: Fallsview Casino Resort. Legends 
  in Concert. See Jan 10. Also Jan 12(7pm), 
  14(3pm & 7pm), 15(3pm), 16(3pm), 17(3pm & 
  8:30pm).

**Thursday January 11**

- **12:00 noon: Trinity Bach Project. Chamber 
  Baroque and Handel’s Gloria. Handel: 
  Missa Sapiens Gazia, Gloria, HWV 245; Bach: 
  Trio Sonata in C BWV 1030; in addition, 
  other chamber works for strings and solo voice. 
  Louise Zacharias Friese, soprano; Christopher 
  Bagan, organ; Michelle Odorico, violin; Felix 
  Deak, cello. St. Augustine of Canterbury, 
  1847 Bayview Ave. 416-250-4256 or www. 
  trinitybachproject.org. Fee. Suggested 
  donation $25.

- **5:00: Fallsview Casino Resort. Legends in 
  Concert. See Jan 10. Also Jan 11(3pm, 12(3pm), 
  14(3pm & 7pm), 15(3pm), 16(3pm), 17(3pm & 
  8:30pm).
LIVE OR ONLINE

Dec 1, 2023 to Feb 7, 2024


Friday January 19

7:30: Aurora Cultural Centre. The Last Waltz. Lance Anderson, piano & organ; Chuck Jackson, Johnny Max, Matt Weidinger; and Quisha Wint, vocalists. St. Andrew’s College, 16800 Yonge St., Aurora. 905-713-1818 or info@auroracultural.ca. $50.

7:30: FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. The Tripelts of Belleville. Benoit Charest, conductor. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, Partridge Hall, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 905-688-0722; boxoffice@firstontariopac.ca. $30 ($25 members).


7:00: Flato Markham Theatre. Dominic Mancuso & Vittorio Mezza: Danses in my Mind. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. 905-305-7469 or www.markhamtheatre.ca. $38 (regular); $68 (prime);$151 (premium).

7:00: Royal Conservatory of Music 21C Festival Music Series: Fazil Say & Friends. Soyun Park, Piano; Sohyun Park, Piano; and Naoki Morita, Guitar. Koerner Hall, 237 Bloor St. W. 416-458-0208; rcmusic.ca. Performance from 21C.

Saturday January 20

3:00: SoundCrowd. Billy Joel vs Elton John. A capella arrangements of songs by The Piano Man and The Rocket Man go head-to-head and YOU, the audience, decide the winner! Paradise Theatre, 1008 Bloor St. W. www.soundcrowd.ca or info@soundcrowd.ca. $30. Limited tickets. Also 8pm.


7:30: Guitar Society of Toronto. Fifty Years of Great Guitar. Leo Del>This also includes the Daddy-O Recital, which has been postponed to a future date.

Sunday January 21


Tuesday January 23


University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750 or www.music.utoronto.ca. Free.

- **Wednesday January 24**
  - **7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music.** France-Canada-Distinguished Visitor in Music: Sophie Dervaux, Bassoon. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750 or www.music.utoronto.ca. Free. LIVE & LIVESTREAM.

- **Friday January 26**

- **Saturday January 27**
  - **1:00: Bravant On Stage.** Mini Pop Kids Live: The Good Vibes Tour. Rose Theatre, 1 Theatre Ln., Brampton. 905-874-2800.
  - **8:30: Fallsview Casino Resort.** Colin James, OLG Stage at Fallsview Casino, 6368 Stanley Ave., Niagara Falls. www.ticketmaster.ca. $51.50-$261.74.

- **Sunday January 28**
  - **2:00: Canadian Opera Company.** The Cunning Little Vixen. See Jan 26. Also Feb 8/14/30pm, 8, 10, 14, 16. @ 7:30pm unless otherwise noted.
**LIVE OR ONLINE**

Dec 1, 2023 to Feb 7, 2024

905-698-0722 or boxoffice@firstontariopac.ca. $15.64-$82.90.

- 2:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. University of Toronto New Music Festival: Canadian Art Song Showcase. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750 or www.music.utoronto.ca. Free.


- 7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. University of Toronto New Music Festival: Electroacoustic Music Concert. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750 or www.music.utoronto.ca. Free.

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**Monday January 30**

- 9:00am: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. University of Toronto New Music Festival: Masterclass #1. Presented by Marjan Mozetich, Roger D. Moore Distinguished Visitor in Music, Edward Johnson Building, Room 109, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750 or www.music.utoronto.ca. Free.


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**Tuesday January 30**


- 7:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society. Janina Fialkowska, Piano. First United Church (Waterloo), 16 William St. W., Waterloo. 519-558-1809 or www.ticketscene.ca/kwcms. $40; $25(sr); Free(12 & under). At door: $45; $30(sr).

- 7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. University of Toronto New Music Festival: Contemporary Music Ensemble - Body Electric. MacMillan Theatre, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-408-0208. $30; $20(sr); $10(st). U of T students admitted free with a valid TCard, space permitting.

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**Wednesday January 31**

- 10:00am: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. University of Toronto New Music Festival: Masterclass #2. Presented by Marjan Mozetich, Roger D. Moore Distinguished Visitor in Music, Edward Johnson Building, Room 109, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750 or www.music.utoronto.ca. Free.

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**Thursday February 1**


- 7:00: FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. Lessons in Temperament by Outside the March. James Smith, creator/performer; Mitchell Cushman, director/development; Nick Blais, designer. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, Robertson Theatre, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 905-688-0722 or boxoffice@firstontariopac.ca. $30. Also Feb 27(1pm). Mature content.

- 8:00: Brantford Symphony Orchestra. Fournier Sings Celine. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. 905-305-7469 or www.flato.markhamtheatre.ca. $58(regular); $48(prime); $15(V/TX).


- 8:00: Tafelmusik. Fantastici: Originating in Italy in the 17th century, the “stylus fantastici” featured unfettered improvisations, dramatic contrasts, and the passion give-and-take of friends in musical conversation. Lina Tur Bonet, guest director and violin; Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra. Jeanne Lamon Hall, Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, 427 Bloor St. W. www.tafelmusik.org or 416-964-6337. From $47. Also Feb 18(3pm) & 4(3pm).

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**Friday February 2**

- 1:00: FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. Lessons in Temperament by Outside the March. See Feb 1. Mature content.

- 5:00: Kingston Baroque Consort. The Enchanted Garden: Music and Poetry Inspired by Nature. Works by Vivaldi, Couperin, and others. St. James Anglican Church (Kingston), 10 Union St, Kingston. legerek@queensu.ca or 613-217-5509 or at Novel Idea, 159 Princess St or www.livemusickingston.ca/kingston-baroque-consort-2023/. $25; $10(st). Free(Under 17).

- 7:30: FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. Humans 2.0 by CIRCA. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, Partridge Hall, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 905-688-0722 or boxoffice@firstontariopac.ca. $49; $45(members).


- 8:00: Brantford Symphony Orchestra. Pimento featuring King Cosmos: Celebrating the Music of Harry Belafonte. Cyril Clark Library Theatre, 20 Loafers Lake Ln, Brantford. 905-874-2800 or www.tickets.brampton.ca. $29.


- 8:00: Flato Markham Theatre. Jeanick Fourmi-Sings Coline. 171 Town Centre Blvd., Markham. 905-305-7469 or www.flatomarkhamtheatre.ca. $88(regular); $73(prime); $15(V/TX).

- 8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Special Performances: Joshua Redman: where are we, Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 237 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208 or www.rcmusic.com/performance. From $60.

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**Saturday February 3**


- 2:00: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. University of Toronto New Music Festival: Bridge & Wolak and Bedford Trio Hong Kong Showcase. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750 or www.music.utoronto.ca. Free.


- 4:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Taylor Academy Concert Series: Taylor Academy Showcase Concert. Mazzoldi Concert Hall, TELUS Centre, 237 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208


7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. University of Toronto New Music Festival: University of Toronto Wind Ensemble - Anniversaries and Acknowledgements. MacMillan Theatre, Edward Johnson Building, 80 Queen's Park. 416-408-0208. $30; $20(sr); $10(st). U of T students admitted free with a valid TCard, space permitting.


Tuesday February 6


Wednesday February 7

6:00: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. John R. Stratten Visitor in Music: Master Class II - Historical Performance Practice in the 21st Century. Presented by Will Crutchfield. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen's Park.

Ongoing, On Demand & Other


LECTURES

- Jan 26 7:00: FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. The Triplets of Belleville. Film screening with live orchestra. Benoit Charest, conductor. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, Partridge Hall, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 905-688-0722; boxoffice@firstontariopac.ca. $30, $25(members).

St. Olaves Winnipeg. Isaac Watts 350. Open with Choral Evensong for Candelmas, a religious service including hymns written by Watts. Followed directly by a music feature to mark the 350th anniversary of his birth. Director of Music Jeremy Tingle discusses the history of hymnody within the Anglican liturgy, with an emphasis on Isaac Watts’s 18th-century paraphrases of the Psalms. 360 Windermere Ave. www.YouTube.com/StOlavesAnglicanChurch or 416-769-5686. Contributions appreciated. LIVE OR ONLINE.


Monday February 5


MUSICAL THEATRE & OPERA

Ongoing, On Demand & Other

Arts Centre/Brock University. Beyond the Imagination Game From Dieppe & James Bond to Blackberry & Quantum Encryption. Peter Berg, David O’Keefe, Richard Brisson, Thomas Jennewein, speakers. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, Cairns Recital Hall, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 305-688-0722; boxoffice@firstontariopac.ca.

905-688-0722; boxoffice@firstontariopac.ca. 905-

Hall, 250 St. Paul St., Ontario Performing Arts Centre, Cairns Recital Hall, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 305-688-0722; boxoffice@firstontariopac.ca.

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music. Community members and music students are welcome to this fun, rewarding and inter-generational experience. Sessions take place from 2 to 3pm (with sound checks and socializing at 1:30pm). Please contact recollectiv@gmail.com for more information.

**North York Central Library, Open Mic at the Library: North York Edition. Music, poetry & storytelling. Are you a musician, poet, or storyteller? If so, then you are invited to share your talents at the North York Central Library Open Mic. Guitar, piano & djembe provided. 7 minutes for each performance. For adults, teens, and seniors. North York Central Library Auditorium, 510 Yonge St. Sign-up is at 5:30pm. For more information, contact the Language, Literature & Fine Arts Department at 416-395-5639. Free. Dec 8.**

**MAINLY CLUBS**

**Bebop Joe’s Coffee House**
960 Queen St W. 416-534-5298
Formerly Antika Café & Records, Bebop Joe’s Coffee House carries on the legacy of Turkish coffee, collectible vinyl, and live jazz on Queen Street.

**BSMT 254**
254 Lansdowne Ave. 416-801-6325
bsmt254.com
A cozy music venue with an underground vibe, BSMT 254 has a wide variety of shows, from jazz to hip-hop to DJ nights.

**Burdock**
1184 Bloor St. W. 416-546-4033
burdockto.com
A sleek music hall with exceptional sound and ambience, featuring a draft list of house-made brews.

**Cameron House**
408 Queen St W. 416-703-0811
thecameron.com
An intimate, bohemian bar with ceiling murals & nightly performances from local roots acts on 2 stages.

**Capone’s Cocktail Lounge**
1573 Bloor St W. 416-534-7911
caponestoronto.com
A self-described perfect marriage of an intimate cocktail den and comfortable neighborhood bar, with live music Wednesday through Sunday.

**Castro’s Lounge**
2116 Queen St E. 416-639-8272
castrolounge.com
Featuring an ever-changing selection of specialty beers, Castro’s hosts a variety of local live music acts, including bluegrass, jazz, rockabilly, and alt-country.

**C’est What**
67 Front St. E. 416-867-8499
cestwhat.com
A haven for those who appreciate real cask ale, draught beer from local Ontario breweries, and live music.

**Drom Taberna**
458 Queen St W. 647-748-2099
dromtaberna.com
A heartland homage to the lands that stretch from the Baltic to the Balkans to the Black Sea, with a wide variety of music.

**Emmet Ray, The**
924 College St. 416-792-4497
theemmetray.com
A whisky bar with a great food menu, an ever-changing draft list, and live jazz, funk, folk and more in the back room.

**Grossman’s Tavern**
379 Spadina Ave. 416-677-7000
grossmantavern.com
One of the city’s longest-running live music venues, and Toronto’s self-described “Home of the Blues.”

**Hirut Cafe and Restaurant**
2050 Danforth Ave. 416-551-7560
hirut.ca
A major destination for delicious and nutritious Ethiopian cuisine, with monthly jazz residencies and jam sessions.

**Home Smith Bar – See Old Mill, The**

**Hugh’s Room**
296 Broadway Ave. 647-960-2093
hughroom.com
A dedicated listening room with an intimate performing space, great acoustics, and an attentive audience. Hugh’s Room recently made the move to their new permanent home on Broadway Avenue.

**Jazz Bistro, The**
251 Victoria St. 416-363-5299
jazzbistro.ca
An historic location, Jazz Bistro features great food, a stellar wine list, and world-class jazz musicians in airy club environs.

**Jazz Room, The**
Located in the Huether Hotel, 59 King St N., Waterloo. 226-478-1565
kwjazzroom.com
One of the city’s best third-wave coffee shops by day and bar by night, Pamenar hosts live music, DJs, comedy, and more.

**Lula Lounge**
1585 Dundas St. W. 416-588-0307
lula.ca
Toronto’s mecca for salsa, jazz, afro-Cuban, and world music, with Latin dance classes and excellent food and drinks.

**Mezzetta Restaurant**
681 St. Clair Ave. W. 416-656-5687
mezzettarestaurant.com
With a cozy atmosphere and a menu of Middle-Eastern cuisine, Mezzetta hosts music on Wednesday evenings.

**Monarch Tavern**
12 Clinton St. 416-531-5833
thenonarchtavern.com
A café/cocktail bar on the main floor and a pub with microbrews upstairs. Monarch Tavern regularly hosts indie, folk, and other musical genres on its stage.

**Nice Bistro, The**
117 Brock St. N., Whitby. 905-668-8839
nicebistro.com
A French restaurant with Mediterranean flair, Nice Bistro hosts ticketed live music events once every month or so.

**Old Mill, The**
21 Old Mill Rd. 416-236-2641
oldmilltoronto.com
The Home Smith Bar: With a stone-lined room and deep, plush seating, the Home Smith Bar provides elevated pub food and cocktails along with straight-ahead live jazz.

**Oud and the Fuzz, The**
21 Kensington Ave. 647-238-9136
With a focus on Armenian-inspired food and cocktails, The Oud and the Fuzz regularly presents a wide variety of musical genres, as well as poetry nights, themed Arabic events, and more.

**Pamenar**
307 Augusta Ave.
cafe@pamenar.com
One of the city’s best third-wave coffee shops by day and bar by night, Pamenar hosts live music, DJs, comedy, and more.

**Pilot Tavern, The**
22 Cumberland Ave. 416-923-5716
thepilot.ca
With over 75 years around Yonge and Bloor, the Pilot is a multi-level bar that hosts live jazz on Saturday afternoons.

**Poetry Jazz Café**
1078 Queen St W. 416-599-5299
poetryjazzcafe.com
A sexy, clubby space, Poetry hosts live jazz, hip-hop, and DJs nightly on Queen St. West.

**Reposado Bar & Lounge**
136 Ossington Ave. 416-532-6474
reposadobaro.com
A chic, low-light bar with top-shelf tequila, Mexican tapas, and live music.

**Reservoir Lounge, The**
52 Wellington St. E. 416-955-0887
reservoirlounge.com
Toronto’s self-professed original swing-jazz bar and restaurant, located in a historic speakeasy near St. Lawrence Market, with live music four nights a week.

**Rev, La**
2848 Dundas St W. 416-766-0746
la.rex.ca
Rev offers their guests and authentic taste of comida casera (Mexican homestyle cooking), and a welcoming performance space featuring some of Toronto’s most talented musicians.

**Rex Hotel Jazz & Blues Bar, The**
194 Queen St. W. 416-598-2475
therex.ca
With over 60 shows per month of Canadian and international groups, The Rex is Toronto’s longest-running jazz club, with full bar and kitchen menu.

**Sauce on Danforth**
1376 Danforth Ave. 647-748-1376
sauceondanforth.com
With Victorian lighting, cocktails, and an extensive tap and bottle list, Sauce on Danforth has live music Tuesday through Saturday (and sometimes Sunday).

**The Senator Winebar**
249 Victoria St W. 416-364-7517
thesenator.com
An intimate, upscale French-inspired bistro with live music serving hearty, delicious comfort food alongside a curated selection of wine and cocktails.

**Smokehouse BBQ and Brew**
744 Mt. Pleasant Rd 416-901-3469
smokehousebbqandbrew.com
A laid-back venue with an emphasis on barbecue and beer, Smokehouse hosts cover artists and original music Thursday through Sunday, with Bachata lessons on Tuesdays and Karsaoke on Wednesdays.

**Tapestry**
224 Augusta Ave.
In the space formerly occupied by Poetry, Tapestry features jazz, electronic music, soul, and more.

**Tranzac**
292 Brunswick Ave. 416-923-8137
tranzac.org
A community arts venue dedicated to supporting, presenting, and promoting creative and cultural activity in Toronto, with live shows in multiple rooms every day of the week.

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Editor’s Corner

DAVID OLDS

After a career of 47 years the renowned Emerson String Quartet is calling it a day and they have enrolled Canadian superstar Barbara Hannigan for their farewell offering, Infinite Voyage (Alpha 1000 outthere-music.com/en/albums/infinite-voyage). The disc opens gently with Paul Hindemith’s four-song cycle Melancholie, Op.13 which Hannigan’s pure soprano is the perfect vehicle for the poems of Christian Morgenstern. Set in memory of Hindemith’s friend Karl Köhler, whose death on the Western Front in 1918 left the composer devastated, noting “Everything is dreary and empty. I feel deathly sad.” This is followed by Alban Berg’s String Quartet, Op.3, with its references to Tristan und Isolde as a tribute to the composer’s beloved – and later its eric prefiguring of the madness depicted in his own opera Wozzeck – in a deeply moving performance by the quartet. Pianist Bertrand Chamayou joins the others for Ernest Chausson’s Chanson perpétuelle, a setting of abridged verses from Charles Cros’ Nocturne in which the narrator, abandoned by her lover, prepares for suicide. At nearly half an hour, Schoenberg’s String Quartet No.2, in F-sharp Minor, Op.10 is the most substantive work presented here. The first two movements are scored for traditional string quartet. The first movement expands the tonality of the key signature without venturing too far outside the lines. Things begin to go astray in the second movement, when toward the end a fractured, but recognizable rendition of the popular song O du Lieder Augustine with it’s refrain “All is over” is heard. The third and fourth movements both feature soprano and the poetry of Stefan George: Litany (D minor), in this seminal work Schoenberg expands the tonality, 12-note system of composition, and still using a traditional key signature (D minor), in this seminal work Schoenberg expands the tonality, stretching it almost to the breaking point while still conveying the depths of emotion in this star-crossed love story. Kaleidoscope rises to the occasion with this program of chamber music from the turn of the 20th century with and without voice. The disc begins with Transfigured featuring the Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective and soprano Francesca Chiejina (Chandos CHAN 20277 chandos.net/products/catalogue/CHAN%2020277) presents a program of chamber music from the turn of the 20th century with and without voice. The disc begins with Alexander von Zemlinsky’s Maiblumen blühten überall for soprano and string sextet from 1898, a setting of Richard Dehmel’s gruesome poem that translates to Lilies-of-the-valley blossomed everywhere, which ends “and the sun burned him to death in the corn.” Anton Webern’s 1907 Quintet for Piano and Strings, at 13 minutes is one of the composer’s most sustained works. Written early in his studies with Schoenberg, it shows some influence of Zemlinsky, his orchestration teacher, and certainly an appreciation of Brahms, as well as an understanding of his new mentor’s ideas. Zemlinsky, Schoenberg’s teacher and later his brother-in-law, also numbered among his students Alma Schindler, who became his lover before her marriage to Gustav Mahler in 1902. She wrote a variety of compositions before her marriage, but Mahler decreed that his wife would have to give up composing. He later relented somewhat and in 1910 sent her music to Universal Edition who published some of the songs recorded here. Kaleidoscope pianist Tom Poster has arranged them quite effectively for soprano and string sextet and in this form they perfectly complement the other repertoire on the disc. Chiejina’s dark, dramatic voice is well suited to these songs which actually show more affinity with the world of Zemlinsky and Schoenberg than that of Mahler. In 1899 Schoenberg wrote the string sextet Verklärte Nacht (Transfigured Night) which remains his most celebrated work, with the possible exception of the mammoth Gurrelieder published a decade later. Like Zemlinsky’s Maiblumen and the first of Alma’s songs presented here, Die stille Stadt, it is based on an emotionally charged poem by Dehmel. In this case however, the text is interpreted solely through music in an extended and gripping tone poem replete with sturm und drang. As the notes tell us, “indebted to Brahms in its string sextet form, the work seemed to be a deliberate repudiation of such a soundworld and its harmonic rules.” Although still some years away from his development of the “atonal” 12-note system of composition, and still using a traditional key signature (D minor), in this seminal work Schoenberg expands the tonality, stretching it almost to the breaking point while still conveying the depths of emotion in this star-crossed love story. Kaleidoscope rises and falls exquisitely with all the rollercoaster twists and turns of the plot until eventually, a half hour later, the quiet and compassionate resolution brings this very satisfying disc to a resplendent close.

I have spent some time in recent months sorting through several thousand LPs in my basement and came across Glenn Gould’s two iconic recordings of Bach’s Goldberg Variations. I took the opportunity to give them both a spin and was surprised at just how much I appreciated Gould’s “mature” 1981 version (51 minutes) with its leisurely approach versus the sprightly, often break-neck tempos of his youthful 1955 debut (38 minutes). A few days after this comparative listening session a new recording of the Goldbergs by Icelandic Vikingur Ólafsson arrived at my desk (Deutsche Grammophon 486 4553 vikingurolfsson.com) and to my surprise, I now have a new favourite of this much-recorded work. As the opening Aria began, I felt the impression that, as with the elder Gould, I was in for another treat and settled in for a smooth and relaxing ride, but...
soon had to fasten my seatbelt; a number of the 30 variations proved to be as nimble and breathtaking as the young Gould’s renderings. It is simply astounding to me that fingers can actually move that quickly and artfully. That notwithstanding, the relationship between the slow and fast movements and overall arc of the trajectory from opening aria to closing reprise gave the impression of a thoughtful, relaxed and balanced performance. It has always surprised me that a work commissioned by an insomniac to ease him through long, sleepless nights is quite so active and engaging. I would have expected the intention to be more of a sleep-aid than an entertainment. In spite of his virtuosic dexterity in the faster variations, I found Olafsson’s interpretation to be more in keeping with my own sensibilities in this regard. I was quite surprised to find that this new recording is virtually twice as long as Gould’s original, despite Olafsson’s equally fast tempos in some of the variations. I had to refer to the score to confirm my suspicion that, as is somewhat common practice, Gould omitted the second (and I think even some of the first) repeats, whereas Olafsson plays them all, giving an outstanding performance that lasts some 74 minutes.

**Concert Note:** Vikingur Olafsson performs Bach’s Goldberg Variations at Koerner Hall on February 4.

One of my great pleasures this past summer was reading *Ma vie heureuse* (My Happy Life) by Darius Milhaud (1892-1974). I was quite surprised to discover that this prolific French composer, a member of Les Six, is sadly underrepresented in current commercial recordings and on websites like YouTube and Spotify. My own collection, built over the past half century, is thankfully more complete than what’s out there currently, so I was nonetheless able to revisit some of Milhaud’s wonderful compositions in conjunction with his delightful memoir. That being said, I was pleased to receive a new disc from clarinetist Yevgeny Dokhansky recently featuring Milhaud’s *Suite for Clarinet, Violin, and Piano Op.157b* (1936), comprising charming movements excepted from the music for a play by Jean Anouilh. *Around the World: Trios for Clarinet, Violin and Piano* performed by *Ensemble Next Parallel* (Heritage Records HTGCD170 heritage-records.com) also includes work by Milhaud’s contemporary, Armenian Aram Khachaturian, and living composers Peter Schickele (USA) and Roger J. Henry (Trinidad and Tobago). Khachaturian’s trio has a Romantic sensibility, and its final movement draws on an Uzbek folk melody. In *Serenade for Three*, Schickele is up to his usual tricks, particularly in the final movement’s perpetually rising variations on a theme from his alter ego PDQ Bach’s oratorio *Oedipus Tex*. Henry’s Caribbean infused music is actually not dissimilar to the sounds of Brazil that so inspired Milhaud most of a century earlier.

Yevgeny Dokhansky also included his earlier *Heritage* release featuring another of my mid-century favourite composers — From Jewish Life: The Music of Ernest Bloch — on which he is accompanied by pianist Richard Masters. Another welcome addition to my collection.

**Regional Roots Roundup:**

As I write this in early November, I have just enjoyed a heady evening at the new Hugh’s Room Live. It was my maiden voyage to the venue on Broadview Avenue, and I must say I was mightily impressed with the layout and the acoustics of the former Broadview Avenue Congregational Church, an 1894 structure designed by iconic Toronto architect E.J. Lennox. Unfortunately the venue is not yet wheelchair accessible, but press releases assure us it is a priority to rectify this as soon as possible.

The occasion of my outing involved the launch of the Andrew Collins Trio CD *The Rule of Three* (andrewcollinstrio.com). The musicianship of this band is outstanding; between the three of them they cover mandolin(s), mandola, mandocello, string bass, guitar and fiddle(s). As to what kind of music they play, Collins is the first to admit it’s hard to describe. He’s even written a song about it that you can check out on YouTube: *I Don’t Know (But I Like It)*. The influences are diverse. While leaning heavily to bluegrass, there’s a healthy mix of western swing, old-time, folk/singer-songwriter, a bit of pop — including a tune by Pink Floyd — and straight up classical, with a remarkable rendition of Debussy’s *Clair de Lune* on this new album. Although mostly a string band, not all of the repertoire is instrumental. Vocals are mostly taken care of by Collins, with bass player James McElaney providing sweet harmonies and occasional leads. *The Rule of Three* opens with Contranym, which Collins explained refers to words which are also their own opposites, such as cleave or sanction. It’s not a word I was familiar with, but in one of life’s little synchronicities Contranyms came up as a category on the episode of *Jeopardy!* I watched the very next day. Other highlights for me include the raucous *How Do You Get to Carnegie Hall*, the balladic *That Jethro Really Burns!*, a swinging tribute to Kenneth C. “Jethro” Burns of Homer and Jethro fame.

Collins also spoke about the strange experience of sheltering in place during the pandemic, a time spent playing alone and writing mandolin tunes. The result was the 2022 solo release *Love Away the Hate* on which he performs admirably as a one-man band, combining mandolin, mandola, mandocello, violin and guitar arrangements of ten tunes also available in notation and tablature in an
accompanying book of sheet music. I look forward to using this to hone my own mandolin skills!

The new Hugh’s Room doesn’t have a kitchen, so rather than the dinner club aspect of the original venue, focus is on the intimate concert hall setting so well appreciated by the audience. One potential casualty of this format is Ken Whiteley’s Gospel Brunches, a treasured monthly feature at the old location. Fortunately, Whiteley has adapted his approach. The first Gospel Matinee took place on Sunday November 12 and presumably will continue in the new year. The first installment served as a launch for Whiteley’s latest CD So Glad I’m Here (kenwhiteley.com) featuring a special guest – Iranian tar and oud master Davoud Azad – giving an ecumenical take on the gospel genre. On it, Whiteley plays a host of instruments, including guitar and resophonic guitar, accordion, mandolin and Hammond organ among others, with George Koller on bass, Bucky Berger on drums and half a dozen supporting musicians and singers, all making “a joyful noise unto the Lord.” The repertoire involves traditional gospel tunes adapted and arranged by Whiteley, along with several originals, including the anthemic (My God Is) Bigger Than That (a sentiment I much prefer to the one more common in this troubled world, “My God is Bigger than Yours!”). One of the real rockers is Gospel Ship which is kind of a family affair with brother Chris Whiteley on harmonica and son Ben on bass, along with full chorus. Azad’s ethereal introduction to Reverend Dan Smith’s This Is The Lord’s House sets the stage for a truly ecumenical take for everyone to come in and “taste the bread of life.” Each of the nine songs is a treasure, but a highlight is the title track with Whiteley’s finger style guitar intro and Azad’s solo, which is a true stunner. The penultimate track, It’s Gonna Rain, is superb.

There are several connections to the preceding Constellations, the new album by Canadian Appalachian clawhammer-style banjo player, guitar picking singer/songwriter Meredith Moon (True North Records TND807 meredithmoon.com). The CD was recorded, mixed and mastered by Andrew Collins and the Toronto launch took place at Hugh’s Room Live back in October. Eight of the ten tracks are self-penned, mostly self-accompanied ballads with an old-time feel. Oneexception is Soldier’s Joy including bass and subtle drums and a fiddle break from Tony Allen, with strangely dark lyrics about the whiskey/beer/morphine concoction used in the 19th century in lieu of anesthetic for battlefield surgeries. I had not heard the words before and only knew it as an upbeat traditional fiddle tune. Quite a surprise! The other is Needlecase Medley, another traditional offering, in this case solo banjo with Moon accompanying herself with podorythmie (foot tapping common in Québécois and Acadian music). Other highlights include the beautiful title track, a nostalgic look back at the wanderlust of Moon’s earlier days, and the closer, Slow Moving Train, a haunting depiction of time rolling on.

I’m surprised and a little embarrassed to say that I had never heard of Canadian singer/songwriter Noah Zacharin until his ninth CD Points of Light (noahsong.com) landed on my desk. I’m sorry to have come so late to the parade because Zacharin is really something. In addition to his solo career in which he has opened for the likes of Odetta, Dave van Ronk and Fairport Convention, he has appeared as a musician or producer on some 65 albums by artists from across North America. This latest disc showcases his outstanding finger-style guitar chops accompanying his solo vocals in storytelling ballads, as well as full band versions of another half a dozen songs in various styles from the gentle and gorgeous (My Love is a) Red Red Bird featuring Denis Keldie (B3) and Burke Carroll (pedal steel) to some rollicking blues and honkytonk tunes to me reminiscent of the late Mose Scarlett and (Chris and Ken Whiteley’s) Original Sloth Band, with help from Gary Craig (drums), Russ Boswell (bass) with cameos from Kevin Turcotte (trumpet) and Roly Platt (harmonica). The disc opens in solo mode with Ten Toms of Road, a paean to love and the call of the road, and continues with one of my favourites 17 Minute, an anti-lament of sorts for past loves. Zacharin seems content to let the past go, with no hard feelings putting me in mind of Tom Rush’s iconic No Regrets. Something Like a River is a solo acoustic guitar instrumental depicting a stretch of the York River in the Canadian Shield where Zacharin spends time in an off-grid cabin. The disc ends quietly with the lovely Been a Long Day, just guitar and voice complemented by an inobtrusive, though lush, string arrangement by Drew Jurecka. I’m so glad that Points of Light found its way to me.

Concert Notes: Noah Zacharin performs at the Greenbank Folk Music Society on December 9 in Greenbank, north of Whitby. He will also be the host at Bill’s Coffee House and Open Mic at Don Heights Unitarian Congregation on Wynford Drive on February 9.

We invite submissions. CDs, DVDs and comments should be sent to: DISCoveries, The WholeNote c/o Music Alive, The Centre for Social Innovation, 720 Bathurst St. Toronto ON M5S 2R4 or to discoveries@thewholenote.com.

What we’re listening to this month:

Around the World: Trios For Clarinet, Violin & Piano
The Andrew Collins Trio
The Rule of Three
Mandolin maestro Collins, central to Canada’s acoustic/newgrass scene, teams up with string experts Shier and McElheny, earning accolades for energetic, genre-hopping performances.

Points of Light
Noah Zacharin
Multi-genre fingerstyle guitarist and songwriter performs Blues, folk, country, jazz, and more. Solo and band performances featuring some of the planet’s best musicians.
On his outstanding new solo CD Ricercari the Canadian cellist Cameron Crozman combines Domenico Gabrieli’s Seven Ricercari with a recital of contemporary pieces (ATMA Classique ACD2 2870 atma-classique.com/en).

Gabrieli’s Ricercari (Italian for “to seek out”) were written in 1689 and heralded the beginning of music for unaccompanied cello. Crozman decided to rekindle this exploratory kind of music-making by commissioning six new works to play alongside the Gabrieli, adding a seventh himself. The Ricercari are strikingly original pieces, covering a wide range of keys and moods. They alternate throughout the disc with an impressive list of commissioned works by Alexina Louie, Nina C. Young, Jordan Pal, Daniel Alvarado Bonilla, Benoît Sitzia and Kelly-Marie Murphy, with Crozman’s Falling Forward, a terrific first attempt at composition, completing the line-up.

With his superb technique Crozman is equally at home in the Baroque and contemporary works.


Schumann’s Violin Sonata No.1 in A Minor Op.105 from 1851 sets the stage for the whole disc with a glorious opening, Friedemann’s rich, rapturous commitment sweeping all before it, with Say matching him every step of the way. Schumann’s Drei Romanzen Op.94 from 1849, originally for oboe and piano are beautifully nuanced.

Schumann, Brahms and the latter’s pupil Albert Dietrich collaborated on the F-A-E Sonata in A Minor, written in 1853 for violinist Joseph Joachim’s birthday, the three notes not only significant in the composition but also standing for Frei aber einsam (Free but lonely), Joachim’s personal motto. World-premiere recordings of Say’s absolutely stunning transcriptions of the Act I Prelude and the Act III Liebestod from Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde complete a superb CD.

Stained Glass, the latest top-notch CD from the stellar duo of Johan Dalene and pianist Christian Hadland presents two 20th-century sonatas together with lesser-known works by Arvo Pärt, Lili Boulanger and Grażyna Bacewicz (BIS-2730 SACD allmusic.com/album/release/stained-glass-mro006096538). The sonatas are Ravel’s Sonata in G Major from 1923–27, its jazz-influenced Blues middle movement a real delight, and Prokofiev’s 1943, Sonata No.2 in D Major Op.94a, originally for flute and piano and arranged for violin with the assistance of David Oistrakh. Described as full of sweet lyricism and playful humour, it’s given a beautifully assured reading here. Pärt’s Fratres draws strong, sustained playing from the duo, with Boulanger’s very brief but quite lovely Nocturne from 1911 sensitively nuanced. Four short pieces by Bacewicz – Humoresque from 1953, Lullaby and Slavonic Dance, both from 1952 and the early Stained-glass window from 1932 – end an immensely satisfying disc full of outstanding playing.

The Chilean-American violist Georgina Isabel Rossi and the Chinese-Canadian pianist Silvie Cheng are the performers on CHORINHO: Music for Viola and Piano from Brazil (navona records NV6537 navonarecords.com).

The world-premiere recording of the lovely title track by João de Souza Lima (1898-1982) opens the disc, and there are two other world-premiere recordings, both for solo viola: the three-movement Meloritmias: No.5 by Ernani Aguiar (b.1950); and the 1981 Pequeno Estudio Op.78 by Lindembergue Cardoso (1939-89), the latter one of several works that are more than merely lyrical. The 1977 Appassionato, Cantilena

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ensemble fantasias, ranging from three to six parts as the pre-eminent.

The composers' ties to the city add to a delightful and revelatory CD. (his In C Major “Dresden” Sonata No.2 Single violin sonatas by Diogenio Bigaglia (his Violin Sonatas in B-flat Major and G Minor by Tomaso Albinoni. Violin Sonatas in B-flat Major and G Major SCD202301 snakewoodeditions.com).

There’s more really lovely viola playing on Hans Sitt Viola and Piano Works, with the Spanish violist Alicia Calabuig ably supported by pianist Jorge Blasco (eudora EUD-SACD-2305 eudorarecords.com).

Sitt was an outstanding violinist and violist as well as a composer and teacher, spending almost the last 36 years of his life (1850-1922) as violin professor at the Leipzig Conservatory, which tied him to the Mendelssohn-Schumann-Bruch-Brahms composer tradition. The works here were mostly written between 1891 and 1919, when the post-Wagner rise of composers like Richard Strauss, Mahler and Zemlinski rendered Sitt’s style somewhat anachronistic.

Still, these are beautifully crafted works, not particularly virtuosic and extremely attractive. Included are the Albumblätter Op.39, the 3 Fantasiestücke Op.58, the Romance Op.72, the 3 Morceaux Op.75, the Romane Op.102/1 and the Gavotte and Mazurka Op.132. Calabuig’s warm tone is a perfect match, as is her beautifully judged vibrato – never constant, and never too wide or heavy. It’s a delightful CD.

The French cellist Xavier Phillips grew up with the music of Gabriel Fauré, and on Faure: the music for cello and piano he teams with pianist Cédric Tiberghien in a recital of the complete works (La dolce vita LDV102 ladolcevista.com/ catalogue/?lang=en).

Both players are fully aware of the flowing, sensuous nature of the music. “To work on Faure,” says Tiberghien, “you need to let go . . . you have to leave this music free to go its own way,” and the warm, rapturous performances do exactly that. Presented here are the Berceuse Op.16, the Élégie in C Minor Op.24, the Romance Op.69, Papillon Op.77, the Sicilienne Op.78 and the Sérénade Op.98, together with the two late Cello Sonatas No.1 in D Minor Op.109 and No.2 in G Minor Op.117.

Casals’ transcription of the song Après un rêve Op.7 No.1 completes a delightful CD.

On L’altra Venezia the scaramuccia ensemble of violinist Javier Lupiáñez, cellist Inés Salinas and harpsichordist Patricia Vintém presents world premiere recordings of chamber music by several of the most prominent and capable Venetian composers active around 1700, roughly contemporary with Vivaldi but now little-known in comparison (Snakewood Editions SCD202301 snakewoodeditions.com).

There are three works by Giorgio Gentili – his Cello Sonatas in A Major and G Major and his Violin Capriccio XI in B Minor – and two Violin Sonatas in B-flat Major and G Minor by Tomaso Albinoni. Single violin sonatas by Diogenio Bigaglia (his “Dresden” Sonata No.2 in C Major), Antonio Caldara (in F major) and Giovanni Battista Reali (his Sonata VII in B-flat Major) complete the disc.

Excellent booklet notes and an annotated map of Venice that details the composers’ ties to the city add to a delightful and revelatory CD.

Instrumental fantasies from the continent, predominantly for lute or keyboard were being published in England by the 1560s, and by the end of the century William Byrd had established instrumental ensemble fantasias, ranging from three to six parts as the pre-eminent chamber music in England. By 1667, however, Christopher Simpson, himself a composer of fantasias noted their “rapid decline into neglect.”

In 1680 the young Purcell wrote a set of 12, the very last ensemble fantasias to be published in England. They are presented in excellent performances on Henry Purcell Fantazias in three and four parts by the John Holloway Ensemble of violinist John Holloway, violists Monika Baer and Renate Steinmann and cellist Martin Zeller (ECM New Series 2249 485 6006 ecmrecords.com).

Purcell biographer Bruce Wood rightly called them “astonishing pieces . . . among the most profound and searching counterpoint of the 17th century.”

On 1923 – 100 Years of Radio the Schumann Quartett celebrates the year that saw not only the first radio broadcasts in Germany and Austria but also the First Chamber Festival of the recently formed International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) in Salzburg (Berlin Classics 0702968BC berlin-classics-music.com/en).

All five composers on this fascinating disc – Paul Hindemith, Alban Berg, Erwin Schulhoff, León Janáček and Aaron Copland – were present at the festival. Janáček’s String Quartet No, “Kreutzer Sonata” was written a few weeks later. Hindemith’s delightfully humourous six-movement Minimax “Repertoire for Military Band” is from July 1923.

Berg’s String Quartet Op.3, written in 1910, was performed to great acclaim at the festival’s opening concert, and Schulhoff’s Five Pieces for String Quartet were written on his return to Prague from Salzburg. Copland’s short Movement for String Quartet was written the same year at the end of his studies with Nadia Boulanger, but the manuscript didn’t come to light until 1983.

Over 80 minutes of outstanding performances of truly eclectic music makes for an absolute gem of a CD.

The digital release Mendelssohn String Quartets Nos.1, 2 & 3 by the Quarteto Carlos Gomes is the first volume in a proposed complete set of the composer’s quartets on the Brazilian label Azul Music (AMDA1887 azulmusic.com.br).

All three works here – the String Quartets No.1 In E-flat Major Op.12, No.2 In A Major Op.13 and No.3 In D Major Op.44 No.1 What we’re listening to this month:

Tendres échos Anne Thivierge French repertoire of the 17th and 18th centuries, this album highlights works for flute and continuo by Couperin, Blavet, Marin Marais, and Jean-Marie Leclair.

Discovering Mendelssohn is the second album from the young violinist Christian Li, who won the 2018 Yehudi Menuhin International Competition for Young Violinists – at age He’s still only 15 and displays quite remarkable talent (Decca 485 3987 deccaclassics.com/en/artists/christian-li).

At the heart of the CD is the Violin Concerto in E Minor Op.64, with Sir Andrew Davis and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, an engaging performance perhaps with not quite the emotional depth he will surely find later. The rest of the CD comprises four short pieces by Mendelssohn – On Wings of Song with harpist Yiuo Mu, Venetian Gondola Song with guitarist Xuefei Yang, Spring Song with pianist James Baillieu and the dazzling Rondo capriccioso Op.14 with pianist Laurence Matheson – and three with his contemporaries or influences: Mozart's Violin Sonata in E Minor K304 with Baillieu; Schubert's Serenade with Matheson; and Bach's Erbarme dich, mein Gott with cellist David Berlin.

In the booklet notes for the 2CD set MOZART – The Violin Concertos (Deutsche Grammophon 486 1067 deutschemphon.com/en/artists/renda-capucon) featuring Renaud Capuçon and his Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne. Capuçon makes an interesting point about the youthful concertos, that over-analyzing them can be counterproductive: “Mozart wrote these pieces extremely quickly: they quite literally flowed from his pen. And as a soloist you need to be able to communicate this rapid flow and this lightness.”

That shouldn’t imply any absence of depth and insight, though, and Capuçon finds a perfect balance in beautiful performances of the five concertos plus the Rondo in C Major K373 and the Adagio in E Major K261, both written as alternative movements for violinist Antonio Brunetti.

Capuçon says that he has to be happy and contented when performing Mozart – “only then does it really work.” Which it certainly does here.

Dependent Rising, the latest CD from violinist Rachel Barton Pine with Tito Muñoz and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra explores connections between classical music and heavy metal in concertos by Dmitri Shostakovich and the American violinist/composer Earl Maneein, both concertos openly confronting pain and suffering (Cedille CDR 90000 223 cedillerecords.org).

Both Barton Pine and Maneein have been heavy metal devotees since their early teens, with the former often including her own arrangements of metal songs in her performances. She commissioned the solo piece Metal Organic Framework from Maneein in 2014; Muñoz was at the premiere and consequently commissioned the concerto.

It’s not the best recording of the Shostakovich Concerto No.1 in A Minor Op.77 available, but the CD stands or falls on the strength of the heavy metal-influenced Maneecin concerto that gives the CD its title. It’s a three-movement work of remarkable impact and resonance, with tough cadenzas in the first and predominantly lyrical second movements, and a real “thrash” finale.

Cellist Antonio Meneses is the excellent soloist on Heitor Villa-Lobos Cello Concertos Nos.1 and 2, the latest release in the Naxos Music of Brazil series. Isaac Karabtchevsky conducts the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra (Naxos 8.574531 naxos.com/CatalogueDetail/?id=8.574531). The Cello Concerto No.1 Op.50 from 1915 was the composer’s first major orchestral work, the ecstatic style suggesting a composer still trying to find his own individual voice. It’s an appealing and virtuosic work full of youthful energy. The Cello Concerto No.2 from 1953 is a four-movement work commissioned by Aldo Parisot for his Carnegie Hall debut in February 1955. Lushly scored, it apparently suggests “man’s cosmic solitude when facing the vastness of the natural world.”

The final work on the CD is the three-movement Fantasie for Cello and Orchestra from 1945, when the composer’s reputation was at its peak and he was able to give free rein to his imagination in flowing style.

The Canadian guitarist Don MacDonald says that the COVID pandemic and lockdown afforded him an enormous amount of time to concentrate on composition, and his consequent search for inspiration is reflected in the three pieces on his new classical guitar CD Midnight Pavane (www.donmacdonaldmusic.ca).

Hex Suite is a set of four movements of improvisatory beauty of the Tabla with inspiring melodies. Celebrates the rhythmical and improvisatory beauty of the Tabla Drums with inspiring melodies. 2023 Global Recording of the Year nomination - East Coast Music Awards.

Edward Cowie: Where the Wood Thrush Forever Sings
Anna Hashimoto, Roderick Chadwick
A captivating new album from the extraordinary talents of Edward Cowie. This is the exhilarating third cycle of his epic ‘bird portraits’.

The Head Of A Mouse
Audrey Ochoa
Audrey Ochoa’s strongest showing yet features inspired and personal compositions performed by an all-star lineup with seamless live-off-the-floor execution.

Don MacDonald
Midnight Pavane (www.donmacdonaldmusic.ca)

Satyam Vineet Vyas

Lara Deutsch; Adam Ciccillitti
With music from the coasts of Japan to the kitchen parties of Newfoundland, Wanderlust stokes the fires of adventure that reside in us all.
Including the title track – based on a six-note scale, while Night Visions is a group of seven pieces, alternating in tempo, that use varying moods and textures. Zephyrs, the longest and most interesting piece, was inspired by Britten’s Nocturnal after John Dowland, a theme and variations work where the theme unfolds at the end of the piece, and not at the beginning.

The compositions employ standard classical guitar techniques and have a real sense of exploration. The playing is beautifully clean, and perfectly captured by the recording engineer, the legendary Anton Kwiatkowski.

Baroque guitarist Pascal Valois’ new CD, PARIS 1790 – La Musique de Monsieur Vidal features music by a guitarist/composer whose first name, date and place of birth remain unknown (he died in 1803), but who was apparently one of the most important guitar figures.

Kapellmeister of Leipzig’s Thomaskirche. In addition to these myriad works, Bach also wrote a number of secular vocal works, including the stunning Gesicht und innen, geschwunden, ihr wibenden Winde, BWV 201, also known as The Contest between Phoebus and Pan, featured on this disc by the Washington Bach Consort.

Titled Myths Contested, this recording juxtaposes Bach’s secular musical drama with American composer Trevor Weston’s A New Song. This work, commissioned by the Bach Consort, addresses the challenges that arise from attempting to evaluate music from past centuries in relation to contemporary music, an issue that resonates with anyone who is asked to review music in a public forum.

Bach’s Contest between Phoebus and Pan is a delightful work composed in traditional cantata form, with recitatives and arias bookended by chorale movements. The Washington Bach Consort manages Bach’s contrapuntal intricacies masterfully, and the orchestra shines in the opening movement, particularly through the virtuosic writing for wind instruments (which is characteristic Bach, given that the choir is singing “Hasten, you swirling winds…”).

Weston’s A New Song is fascinating, a modern “cantata” for choir and Baroque orchestra that adheres to certain stylistic conventions while defying others. For example, the opening and closing movements include trumpet and full choir, and arias (titled “songs”) are the primary middle movements, although a chorus and chorale are each interspersed between the solo movements. While these traditions look back to the Baroque, the musical vernacular is strikingly different than anything Bach ever wrote, resulting in a listening experience that is simultaneously familiar yet new.

Matthew Whitfield

Abendständchen and Darttulas Grabgesang – an all fine compositions of the German folks- lied tradition, while the choir has no difficulty in capturing the mystical religious mood in Tchaikovsky’s Hymne des Chérubins Op.41.

The fine sound produced by Ensemble ArtChoral’s performers together with the thoughtfully chosen program go to make this a compelling recording, although it could have been even more fulfilling had Maute included one or two more substantial works. Nevertheless, this is a minor quibble and doesn’t mar an otherwise fine performance – we can look forward to more in the series.

Richard Haskell

For some unknown reason Verdi’s Ernani does not even make it to the operatic maestro’s greatest hits. This performance by Francesco Meli (in the title role), Roberto Frontali (Don Carlo), Vitalij Kowaljov (Don Ruy Gomez de Silva) and the inimitable Maria José Siri (Elvira) is nothing short of stellar, more so for the masterful direction of Leo Muscato who enables them to bring the characters to life. James Conlon’s conducting of the Orchestra e Coro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino is superb.

There is real gain from watching this DVD, with those stars throwing every fibre of their being into intense portrayals of what becomes an emotional whirlpool by the end of the opera. Verdi adapted Victor Hugo’s play which came at a time when Hugo was
waging a “culture war” that aimed to promote “ideas for progress” in the 1830s. By the time of this opera the Italian master’s work had already become synonymous with the word “operatic”.

Verdi throws his characters in Ernani into infernos for tortured souls. But while the passion with which Meli, Frontali, Kowaljow and Siri play their parts may not be unexpected, it is impressive indeed to Kowaljow and Siri play their parts may not the passion with which Meli, Frontali, Kowaljow and Siri play their parts may not. Francesco is forced from power, finds the fight for power and corruption of the ruling families of the realm. When Jacopo is the tragic story of a father and son and the father's responsibilities to the Republic of Venice. The opera owes its inspiration to the true story of Francesco Foscari, the 65th to inject it with more theatricality. Based on the same libretto and set is elegantly simple, costumes are superb design to accentuate the melodrama – is down to the last accessory and the filming – designed to accentuate the melodrama – is to unexpected, it is impressive indeed to watch and listen to the subtlety of so much soft singing. Meli and Siri's performances tingle with so much nervous intensity. The set is elegantly simple, costumes are superb down to the last accessory and the filming – designed to accentuate the melodrama – is excellent.

Raul da Gama

Guiseppe Verdi – I Due Foscari

Simon O’Neill; Anja Kampe; Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra; Simon Rattle

BR Klassik 900211 (brso.de/en/cd-dvd/Richard-wagner-siegfried/)

I Due Foscari

On the surface, the plot of I Due Foscari is Verdi’s sixth opera, preceded immediately by Ernani, both in the same year, 1844, with the same librettist, Francesco Maria Piave. It is well documented that Verdi was very actively involved with the development of the libretto, wishing to inject it with more theatricality. Based on the true story of Francesco Foscari, the 65th and longest reigning Doge of the Republic of Venice. The opera owes its inspiration to the poetical drama play by England’s Lord Byron, The Two Foscari.

On the surface, the plot of I Due Foscari is the tragic story of a father and son and the father’s responsibilities to the Republic versus his responsibilities as a father. The Doge of 15-century Venice, Francesco and his seemingly popular son Jacopo highlight the fight for power and corruption of the ruling families of the realm. When Jacopo is wrongly accused and convicted of a crime for which he will be exiled, his father doesn’t defend him. Prior to being exonerated in the third act, Jacopo dies in jail from a broken heart. Francesco is forced from power, finds out his son has died and he too perishes of heartbreak.

The baritone Luca Grassi as the Doge, Héctor Sandoval as Jacopo and Sophie Godeladze as Lucrezia his wife, all deliver stunning performances. Marcus Bosch conducts the Czech Philharmonic Choir Brno and the Orchestra of Heidenheim Opera Festival brilliantly, supporting the inspired stage direction of Philipp Westerbarkei.

Bruce Surtees

Wagner – Siegfried

Richard Wagner

Wagner’s idea of “Gesamtkunstwerk” or total art work is in question, it is questionable whether he would be pleased with the thought of tearing his Total Art Work limb from limb into its constituent parts.

It is this reviewer’s conundrum that such a situation has arisen here, with La Scala di Genova’s Frati uccelli, a small, five-track release that originally accompanied Nino Rota’s visual and sound installation of the same name at the Saorge Monastery in France. This monastery was previously home to Franciscan monks and Frati uccelli attempts to revive their memory through the monastery’s physical space and these polyphonic vocal works.

The music itself is a blend of Genovese and early Baroque polyphony, playfully interpreted by La Scala di Genova. Crafted specifically for the Frati uccelli exhibit, these works are adaptations of texts by historical figures including Luca Marenzio and Giovanni Legrenzi – both of whom were notable composers – as well as two Anonymous period compositions, all of which provide delightful forays into early Italian musical styles.

Matthew Whitfield

Wonderland

The King’s Singers

Signum Classics SIGCD739 (kingssingers.com/albums)

Wonderland

What happens, however, when the music one is listening to is extracted from a larger artistic production, of which music is only a portion of the whole? Consider, for example, Wagner’s idea of “Gesamtkunstwerk” or Total Art Work, in which all the senses are engaged in the consumption of a work of art. While one can listen to Wagner’s music away from the stage, it is questionable whether he would be pleased with the thought of tearing his Total Art Work limb from limb into its constituent parts.

It is this reviewer’s conundrum that such a situation has arisen here, with La Scala di Genova’s Frati uccelli, a small, five-track release that originally accompanied Nino Rota’s visual and sound installation of the same name at the Saorge Monastery in France. This monastery was previously home to Franciscan monks and Frati uccelli attempts to revive their memory through the monastery’s physical space and these polyphonic vocal works.

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Signum Classics SIGCD739 (kingssingers.com/albums)

Wonderland

With his centenary year ending, at last there comes a vocal project worthy of one of the most iconic and adventurous composers of the 20th century, György Ligeti. That project comes in the name and shape of Wonderland, by the celebrated King’s Singers. To be exact, while the project is built around Ligeti’s eerily beautiful Nonsense Madrigals, the composer’s delightfully zany world is embellished by works – equally and beautifully daft – by seven other composers who take us through the rabbit hole of Ligeti’s making.

Makiko Kimishita, Ola Gjeilo, Francesca Amevudah-Rivers, Joe Hisaishi, Judith Bingham, Malcolm Williamson and Paul Patterson give us equal cause for merriment and joy as they leap off Ligeti’s song cycle with marvellous works of their own.

Together the seven composers create a parallel world evocative of Lewis Carroll’s Wonderland (that Alice tumbles into), as magical as Ligeti’s madcap world (not unlike
his Breughelland – a world derived from the paintings of Breughel and Bosch – from his opera Le Grand Macabre). Only this Wonderland is one infinitely more light-hearted, evoking Ligeti’s inimitably personal manner with a lyric often expressed in a complex rhythmic style in which conflicting layers of tempi are used to drive narratives – and the music – ever onward.

In the wrong hands these works might sound merely odd. But The King’s Singers deliver the crazy lyrics with consummate sound merely odd. But The King’s Singers

Raul da Gama

Afarin Mansouri – Dancing with Love

Afarin Mansouri; Various Artists

Afarin Mansouri – Dancing with Love

Centrediscs CMCCD 31923

(afarinmansouri.com/recorded-albums)

► Toronto-based Afarin Mansouri (b. Teheran 1974) came to Canada in 2002 and studied composition, receiving her doctorate from York University. Singing in Farsi, she brings her vibrant mezzo-soprano voice to nine of this CD’s 12 selections, all involving aspects of “Love.”

Mansouri has drawn most of the texts from medieval Persian poetry. Verses by venerated 13th-century mystic Rumi and 14th-century Hafiz adorn three arias from her opera Zuleykha. Mansouri calls her libretto a revisionist “female perspective” on the biblical Potiphar’s wife, lovesick for Joseph. In addition to four solo songs, she’s joined in two duets by beguiling, velvet-voiced tenor Milad Bagheri, including the finale of her opera—in-progress The Endless Sea. Its about the tenth-century Rabia Balkhi, considered Persia’s first female poet, and incorporates Balkhi’s poetry. Bagheri also solos in two of Mansouri’s songs.

They’re variously accompanied by pianist Cheryl Duvall and other members of the Thin Edge New Music Collective, plus Padideh Ahrarnejad on the waisted-lute tar and Ali Masoudi on tombak and daq drums. Mansouri also adds atmospheric electronic soundscapes to three selections.

I can’t imagine anyone, whatever their musical preferences, not enjoying Mansouri’s richly melodic, vivaciously rhythmic and exotically scored compositions, inspired by traditional Persian music yet contemporarily in sensibility. Her rapturous traversal of love’s joy, yearning and despair ends with the poignant A Lament for Love for solo flute, played by Terry Lim. It expresses, writes Mansouri, her “heartfelt love and nostalgia for the homeland.” Texts are included.

Michael Schulman

It Floats Away from You

Byrne:Kozar:Duo

New Focus Recordings FCR378

(newfocusrecordings.com)

► A debut album from the Byrne:Kozar:Duo hits an impressive mark, with finely curated and exquisitely performed new works for soprano and trumpet.

Undoubtedly, this ensemble is a unique one. It unveils surprising tonal ecosystems and colouristic effects rarely heard, originating from an elliptic Renaissance sensibility. The duo endeavours to “guide the way, providing a template for integration across multiple parameters as a powerful vehicle for expression and depth.” Once moving past such novelties, the listener embraces a lustrous, generous universe of diptych-infused dedication, perfectly integrated in a concordant yet plural narrative. The skilful synthesis from these two musicians is one reason for this achievement. The other: the compositions themselves, boasting sensitive text settings and idiomatic constructions.

Austere, even stark, music like Li Qi’s Lonely Grave (with a fixed media component) sets a compelling foil to such pieces as Alexandre Lunsqui’s Two Patches and Jeffrey Gavette’s Proof of Concept for Floating Child, the latter exemplifying the duo’s textural and rhythmic possibilities, inspired by heavy metal music and Meredith Monk.

While each track is well ordered, the disc plays more as a recital rather than a coherent album. That is not necessarily scabrous, especially when considering a debut record. Indeed it might compel the listener to leave the audio space and seek live performances from this new duo, having whet the aural appetite with unexpected soundscapes. Let the armchair listener witness first hand the energy, intimacy and aired spell, the Byrne:Kozar:Duo so masterfully conjures.

Adam Sherkin

CLASSICAL AND BEYOND

Lovers and Mourners – Variations and Sonatas from 17th Century Germany

Dorian Komanoff Bandy; Hank Knox; Elinor Frey

Leaf Music LM263 (leaf-music.ca)

► The artfulness of virtuoso composer-performers, nurtured and cherished in the 17th century, is at the centre of this lovely new release, cleverly reinforced by violinist Dorian Komanoff Bandy’s choice of repertoire. Presented here are variations and sonatas from 17th-century German composers Schenck, Walther, Biber, Pisendel and Becker. Variations, arguably a favourite compositional technique of that time, allowed both composers and performers to display their respective abilities and imagination by the way of building up rich melodic and harmonic material over a short, repeated theme, usually in the bass. Similar to lovers and mourners, going through spiraling, intense emotions, the music here expresses meandering states via “stylus phanasturic,” a popular compositional style of that time that was free flowing, improvisational and characterized by swirling virtuosic elements.

Bandy’s virtuosity is on full display here – relentless, precise and, above all, dazzling. He draws beautiful colours out of his Baroque violin, even amidst the fast passages or more uniform material. The emotional scope of his interpretation is impressive, especially in Biber’s sonatas. The Baroque-style articulations are brought to life with well thought-out phrasing and back and forth trading of ideas within the ensemble. Harpsichordist Hank Knox and gambist Elinor Frey, although mostly in the supporting roles in this repertoire, are nevertheless essential in building the overall sound and direct a spotlight on the inventiveness of these compositions.

Ivana Popovic

Tendres échos

Anne Thivierge; Mélisande Corriveau; Eric Milnes

ATMA ACD2 2871 (atmaclassique.com/en)

► Flutist Anne Thivierge, viola de gambe player Mélisande Corriveau and harpsichordist Eric Milnes, playing period instruments, bring works from François Couperin’s Concert Royal No 2 for Flute and Continuo in D Major and Minor and the Pièces de clavecin, the 14th suite (of 27) from his book Ordres to life – together with works by Marin Marais, Michel Blavet and Jean-Marie Leclair.

Couperin’s work is marked by expressiveness enhanced by rich ornamentation, which – unusual for the time – is never left to the discretion of the performer, but always precisely specified. Here he adopts what came to be called style brisé (broken style) in which the notes of the chord are not all played together, but one after the other (originally in imitation of luteists). Marais, who studied with Jean-Baptiste Lully, had come under the latter’s development of a style that melded the French and the Italian (of Corelli). Marais’ Pièce for Viola de gamba and Continuo Suite No.1 in D Minor soars in its rhapsodic La follette
movement and ends with the soulfully expressive Gigue La favorite.

On Blavet’s Sonata for Flute and Continuo in D Minor Op. 2 No. 2, the flute is clean and vibrant, the continuo gently sympathetic, as the musicians immerse themselves in the music’s warm beauty. An alert sense of rhetoric is evident in the intricately wrought, magical performance of Leclair’s Trio Sonata for Flute, Violà da gamba and Continuo in D Major.

Raul da Gama

Boulder Bach Festival
Boulder Bach Festival; Zachary Carrettin
Sono Luminus DSL-02265 (sonoluminus.com)

> Recorded immediately after the 2022 Boulder Bach Festival, this disc contains several of the highlights featured in that year’s performances, including Bach’s Concerto for two violins, BWV 1043, and the magnificent Concerto for harpsichord, BWV 1052, as well as two vocal works by Johann Christoph Bach.

For early music aficionados, what makes this recording most interesting is that these works are performed on modern instruments – apart from the harpsichord, of course – with period-based nuances such as using a Baroque bow for the double bass, or a classical bow on a viola, added at the discretion of the performer. By making these decisions by ear, rather than adherence to convention and 20th-century tradition, the musicians tailored their sound to the overall interpretation, producing a result that is more forthcoming and strident than period instruments, but with the shapes and phrasings that listeners have come to expect.

These interpretations portray Bach at his most dramatic and invigorating, with performances that are full of energy and joy. The Concerto for two violins is serious yet playful, abounding with communicativeness and ample musical dialogue between the soloists and orchestra. The Concerto for harpsichord, always serious, is imbued with a lightness and grace that keeps it from becoming funereal, but it is also played deliberately enough that it contains all the gravity demanded of it.

The vocal works by J.S. Bach’s older cousin Johann Christoph Bach (1642-1703) – not to be confused with J.S. Bach’s uncle, who had the same name and introduced J.S. to the organ, or J.S.’ ‘eldest brother who also had the same name and mentored J.S. after his parents died – are beautiful in their simplicity, and a fine contrast to the density of Johann Sebastian’s musical vernacular. With two excellent performances of two of Bach’s finest concertos, this disc is not one to be overlooked, and is an excellent testament to the talent present at the Boulder Bach Festival.

Matthew Whitfield

Bach Generations
Albrecht Mayer; Berliner Barock Solisten
Deutsche Grammophon 486 4183 (store.deutschgrammophon.com/p50-a157976/albrecht-mayer)

> Curated by oboist, Albrecht Mayer, Bach Generations is the latest in a series of portrait albums featuring the Bach family. Beginning the incredible legacy, Johann Sebastian’s early musical influences began with his father who played the violin and extended to his father’s first cousin, composer Johann Christoph. Johann Sebastian went on to become one of the most prolific composers of all time, teaching all “ten” of his children music with four of them becoming notable composers. Each of these composer sons had their own style and relationship to their father’s music. This album showcases three generations of the Bach family with music by JS Bach’s uncle, Johann Christoph, Johann Sebastian himself as well as two of his sons, Carl Philipp Emanuel and Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach.

Bach Generations opens with the JS’s Concerto for Oboe d’amore which is best known today as the Harpsichord Concerto No. 4 in A Major. Following this beautiful work are transcriptions of concertos by Carl Philipp Emanuel and Johann Christoph Friedrich, a Badinerie and Air from Johann Sebastian’s Orchestral Suites Nos.2 and 3, as well as a Bach family favourite, Gottfried Heinrich Stözel’s Bist du bei mir. Concluding with Ach, dass ich Wassers g’heiß hätte by Johann Christoph Bach, Mayer ties in the third generation of the Bach family legacy with this lovely transcription for English horn, solo violin, strings, and continuo.

Played with Berliner Barock Solisten in traditional Baroque style, Mayer elegantly performs these works on modern instruments. With his rounded tone, expressive playing and virtuosity on the oboe, oboe d’amore and English horn, he showcases the beauty of expression throughout the Bach generations.

Melissa Scott

Editor’s note: Although JS Bach fathered some twenty children, only ten survived into adulthood.

The Complete Beethoven Piano Concertos
Garrick Ohlsson; Grand Teton Music Festival Orchestra; Sir Donald Runnicles
Reference Recordings FR-751SACD (gtmf.org/beethoven-piano-concertos-recording)

> Curated by oboist, Albrecht Mayer, Bach Generations are monumental contributions to the Western Art Music canon, providing an overview of musical evolution through masterful compositions that have remained in the core repertory for over two centuries. Always an innovator and disruptor of established trends, these works trace Beethoven’s progression from traditional forms to increasingly original ones. For example, Beethoven’s Fifth Concerto, the “Emperor” begins with a piano-centric cadenza at a time when it was customary for the orchestra to play a lengthy introduction. Although this seems like a mildly interesting break from convention in the 21st century, such re-inventions were edge-of-your-seat moments for Beethoven’s audience.

Recorded during live performances at the 2022 Grand Teton Music Festival, located near Wyoming’s Rocky Mountain range, this complete set of Beethoven concertos features the festival’s orchestra conducted by the renowned Sir Donald Runnicles and pianist Garrick Ohlsson, a student of the late Claudio Arrau. This collection is decidedly level-headed, providing consistently reliable results, but also limiting the impact of climactic moments. These interpretations are charming, but perhaps lack the precipitousness and risk-taking that is required to turn them into something beautiful and breathtaking.

Despite its overall conservatism, there are some striking moments on this disc, including the glorious Adagio from the fifth concerto, in which the balance between winds and strings is notable, particularly for a live recording. Performing the complete set of Beethoven’s piano concertos is an expansive and impressive task, and this collection is well-suited for those seeking an all-encompassing survey of these magnificent works.

Matthew Whitfield

For Clara
Hélène Grimaud; Konstantin Krimmel
Deutsche Grammophon (deutschgrammophon.com/en/artists/helenegrimaud)

> “Imagine, since my last letter I have again an entire volume of new things ready. I shall call it Kreisleriana. My music seems to me...
changes in mood throughout are treated with flawless technique while the never-ending having previously recorded Schumann as “the most literary of by Brahms performed by pianist Hélène together with the three on this splendid DG recording titled the collection to Chopin, it became one his Intermezzi Op.117 were among the last the composer wrote and were written in 1864 with texts by Georg Friedrich written in 1864 with texts by Georg Friedrich Daumer and August von Platen may seem a dark choice for these challenging times. Nevertheless, Grimaud and Krimmel are a formidable pairing, with Krimmel’s warm tone and fine diction together with Grimaud’s sympathetic partnership resulting in a most satisfying performance. Bravo to both artists – Robert, Clara and Johannes would all have been pleased!

Richard Haskell

Franz Liszt – Transcendental Etudes
Haochen Zhang
BIS BIS-2681 (bis.se)

*Liszts 12 Études d’exécution transcendante* (or Transcendental Etudes) comprise perhaps the greatest documents of musical Romanticism, a high watermark in the history of the piano, amounting to nothing less than the creation of modern keyboard technique. That Haochen Zhang has even attempted these studies is a testament as much to his audacity as it is to the unbridled virtuosity that he displays in his performance of them.

These studies teem with such outrageous difficulties that, in their day (1831) they were the most difficult works for the piano; even now there’s but a handful of pianists who can play them authoritatively. Lazar Berman’s (Melodiya, 1963), Boris Berezovsky’s (TELDEC, 1996) and Leslie Howard’s (Hyperion, 2016) have always been considered benchmark recordings.

We must add Zhang’s exquisite recording to this short list. To play these works at all requires a formidable technique; to play them so as to convey their poetry rather than the effort required to play them is a gift afforded to very few. Clearly Zheng is one of those.

Throughout the performance of the 12 studies Zheng displays technical prowess to reach a plateau of intense emotional conviction – especially in the first four etudes. Moreover, he also knows how to enter the introspective core of such pieces as the beautiful Ricordanza and Harmonies du soir.

Saint-Saëns – Complete Symphonies
Malmo Symphony Orchestra; Marc Soustrot
Naxos 8.503301 (naxos.com/CatalogueDetail/?id=8.503301)

Anyone trying to dismiss Camille Saint-Saëns as a minor composer and pushing him to the sidelines would be surprised hearing this already much praised new set of his complete symphonic output. The conductor is Marc Soustrot a highly accomplished French musician, specialist in French Romanticism and he puts his heart and soul into these performances. The Swedish orchestra follows him every inch of the way and with HD sound this set becomes a clear first choice.

I have always been fond of this tremendously talented French composer/pianist who had a long productive life from the mid 19th into early 20th century. The fondness I mentioned originated when my father took me to the first concert of my life at age seven right after the War. The program started with Danse Macabre and my dad explained to me the story of the ghosts and the skeletons, the midnight bells, the devil’s violin solo and the final rooster call.... Wow! I also became quite addicted to the Carnival of the Animals. Saint-Saëns was a child prodigy and wrote a symphony when he was 15 but was cautious like Brahms and didn’t give it a number. He called it Symphony in A Major and it is a tribute to Mozart. It’s a charming work, quite expertly written; it is interesting that he used the same four notes (C, D, F, E) Mozart used to build the last magnificent contrapuntal movement of the Jupiter Symphony.

His numbered symphonies began two years later with No.1 in E-flat Major and I found it thoroughly enjoyable. It has a gorgeous second movement (March, Scherzo) with a melody one wants to sing along with while the Adagio has a long, sustained clarinet solo, so enchanting I wished it would never end. To top it, the Finale even has a military band that sounds like a Napoleonic march. This is French Empire music. In fact, the symphonies were admired by Berlioz and Gounod.

After a competition entry symphony, again without a number, Urbs Roma (now almost never played) the boy keeps honing his skills with the Second Symphony, already a mature work with an energetic, syncopated fugue and an elegant presto, a somewhat Italianate finale where the influence of Mendelssohn is noticeable.

However, the best is yet to come. It is so interesting that in many a composer’s career there is a sudden qualitative leap, a divine inspiration that produces a work so superior to and unlike what has been written before. Such a work is the magnificent Third Symphony in C Minor. It’s a master-piece of the first order, highly innovative with an organ and two pianos added. Much recorded by the greats, it’s always a high-light in the concert hall. There is a cyclical theme (à la Liszt) which underlines the structure is capable of many transformations and keeps everything together. The first move-ment is exciting with the cyclical theme in restless, constant motion while the second movement simply glows with religious piety with the wonderful support by the organ. The tempo picks up in the incisive Scherzo where the two pianos are added. After a suspenseful Transition an explosion of the organ is very effective. The symphony ends triumphantly with a final accelarando and a long-reverberated organ note.

As an added bonus, this fascinating set also contains the four inspired and atmospheric symphonic poems, including my old friend the Danse Macabre and three others all inspired by Greek mythology.

Janos Gardonyi

Sergei Rachmaninoff – Symphonies 2 & 3;
Isle of the Dead
Philadelphia Orchestra; Yannick Nézet-Séguin

*Mention the name Sergei Rachmaninoff today and the chances are that pianist Yuja Wang and her incandescent recordings of his work come to mind.*

Not this time, however, for what we have here is the enigmatic and towering figure of Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducting the mighty Philadelphia Orchestra. The result is a double disc featuring Symphonies Nos. 2 &
3 and Rachmaninoff’s first orchestral masterpiece *Isle of The Dead*, performed in all their solemn grandeur.

**Symphony No.2** is a work of immense power and maturity. Its richness of themes makes it the most absorbing of the composer’s three symphonies. The penultimate Adagio is one of the greatest symphonic movements in Russian music. It becomes perilously sentimental in places, but its lush harmony and exquisite orchestration are so genuinely felt that you’ll forgive any excesses.

**Symphony No.3** is so nearly as powerful; a great surge of orchestral energy follows the hushed Orthodox chant of the opening, and the singing interludes between the music’s recurring motifs are of Rachmaninoff’s most alluring kind.

The *Isle of The Dead* is an amazingly powerful piece, whose sepalicular air works its way insistently into the memory. Throughout the program Nézet-Séguin fires up the Philadelphia Orchestra to get into the guts of this extraordinary music. His sense of power and maturity . Its richness of themes makes it the most absorbing of the composer’s three symphonies. The penultimate movement in Russian music. It becomes solemn grandeur.

In the film there are excerpts of her playing at various ages. She was a child prodigy and could play Paganini caprices at age five or a Hungarian Dance at breakneck speed. She was discovered by the legendary Herbert von Karajan and became his protegée. This gave an immense boost and catapulted her into world fame. Today she owns two priceless Stradivari violins and has given concerts all over the world, gathering many awards and decorations. Even played at the White House for Barack Obama. Her discography is simply astounding, mostly with DG, but also with Sony and EMI.

But fame didn’t spoil her. She is a passionate supporter of new music, introducing many new works and sharing her considerable fortune to help young musicians and many charities. Now she is touring the world with her own chamber group, Mutter Virtuosi, comprising amazing young string players. What a delight to listen to them. Her motto is FORWARD! It just about sums her up.

**MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY**

**Vivace – A Film by Sigrid Faltin**

**Anne-Sophie Mutter**

**SWR Classic SWR19132DVD (naxos.com/ CatalogueDetail/?id=SWR19132DVD)**

World-famous violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter is 60 years old, a widow of two illustrious beloved husbands, an avid tennis player (her icon is Roger Federer) and in terrific physical and psychological shape. So, when award-winning German filmmaker Sigrid Faltin decided to create a documentary about her she chose to portray Mutter in an outdoor Alpine setting, in a long mountain hike near Kitzbühel, Austria walking side by side with the filmmaker and her little dachshund, talking spontaneously about anything that comes to mind.

The most important feature of the film is her place in society represented by a few of her favorite people, her friends. They are an eminent group including Federer, German composer Rolf GMann, Daniel Barenboim, who conducted for her in Salzburg, celebrity composer/conductor John Williams who wrote a concerto for her, her accompanist Lambert Orkis and a magician from New York, Steve Cohen. Cohen performs a little magic trick of tearing up a dollar bill into little pieces, puts it into his mouth, takes it out, blows at it and it becomes whole again, perfectly intact. Wow!

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**John Robertson – Portraits**

**Bratislava Symphony Orchestra; Anthony Armore**

**Centrediscs CMCCD32623 (cmccanada. org/product-category/recordings/ centrediscs)**

**Kingston-based John Robertson (b.1943) creates colourfully scored, neo-Romantic music that succeeds in sounding freshly minted, avoiding Hollywood clichés or borrowings from other composers. This CD presents six pieces, all but one under 12 minutes long.**

Overture for a Musical Comedy, Op.15 evokes, for me, the song-and-dance of a 1930s cabaret. Salome Dances, Op.32 is more subtly suggestive of that legendary unvelling than Richard Strauss’ frenetic version. Cyranoo, Op.53 affectionately depicts scenes of love and strife from Edmond Rostand’s classic play. The Death of Crowe, Op.30 describes an episode in Timothy Findlay’s novel Not Wanted on the Voyage in which Mrs. Noah laments the death of her blind cat’s dear friend. The music is fainful and poignantly lyrical, featuring an extended clarinet solo wandering over repeated descending strings. The melancholy, perturbed Overture to Robertson’s ballet Lady Jane – A Fable, Op.66 includes, writes Robertson, “various themes that will be heard later in the work.”

The 31-minute, six-movement Suite from Robertson’s opera Orpheus – A Masque, Op.64 suggests that his take on the familiar myth is closer in spirit to that of the irreverent Offenbach than to Monteverdi or Gluck, its insouciant lack of gravitas offsetting the tender beauty of Orpheus’ and Euridice’s love music. (The rocking, bittersweet waltz tune of Dancing in the Elsgian Fields has become, for me, a recurrent, invigorating earworm!)

Anthony Armore, conductor of four CDs of Robertson’s compositions on the Navona label, continues to champion Robertson’s music with enthusiasm, entirely merited.

**Michael Schulman**

All we are made of is borrowed

**Paramorph Collective**

**Redshift Records TK534 (redshiftrecords.org)**

Montreal-Ottawa musicians and multidisciplinary artists. An Laurence (guitar, voice, etc.) and Kim Farris-Manning (piano, voice, synthesizer, etc.) comprise the Paramorph Collective. “Paramorph” in mineralogy refers to the process of transformation of a mineral through the reorganization of its molecular structure only. Analogously, the collective aims to transform itself and its audience through “rearranging inner feelings or thoughts… seeking new perspectives.” The Collective’s nine-track debut album All we’re made of is borrowed shows the duo in twin roles: music creators and performers of scores by Canadian composers Rodney Sharman and Linda C Smith, and California-based Margot George.

Smith’s remarkable Thought and Desire is an engaging piano solo until 3’45” when the pianist begins singing in her soft soprano. At that moment the piano’s identity suddenly shifts, its role thereafter is to accompany. It’s a delightful perceptual shift for listeners. Four of the tracks are original works by the Collective, evoking an overall peaceful, soft and layered aesthetic space through spoken word, electronics and guitar-supported song. Margot George’s rousing Fruiting Bodies forms the album’s centerpiece. Farris-Manning’s custom-built organ synthesizer’s sustained chords are animated by Lawrence’s crashing electric guitar clusters and sustained single tones. This 21-minute composition presents dichotomic extremes: of sound pressure and distortion, sustained keyboard vs plucked strings – counterpointed by shimmering stacked organ chords evoking ecclesiastical regions.

The album notes ask listeners to reflect on the title – All we’re made of is borrowed – and to hold onto – All we have made of is borrowed to each other. We have only a limited time to share what we do with others.

**Andrew Timar**
Live in Toronto
Spindle Ensemble; Evergreen Club
Gamelan Ensemble
Hidden Notes (spindleensemble.bandcamp.com/album/live-in-toronto)

*Live in Toronto*, the 2022 collaboration between the seven-musician Toronto group Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan and the UK Spindle Ensemble (violin, cello, piano, marimba), is nothing short of captivating.

Spindle pianist Daniel Inzani’s composition *Lucid Living* firmly establishes ECG’s degung gamelan voice, amplified by Spindle’s tight harmonies. Evoking monochrome hues of early morning light, the musical palette is enhanced with the addition of Spindle’s marimba and piano before opening into full daylight. Inzani’s music took me on an impressionistic *Joycean* journey.

Orpheus by Spindle’s Harriet Riley begins as an homage to Stravinsky’s ballet of the same name. Its Western roots however soon give way to ECG’s Southeast Asian tones, reminding me of American composer Lou Harrison’s gamelan-centric approach in some of his works. Riley found exotic ways to blend the 11 instruments at her disposal: the strings (violin and cello) overlap ECG’s wind (suling, a ring flute) making for an enchanting sonic exchange.

ECGG suling soloist Andrew Timar’s composition *Open Fifths: Gardens* takes us to the EP’s summit, a work featuring complexity of a kind I associate with the best modal jazz improvisation. The performers play off one another with a sensitivity that finds the fruitful common ground between the musical worlds the two ensembles inhabit. When Timar’s low-sounding suling gambuh invites the cello into the conversation we witness an unanticipated aural blending and the unfolding sound palette celebrates all the voices present.

My only question lies in *Open Fifths’* ending. The suspended silence before the last note—reminiscent of a certain Chopin piano *Prelude in E Minor*—caught me off guard. *Open Fifths*, like the rest of this EP, is filled with happy surprises.

—*Edwin Gaillits*

Composing Israel – The First Three Generations
Various Artists
Neuma 177 (neumarecords.org)

*Ten compositions spanning six decades present an overview of “the first three generations” of Israeli composers, variously performed by 24 musicians including members of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and five different pianists.*

Toccata, Op.14, No.5 for piano (1943) is a wild, whirlwind dance by Paul Ben-Haim (né Paul Frankenburger, 1897-1984), a German refugee who helped found the “Eastern-Mediterranean School” of Israeli composition. German refugee Tzvi Avni (né Hermann Steinke, b.1927) studied with Ben-Haim and dedicated his *Capriccio* for piano (1955, rev.1975) to his mentor. Like Toccata, it embraces the volatile rhythms of Middle-Eastern music.


I enjoyed all these much more than the non-Middle-Eastern-sounding piano pieces by Abel Ehrlich (1915-2003), Ari Shapiro (1943-2015) and Ari Ben-Shabetai (b.1954) or the electronic collage of Bedouin children speaking by Tsippi Fleischer (b.1946), all dating from the 1980s.

In the 19-minute *Wire* for soprano and chamber ensemble (1986) by Oded Zehavi (b.1961), Denise Lundine keens a Hebrew poem, her “voice crying in the wilderness” over bustling percussion, the French horn emulating liturgical *shofar* (ram’s horn) elephantine trumpetings making this, by far the CD’s longest work, also its most “Jewish.”

—*Michael Schulman*

Messiaen – Vingt Regards sur l’Enfant Jesus
Kristoffer Hyldig
Our Recordings 6.220677-78 (ourrecordings.com)

*Another pianist passionate about Olivier Messiaen, has released his recent take on Vingt regards sur l’Enfant-Jésus, a 20-piece solo piano cycle which – to some enthusiasts – represents a mighty pillar of mid-century modernism. The striking Danish pianist, Kristoffer Hyldig, recorded this disc at Vor Frueker’s Church in Copenhagen during a severe pandemic lockdown in March of 2021.*
John Luther Adams – darkness and scattered light

Robert Black double bass
Cold Blue Music CB0067 (coldbluemusic.com)

Renowned award-winning American composer John Luther Adams’ album *Darkness and Scattered Light* is an unusual one, consisting of three major works for double bass. Two scored for solo double bass and one for bass quintet, each attractive piece is a substantial contribution to the bass repertoire.

Superbly performed by the late bassist Robert Black (1956–2023) these virtuosos works call not only on the majesty of the lowest of the string section, but also on its ability in the right hands to evoke near-orchestral multi-part textures— as in the serene solo *Three High Places* (2007). Fascinatingly, all the sounds in this work consist of bowed natural harmonics or open strings, the musician’s fingers never touching the fingerboard.

*Darkness and Scattered Light* (2023), Adams’ 16’32” single-movement score for five double basses (all played by Black), wades deeply into orchestral textures, employing both the harmonic and subharmonic overtone series. Marked by merging long tones transfigured onto a tonally ambiguous harmonic terrain, Adams’ aesthetically sophisticated, historically informed work is masterful.

The other solo is *Three Nocturnes* (2022), evoking the dark side of the harmonic series and of nature herself. Dedicated to Black, he gave the premiere outdoors, amid red rock canyons.

Composer Michael Gordon wrote that Black “has single-handedly reinvented the technique and repertoires of the double bass, bringing it bursting into the 21st century.” Black’s no-nonsense, committed, masterful playing of Adams’ music is his beautiful, lasting legacy.

Andrew Timar

**Edward Cowie – Where the Wood Thrush Forever Sings**

Anna Hashimoto; Roderick Chatwick
Metier mex 77104 (divineartrecords.com)

When one walks every morning through wooded areas, one hears the seasons changing in the calls of birds. Spring is as raucous as winter is silent, a muted summer leads to the random cries of migration in fall. One is hardly likely to find this strange chorale upsetting unless one suffers hypersensitivity to sound, as some poor souls no doubt do.

Composer Edward Cowie has found the alchemical formula for transmuting various bird cries into duets for clarinet and piano. Played mellifluously on *E-flat* and *B-flat* clarinet by Anna Hashimoto, with Roderick Chadwick at the keyboard, this group of four “songbooks” are a series of short explorations of various birds’ musical identities. Hashimoto manages the higher register with accuracy that is sometimes piercing yet never shrill. Chadwick is sure-handed with the understated piano writing. Cowie’s harmonic language is both new and sometimes familiar.

Birds and their environment have inspired composers before now, of course. Beethoven wrote a quartet of characters into the coda of the second movement of his *Sixth Symphony*, giving the poor clarinetist the role of Cuckoo (which some might find quite appropriate). Olivier Messiaen was noted for his sometimes-verbatim quotes from the aviary, and his *Abyss of the Birds* is a *tour-de-force* for solo clarinet. Cowie’s settings do more than quote the melodic arc of any of the 24 birds represented here, but they are meticulously researched, as his field notes in the accompanying booklet indicate. This is his third collection, focused on North American species. Divided over two discs, six species per “book,” the tracks range between two and six minutes. I can’t decide whether it’s better to know which bird is singing as the disc plays or to simply enjoy the walk while trying to guess.

Max Christie

**The Senator – A Tribute to Tommy Banks**

Hutchinson Andrew Trio
Chronograph Records CR 100 (hatjazz.com)

Tommy Banks packed many accomplishments into his 81 years. He was a conductor, arranger, pianist, television personality and a member of the Canadian Senate from 2000 to 2011. The Senator is named after his political life but pays tribute to his music and how he inspired and influenced a younger generation of musicians. The members of the Hutchinson Andrew Trio (Chris Andrew, piano; Kodi Hutchinson, bass;
Dave Laing, drums) all had a personal relationship to Banks, as did the “special guests” PJ Perry, Al Muirhead and Mallory Chipman, and these connections invigorate their performances.

Highlights of the album include a bouncy version of *Jig* (a tune played and recorded by Banks) and *Bank on It*, written by Chris Andrew as a grooving bop tribute from one pianist to another. The *Senator* is a delightful undertaking that pays tribute to Banks’ music legacy and reminds us of this important musician. It was recorded live over two nights at the Yardbird Suite in Edmonton, on what would have been Banks’ 85th birthday, and that adds to the sense of celebration.

Ted Parkinson

Éclipse
Aline Homzy
Elastic Recordings ER-009 (alinehomzy.com)

An award-winning Canadian violinist and composer, Aline Homzy is no stranger to the exploration of the unknown and this is precisely what she does with her debut album *Éclipse*. The world of *Éclipse* is elegant, nuanced and enigmatic, sparking a curiosity in the listener. Homzy and her Étoile Mogique colleagues are set on capturing the enigma of incopercularity in their music, translating visual/physical shifts, such as movements of the celestial bodies, into an aural one. Thus we have the world built on the cosmos like textures using synths, theremin and the colours of vibraphone, creating a sonic background for our imagination. In that world, Homzy’s violin is both the guide and the explorer – her balanced sound and impeccable phrasing transversing beauty and etherealness but not shying away from bold gestures or rhythmic complexity.

In addition to the explorative elements, *Éclipse* is still very much rooted in the jazz violin tradition and many arrangements are within the classic jazz structure. Ten original tunes by Homzy and vibraphonist Michael Davidson cultivate the best of that tradition while leaving a mark of their own. The rest of the core ensemble, consisting of guitarist Thom Gill, bassist Dan Fortin and percussionist Marito Marques, forms a tight-knit group. Their own solos, most notably by Fortin in the only cover on the album – Charlie Parker’s *Segment* – are charming and engaging. With such a clear compositional direction and sophisticated performers, this album will be noted by many.

Ivana Popovic

Plays Long
Longhand
Drip Audio DA 02040 (dripaudio.com)

Josh Zubot Strings
Josh Zubot; Jesse Zubot; James Meger; Meredith Bates; Peggy Lee
Drip Audio DA02420 (dripaudio.com)

Emad Armoush’s Duos
Emad Armoush; Francois Houle; Jesse Zubot; JP Carter; Kenton Loewen; Marina Hasselberg
Drip Audio DA02392 (dripaudio.com)

Dividing his time among record production, film scoring and running the Drip Audio record label, British Columbia-based violinist Jesse Zubot finds time to play music. Fittingly for someone whose productions include pop and ethnic sounds, each of these sessions features different styles. On Longhand’s *Play Long*, he joins guitarist Tony Wilson’s jazz-rock fusion band featuring Russell Sholberg, playing bass and musical saw, percussionist Skye Brooks and Jesse’s brother Josh Zubot on violin. When the brothers become twin Jean-Luc Ponty, expositions are torqued to arena-rock distortion, especially when Wilson’s effects pedals produce stumps and buzzing tones. A bass groove and drum backbeat contribute as well. However when the violinists match Wilson’s kalimba colouration with gentleness and folksy bounces as on *The Exotic Popscicle* narratives are lightened. *Chicken Grease* is the most notable instance of moderated fusion. Here a moderated bass solo gives way to multiple-string shudders from the violinists and chiming chords from Wilson, leading to a theme with a pop music interface, but recapped enough to emphasize jazz tradition links.

Josh Zubot, playing viola and violin, is the leader on Strings. Interpreting his jazz-improv compositions are cellists Peggy Lee; bassist James Meger; Meredith Bates playing violin/viola and brother Jesse on viola. Uniquely constituting this string quintet, Zubot’s arrangements include a few traditional sounding and mostly pastoral tutti themes and those ricocheting between Arcadian and avant-garde passages which divide the strings into soloists with sympathetic backing. *Beach and Car* is notable since it’s a suite of three separate sections in fewer than six and a half minutes. Beginning with pleasant swing it moves up the scale as a violinist’s broken-chord stops are backed by double bass thumps. Slowing to mid-range, the piece climaxes with a contrapuntal do-si-do involving the lower-pitched strings’ watery textures and the higher pitched ones’ avairy squeaks before a full hand ending. Multiple tracks vibrate in tempos ranging from andante to prestissimo, with the two *Explorations* the freest ones, highlighting harsh bow strokes and col legno string scratches. Other tunes invoke flat line minimalism, some almost romantic formalism, while others feature the closest to a martial beat string piers can attain. With three violinists, it’s only on *Augur 44* when the others play violas, that Jesse Zubot’s contributions stand out. Turning spiccato squeaks every which way after introducing a hoedown-like theme, the other musicians then add Eastern European-like presto slides. Tension from Zubot’s string jumping doesn’t upset the narrative’s unfolding, since pressure is released first by a mellow tutti interlude and later by slapped and sliding asides from the bassist and cellist.

Jesse Zubot is one of the Vancouver players fronting with Syrian-born local Emad Armoush, who plays oud, nay, guitar and vocalizes on *Electric Tradition*. Some tracks are a little too close to ethnic music, but when Armoush partners with experienced improvisers the result is a dramatic blend of West Coast and Middle East. Zubot’s spiccato slides and buzzes seem more accompaniment than point making when he plays. More notable are duets with Kenton Loewen which refine Levantine lyrics and drum beats. Loewen’s rough accents on *Talah* create tandem progression with Armoush’s guitar twangs; and this toughness is intensified on *Hey Free Bop* as clapping muffles make ney peeps almost swing. Clenched guitar picking on *Flamenco Strut* emphasizes the title’s second word as trumpeter JP Carter’s strained triplets create a Middle-Eastern blues. Equivalent brass shakes and toneless breaths on *Labshi* mean that Armoush’s percussive picking combines the free improv as well as the traditional music world.

String oriented, but not string exclusive, these discs confirm that unprecedented sounds are being created and recorded in British Columbia.

Ken Waxman
Cry Me a River  
Hilario Durán and his Latin Jazz Big Band  
Alma Records ACD90832  
(almarecords.com)

> A sign of a truly great musician is the ability to not only capture the attention of the listener from the first note, but also to maintain that same level of rapture throughout an entire recording. Renowned pianist Hilario Durán’s long-awaited Latin big band album does just that, it captivates and thoroughly ensnares within the sizzling melodies and rhythms of these tunes. The mix of original compositions and covers with an interesting and refreshing twinge make for an ear-pleasing whole that is as vibrantly expressive and joyful as the changing colours of the autumn leaves.

A defining element of this album is the way in which Durán’s improvisational and genre-crossing talents are highlighted within each piece. It’s absolutely enthralling to listen how the star pianist throws in his own flavour to well-known jazz standards such as Dizzy Gillespie’s A Night in Tunisia, which takes on decidedly more Latin flavour, adding a renewed element energy and passion to the classic tune. Rhythmic grooves and scorching melodies interspersed with Durán’s prolific improvisational riffs create a delicious musical potpourri that will fill the soul and body of listeners. For him, there are no barriers between genres and bends pieces to his will, jumping from traditional jazz to modern and even funk with the utmost ease. Featuring a roster of great musicians such as Luis Mario Ochoa on guitar, Elizabeth Rodríguez on violin and Roberto Occhipinti on bass, this is a must-have for any jazz-lover’s collection.

Kati Kiilaspea

Shaping the Invisible  
Teri Parker; Luis Deniz; Andrew McAnsh;  
Mark Godfrey; Ernesto Cervini  
Independent (teriparkermusic.com)

> Skilled pianist/composer/arranger Teri Parker has just released a remarkable project that began as an immersive writing experience... sans any pre-conceptions, and yet ripe with a wide variety of influences. With the exception of two exquisite tracks (Segment by Charlie Parker and Retrograde by British producer/vocalist James Blake), all compositions have emerged from the creative soul of Parker. As she has so succinctly said, “Music is just sound particles in the air, but it doesn’t exist until you make it exist.” Parker has assembled a fine complement here, including Luis Deniz on alto and soprano sax, Mark Godfrey on bass, Ernesto Cervini on drums and special guest Andrew McAnsh on trumpet.

The opening salvo, Becoming (inspired by Michelle Obama’s memoir), is replete with a languid, mystical intro featuring the supple Deniz and McAnsh, which gives way to a stirring and rhythmic melodic line, imbued with the sheer beauty and power of Parker’s piano. McAnsh provides a stunner of a solo here, engaging fully with the solid rhythm section. The groovy–cool Hump was written in tribute to the late bop–saxophonist Dewey Redman and masterfully lauds his eccentric style and command of his instrument. Deniz shines on alto here, and also on Desolate Places, which is a sumptuous, lilting duet between Parker and Deniz on soprano. Parker’s Segment is also a stunner, rendered here with all bop sensibilities intact, but also informed by Parker’s contemporary view, as well as her highly intuitive comping and potent soloing.

The closer of this fine recording, Strolling, is a sultry exploration, replete with a luscious solo by Parker and dynamic percussion by Cervini. Nimble bassist Godfrey is also featured, with Deniz serving as the magical glue which encircles and binds the ensemble in pure creativity.

Lesley Mitchell-Clark

Someday  
Marc Copland Quartet  
Inner Voice Jazz IJV107  
(marcycopland.com)

> This album Someday by Marc Copland is not only enigmatic–ally entitled but is replete with music to match. Copland declares his intent right out of the gate, exploring music’s spectral nature with a gloriously wistful interpretation of Frank Churchill’s iconic song Someday My Prince Will Come, one of three standards on this album.

The pianist twists the B-flat Major key of the song shaping the harmony from obtuse angles, setting up the narrative in gambling, elliptical melodic lines, sharing the oblique harmonic variations with saxophonist Robin Verheyen. By the time drummer Mark Ferber stirs the proverbial soup with beautiful brush strokes and bassist Drew Gress adds a dusky rumble to the gossamer melody you know you’re in for quite the ride on this sparkling set.

Verheyen’s song Dukish is wonderfully sprightly and receives a delightful treatment as the musicians react with seamless vibrancy. Saxophonist and pianist invite the bassist and drummer to apply rhythmic propulsion to the quick outer movements, passing lines deftly to the other musicians who know exactly when to dominate and when to lend support.

As a composer, Copland gives us a ringside perspective on his magical writing through two other originals including the wonderfully spiralling Round She Goes. The song, propelled by a hypnotic four-note piano figure, builds in intensity as the musicians capture the urgent and plaintive power that makes Copland’s music – and this album – so ethereally beautiful.

Raul da Gama
Rituals
Kelly Jefferson
Cellar Music CMR022023 (cellarlive.com)

> When the Canadian JUNO-Award winning star of the saxophone – curved or straight – Kelly Jefferson decides to bare key moments in his life it must be something special. When he plays the momentous music with a stellar trio of his peers – pianist Amanda Tosoff, bassist Ion Maharaj and drummer Morgan Childs, whose idiomatic interpretations mark this music – then the album of songs does, indeed, become something truly special.

The title of the album – Rituals – suggests a rite of passage for Jefferson. Each of the nine charts marks the memory of a milestone that, as the lyric of the iconic Sam Cooke song suggests “a change is gonna come,” or in Jefferson’s case, a change did, in fact come. What these events were, are poured into deeply soulful charts by the saxophonist. Each is suited to a particular horn – tenor, alto or soprano – and his playing will drive listeners, happily, into a state of frenzy.

Whether it be Kindling, or No Time Like The Present, or even Dimmer Switch, each is suited to his alternating ultra-virtuosity and languor. With hallmark rapid crescendos and decrescendos, accelerandos or decelerandos, sometimes within a few bars, almost as if a grenade has been tossed into the saxophone, Jefferson announces his unique musical charisma to us, his rapt audience.

Tosoff, Maharaj and Childs, fully attuned to Jefferson’s vision, remain inspired choices to bring this music to fruition.

Raul da Gama

Hummingbird
Ashley Wey
Independent (ashleywey.bandcamp.com/ album/hummingbird)

> When pianist, vocalist and composer Ashley Wey opened for the great Lisa Fischer (of Rolling Stones and 20 Feet From Stardom fame) in Wey’s hometown of Victoria in 2018, she wrote a song for the occasion, inspired and actually titled by Fischer! Thus, Hummingbird became the name of both the album and title track of Wey’s most recent release. It’s also her first to feature mostly original music (written over a 15-year period).

Wey is an “uncategorizable” artist who, while firmly grounded in the jazz tradition, is equally at home in the worlds of alternative folk and indie pop – “genre-blending,” rather than genre-bending. I had the pleasure of hearing Wey perform live in Victoria this past spring, at Superior Jazz, a project by Victoria-based jazz vocalist, Heather Ferguson (whose debut album I reviewed in the Feb/Mar 2023 WholeNote). Wey impressed me with her versatility, generosity, energy and playfulness, qualities, along with some of that genre-blending, apparent throughout the album.

An overriding feeling of expansiveness repeatedly came up for me in listening to Hummingbird. It’s there, in abundance, in the title track, as well as in other instrumental tracks, Stereosis, Initially and Finally and Destiny – a lovely, fluid, Metheny-esque expansiveness that I found beautifully compelling.

Along with her solid piano work were Wey’s breezily playful vocals on that old nugget, Just Squeeze Me. I could “hear” her smiling! Joining Wey are her longtime trio collaborators, Louis Rudner on bass and drummer Nicholas Bracewell, both masterful. Hummingbird will indeed leave you humming.

Sharna Searle

The Speed of Time
Andrew Rathbun; Gary Versace; John Hebert; Tom Rainey
Steeple Chase SCCD 31950 (andrewrathbun.com)

> Andrew Rathbun is a saxophone player and composer who grew up in Toronto, earned a Master’s from the New England Conservatory in Boston and a PhD in Jazz Arts from the Manhattan School of Music. His compositions and performances have appeared on his own and others’ albums for over 20 years. Rathbun states that the works on The Speed of Time are “all connected with how the world has unfolded over the past few years” and are “influenced by the strange fluctuations of his «perception of time during that period.»

The Speed of Time offers pieces that are both sophisticated and funky. For example, the title composition has a very grooving piano ostinato that leads to a melodically complex saxophone line; the solos swing while also showing a strong intellectual component. Rathbun has a forceful and urgent tone on tenor sax that is not overblown. Widen the Doorway injects some great sax harmonies to add colour and contains vibrant sax and drum solo work. Rathbun’s soprano sax on Wandering is clear and beautiful. He cites Wayne Shorter as an influence but on Velocity Unknown I also hear the playful lyricism of Steve Lacy. The Speed of Time is an excellent album greatly aided by the subtle and fiery musicianship of Rathbun, Gary Versace (piano) and Tom Rainey (drums).

Ted Parkinson

If I Had
Curtis Novosad; Andrew Renfroe; Luke Sollick
Independent (curtisnovosad.com)

> Curtis Novosad, a drummer and composer born in Winnipeg and currently living in New York City, released his first album in 2019.
In my WholeNote review of this eponymously titled work, I stated its choice of covers such as Gil Scott-Heron’s Home Is Where the Hatred Is and Nina Simone’s Sea Line Woman combined “socially conscious history with assured jazz performances.” Nowosad has now released an EP called If I Had containing covers of four songs by Nick Drake (Road), Pete Seeger (If I Had a Hammer), Jimmy Webb (By the Time I Get to Phoenix) and Stevie Wonder (Heaven Is 10 Zillion Light Years Away). These choices follow his tradition of mixing great classic songs with ones that are socially conscious. It is a pleasure to listen to these interpretations: Andrew Renfew’s guitar work is gorgeous and really shines on Phoenix while Luke Sellick (bass) and Nowosad (drums) offer complex and solid backing. Nowosad throws in seemingly effortful fills while keeping a solid and funky groove.

**Ted Parkinson**

**Magnetic Dreaming**

**Trio**

**ER005 (alexfournier.bandcamp.com)**

- Extended plays can often be too concise, tapering off right as they begin, inviting a listener too late to an event that had long reached its peak. Trio’s Magnetic Dreaming follows you from the beginning, immediately arresting by means of hypnotism; vibraphone suggestions over chil-inducing ambient guitar swells. The music itself is a six-part suite – recorded during the sessions of last year’s longer Six-Ish Plateaus – and rather than sounding like an accessory, it absolutely flourishes on its own terms. Its form is said to be influenced by “dream logic,” which is almost a perfect description of these woozy yet gentle transitions between states of consciousness. Each passage blends into the next with incredible patience, leaving one to float between its many dimensions, completely oblivious to where they just arrived from.

Alex Fournier’s steady bass intro on the climactic What Cycle or Identity, In Lie Group or Waking sounds like it’s emanating from the core of the Earth, creating a strong sense of unease that clutches the gut. As Stefan Hegerat’s drum groove borders increasingly on live turntablism, Bea Labikova and Naomi Carroll-Butler’s dual saxophone-clarinet attack remains steadfast; apocalyptic lyptics piercing through a warm film noir fog. Tom Fleming (guitar) and Michael Davidson (vibraphone) lay an intoxicating foundation on the EP’s intro that, when scrubbing through each track, flows into each subsequent second supernaturally, with every drone feeling like a return flight to the mothership.

**Yoshi Maclear Wall**

**The Magnificent**

**Brad Turner Quintet**

**Cellar Music CM01523 (cellarlive.com)**

- All nine of the compositions here were penned by Brad Turner, with Cory Weeds and Turner producing. The title is an homage to a late great trumpeter, hardocking back to the 1956 Blue Note release, The Magnificent Thad Jones. For this project, Weeds encouraged Turner to select a “band of his dreams” which, in addition to Turner on piano and trumpet, includes Weeds on tenor saxophone, Peter Bernstein on guitar, Neil Swainson on bass and Quincy Davis on drums.

First up is the melodic You’re OK, replete with a stunner of a trumpet solo from Turner. His tone, intonation, ideas, expressiveness and sheer technical skill are mesmerizing. The equally gifted Bernstein seems to sing through his guitar, using all of the possible emotional colours. Next is Barney’s Castle – an up-tempo, bop burner, in which the ensemble moves as a one-celled organism, gliding through dynamic, unison horn lines. Weed’s exquisite sound and rhythmic sensibility create a heady mix and Davis masterfully drives the ensemble down the pike, while Swainson establishes the tempo in his unique, potent way.

Another standout is the languid and sultry Virtue Signals. Turner has said that this track is “simply a complete chromatic scale (though ornamented and disguised) in descent” – and yet the lilte beauty of the composition is palpable. Bernstein shines here, as does Turner on piano. The title track does not disappoint, and the cohesion of the musicians’ ideas and approach are nothing short of luminous. A true highlight is the almost unbearably gorgeous Theme for Jocie – a ballad written for Turner’s partner and fellow trumpeter Jocelyn Waugh, where Turner wraps his warm, evocative, trumpet sound around every note.

**Lesley Mitchell-Clarke**

**The Drip**

**Rubim de Toledo**

**Independent (rubim.com)**

- If there exists one word to try and encapsulate the sheer abundance of groove in The Drip, it would be “punish” (“pop” would be a close second). In any case, this descriptor would need to be of the onomatopoeic variety, because this album is a verb, not a noun. Nine tracks of back-to-back-to-back momentum and drive, every break in the sonic stream implies re-entry. Syncopated bliss, tracks like Rhythm Chante deploy Karinthal’s repeated phrases and Audrey Ochoa’s staccato trombone blasts to paint the proverbial town electric. One cannot help but feel that the totality of this experience is tailor-made to be taken beyond the studio, into a live space befitting its live energy.

Switching between upright and electric bass, Rubim de Toledo is a curator of low end, opting with upright when more percussive attack is desired, and amping up when emphatically dubbing horn lines. Across this galaxy of funk, it is de Toledo that remains integral to the sound of the ensemble. As much as there are standout tracks throughout, the elephant in the room here is certainly The Long Way (Up). Contrasting beautifully against the gauntlet of upbeat punchiness that proceeds it, this song has a very minimalist intro courtesy of guitarist Felix Tellez’s sustained arpeggios and Jamie Cooper’s ride cymbal alchemy. Just as that initial build to a climax begins to feel inevitable, Rubim de Toledo yanks on the reins and brings us home.

**Yoshi Maclear Wall**

**Canons**

**Lina Allemano**

**Lumo Records LM 2023-15 (linaallemano.bandcamp.com)**

- Trumpeter/composer Lina Allemano’s interest in the canon form, in which parts are repeated exactly within a composition, surfaced on her recent quartet CD, Pipe Dream, but here the form appears in various permutations, both in composed works with elements of improvisation and a series of improvisations by BLOOP. Allemano’s duo with Mike Smith contributing live processing and effects. While some playfulness is evident, Allemano’s expressive focus provides reflective balance.

The opening Trumpet Canon introduces a pattern of expanding complexity, one over-dubbed trumpet following another until the initiating horn is sputtering a series of barely articulated sounds, the other parts following. There’s more playful creativity with German trombonist Matthias Müller as he and Allemano match wits on the duet of Canon of Sorts, while Bobby’s Canon, with cellist Peggy Lee and clarinetist Brodie West, is elegant chamber music. Butterscoves and Twinkle Tones, with frequent collaborator bassist Rob Clutton, synthesist Ryan Driver and guitarist Tim Postgate emphasize collective creativity.

The alternating improvised tracks by BLOOP are highlights, with Allemano’s spontaneous melodies “canonized” and altered
in Mike Smith’s electronic repetitions and distortions, whether he’s slowing down the trumpeter’s phrases on Shadow or distorting and muffling her phrases within seconds of Wilds’ outset. On Moons, Smith turns Allemano’s shifting phrases and tonal explorations into a compound canon, while the concluding Ponds is also the richest track, with the keening lyricism of her trumpet lines multiplying in a warm universe.

\[\text{Stuart Broomer}\]

**SOG**
Lina Allemano; Uwe Oberg; Matthias Bauer; Rudi Fischerlehner
Creatives Sources CD 777 CD (creativesourcesrec.com)

Having fully integrated herself into the burgeoning Berlin free improv scene, Toronto trumpeter Lina Allemano helps make SOG a memorable instance of stretching instruments toward their limits without losing cadenced evolution. Associates are Germans, bassist Matthias Bauer and pianist Uwe Oberg and Austrian percussionist Rudi Fischerlehner.

Consisting of three extended tracks and a brief encore, the music touches on delicacy as well as dissonance. The former quality is expressed when focused trumpet grace notes brush up against chiming piano lines promoting quiet interludes among the generally invigorating sounds. A colourist, Fischerlehner’s wooden clave slaps, bell shakes and idiphone rattles pace the expositional stretches, while Bauer’s sluicing bass line provides a proper pulse. That leaves space for Oberg and Allemano, who take full advantage.

Expressive at varied tempos, the pianist sweeps from singular clips to extended glissandi with ping-pomping emphasis maintaining linear flow. Allemano meets Oberg and Fischerlehner’s rhythmic animation on Il Vortice with squeaky slides and bitten off single notes. The extended El Remolino finds her intermittently exposing the melody above drum punches and keyboard rumbles as she slides through a practice book of technical development including hand-mutted squalls, clenched teeth growls and half-valve spits. Like Oberg though she makes the exposition less about technique and more about emotional transference.

There’s no indication of what SOG translates to in any language. Maybe it stands for Session Obviously Good – but that slogan might itself be too limiting.

\[\text{Ken Waxman}\]

**Nighttime Creatures**
Angelica Sanchez Nonet
Pyroclastic Records PR30 (pyroclasticrecords.com)

Expatriate Canadian Kris Davis is developing her Pyroclastic record label into a stellar chronicle of a contemporary jazz idiom that’s often as distinguished by compositional content as improvisatory flair. The latest enlistee is Angelica Sanchez, a fellow pianist-composer whose intensely lyrical small-group work has been documented over the past two decades. Here Sanchez makes a dramatic leap as a composer, writing for a nine-member ensemble, while drawing inspiration from a nocturnal forest far from her New York City home.

Rather than typical nocturnes, Sanchez’s compositions abound with contrast, from subtle dissonances to complex rhythmic overlays. There is a jagged spikiness to C.B. the Time-Traveller and waves of dissonant polyphony on Land Here, all of it somehow framed in discovery and surprise. Ring Leader moves from a rhythmically even guitar line with sudden brass punctuations to an improvised duet of multiphonic tenor saxophone and drums.

While her fleetly inventive, sometimes multi-directional piano can come to the fore, Sanchez also surrounds herself with musicians whose individual voices go by ensemble skills, including saxophonists Michael Attias and Chris Speed. Two musicians bring particularly unusual instrument ensembles to both ensemble and solo roles, Ben Goldberg his contra alto clarinet and Thomas Heberger his quarter tone trumpet.

Occasionally referencing Carla Bley, Sanchez also includes works by two other composers, performing Duke Ellington’s Lady of the Lavender Mist and Chilean composer Armando Carvajal’s Tristeza, a mysterious wandering through the ensemble’s individual voice before an ultimate collective theme statement.

\[\text{Stuart Broomer}\]

**Continuing**
Tyshawn Sorey Trio
Pi Recordings 98 (pirecordings.com)

In 2022 drummer/composer Tyshawn Sorey, largely associated with extended composition and cutting-edge free jazz, added another dimension to his wide-ranging practice, creating a traditional jazz trio with pianist Aaron Diehl and bassist Matt Brewer to explore the broad repertoire of mainstream modern jazz. It began with Mesmerism and continues here.

The trio emphasizes understated virtuosity, developing themes with an almost orchestral feel, reminiscent of classic piano trios led by Duke Ellington, Ahmad Jamal and Red Garland in ways that expand both form and interaction. The possibilities for depth are enhanced by slower tempos and extended lengths (from 10:25” to 15:43”). The trio isn’t simply playing these pieces; they inhabit them.

Wayne Shorter’s Reincarnation Blues is magisterially slow, the tempo emphasizing the precise sonority of each instrument, represented almost equally in the mix. Diehl’s punctuating chords and phrases delivered with trumpet-like brightness. By the conclusion, the listener is swimming in Diehl’s dense arpeggios and clusters while Sorey and Brewer maintain a rock-solid architecture. The program only gets richer with Ahmad Jamal’s Seleritus, at once elegant and spare, initially highlighting Brewer’s bass.

Matt Dennis’ Angel Eyes resides in a tradition of exalted ballads, while in What Direction Are You Headed? by the late pianist Harold Mabern, a teacher of Sorey to whom this CD is dedicated, demonstrates the persistent relevance of classic soul jazz, as codified by Horace Silver and Bobby Timmons.

Like its predecessor, Continuing is music to be savoured.

\[\text{Stuart Broomer}\]

**Walking Through Fire**
Indigenous Collaborations with Sultans of String
Independent MCK2301 (sultansofstring.com)

This powerful project is the result of inspired musical and poetic collaborations between an array of gifted Indigenous artists from a wide variety of musics and tribal identities, and the highly regarded, multiple award-winning Sultans of String, which includes producer Chris McKhool on violin and viola, producer Kevin Laliberte on nylon-, steel-string and electric guitars, Drew Birston on electric and acoustic bass and Rosendo “Chandy” Leon Jr. on drums and percussion.

These diverse artists – Indigenous and non-Indigenous have joined together in the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94 Calls to Action and Final Report, which sparked the co-creation of Walking Through Fire – the title of both the CD and live touring performances, which began on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation this year.
There are 14 original tracks here, each inspiring, thought-provoking and brilliantly produced. Works of particular beauty include *A Beautiful Darkness* featuring Ojibwe vocalist Marc Márileinen, backed by a thrilling wall of sound, punctuated by McKhool’s haunting violin lines; Kó, with luminous and resonant vocals by Dene artists Leela Gilday and Leanne Taneton and The Rez – a deeply moving ballad featuring both rock and fiddling motifs alongside a stirring, soulful vocal from young, contemporary Ojibwe performer Crystal Shawanda.

Also unforgettable is the soul-searing *Take Off the Crown*, where the incomparable horror of the murdered children is explored in a place beyond tears, introduced by “Digging Roots” member Raven Kanatakta (Anishinaabe Algonquin/Ojibwe). Our *Mother The Earth* is also a gem, featuring masterful work from the Sultans of String as well as the vocal gravitas of the eminent Dr. Duke Redbird (Chippewa/Anishinaabe). This project is a rare gift from all of the artists involved... the gift of creativity, collaboration and hope for our future.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

**Satyam**

**Vineet Vyas**

**Independent (vineetvyas.com)**

Toronto-based tabla virtuoso Vineet Vyas’ musical path encompasses both the Canadian East Coast and one of the preeminent music traditions of India. Born into a family of Hindustani classical musicians in Nova Scotia, he began lessons on the tabla early.

Already showing promise, in 1987 his studies modulated to the next level. That year he began instruction in the traditional guru-shishya parampara manner with tabla master Pandit Kishan Maharaj in Varanasi, India. Vyas credits that intense training and sadhana (dedication) to his guru for enabling him to establish himself as a tabla musician on the international stage.

Vyas’ seven-track album *Satyam*, his third solo outing, was nominated for Global Recording of the Year at the 2023 (Canadian) East Coast Music Awards. *Satyam* – a Sanskrit concept referring to examining the truth – musically evokes the Hindu myth of princess Savitri, her husband prince Satyavan and their struggle with Yama, the god of death. Spoiler alert: after extensive musical conflict, the last track resolves in a peaceful coda.

While the record features Vyas’ tabla mastery throughout, *Satyam* also leans heavily on seven skilled musicians who provide melodies based on Hindustani ragas. They contextualize, support and sometimes also defy the often sonically dense and mathematically intense drumming. In addition to the gripping Savitri narrative, Ajay Prasanna ( bansuri), Rajib Karmakar ( sitar), Pankaj Mishra ( sarangi), Justin Gray (electric bass) and Bageshree Vaze (vocals) make substantial contributions to Satyam’s success as a listen-through album.

Andrew Timar

**Wanderlust**

**Lara Deutsch; Adam Cichillitti**

**Leaf Music LM269 (leaf-music.ca)**

During the mid-2000s I went to New York to research an article about some of the unusual characters that dot the historical jazz landscape. After a considerable crosstown public bus journey one day, I found myself sitting across from Bernard Stollman, whose career and life is too fantastic and wide-ranging to discuss here. Briefly, however, I was speaking to Stollman about that incredibly fertile 18-month period from 1963 to 1965, when he oversaw and released 45 largely freely improvised albums on his label ESP-DISK. Although the label would become best known for its association with Albert Ayler and Sunny Murray, ESP-DISK’s first release was *Ni Kantu En Esperanto* (Let’s Sing in Esperanto), a vocal album capturing a collection of folk songs in that “universal language” created by L.L. Zamenhof in 1887.

What, you may ask, does any of this have to do with *Wanderlust*, the terrific Leaf Music collection of folk pieces by flutist Lara Deutsch and guitarist Adam Cichillitti? I suppose it is that while enjoyably listening to this 2023 recording – which threads together eight disparate pieces representing a multiplicity of musical regions and cultures by way of gorgeous playing, telepathic musical interaction and two expertly cultivated instrumental sounds – I was again reminded that Zamenhof’s quest for a “universal language” had, in fact, already been realized. It’s called music. This aptly named travelogue recording, treats the music of Argentina, Romania, Japan and elsewhere with the equity of aplomb and care it deserves, foregrounding beauty while ensuring that nothing is lost in translation.

Andrew Scott

My Heart Speaks

Ivan Lins

Resonance Records
(resonancerecords.org/product/ivan-lins-my-heart-speaks-cd)

► All of the compositions here were written by the esteemed Ivan Lins (who has penned more than 600 tunes in his illustrious 50-year career), and all arrangements are by Kuno Schmid. Lins’ dynamic core ensemble includes Josh Nelson on piano, Leo Amuedo on guitar, Carlitos Del Puerto on bass and Mauricio Zottarelli on drums and percussion, as well as the gorgeous inclusion of the Republic of Georgia’s Tbilisi Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Vakhtang Kakhidze. The recording was produced by Schmid and George Klabin and the stunning CD package itself features compelling liner notes from the eminent author and arts journalist, James Gavin.

The first selection is the sumptuous *Renata Maria*, which features Lins’ recognizable tenor in a lovely melodic foray, enhanced by lush symphonic string lines, a superb guitar solo by Amuedo and Lins’ palpable sense of joy. Next up is the title track, replete with a luminous Dianne Reeves sailing directly into the listener’s heart, effortlessly wielding her languid and sultry-four octave range. *Congada Blues* features the core ensemble, and surrounds us with a deep, percussion-enhanced tribal resonance, punctuated by a fine bass solo from Del Puerto.

Other beauties here include the up-tempo, jazzy cooker *Easy Going*, the melancholy waltz, *Corpos (Bodies)* and *Missing Miles*, which features perhaps the most lush and thrilling symphonic elements on the project, as well as a superb wordless vocal from Lins and a deeply moving, muted solo from trumpeter extraordinare, Randy Brecker. The final track, *Nada Sem Voce (Nothing Without You)* returns the music to the essential unit of piano and rhythm section – rendering it all the more emotional and directly communicative.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

Poetry is Blood

Keith Garebian

Independent KGCDD2301 (kgarebian@gmail.com)

► Much in the same way that musical improvisation is sometimes referred to as “liquid composition,” and, conversely, composition as “frozen
Something in the Air
Multiple disc sets offer space for retrospection and innovation

KEN WAXMAN

Trying to release more music than fits on a conventional album has been a situation artists have faced since the invention of recorded music. Although advances in technology now offer more space; exposing multiple artists’ ideas and/or exhibiting the scope of a career, call for more than one disc. That’s what these multiple disc sessions offer.

Born in 1942, UK saxophonist Alan Skidmore’s career has encompassed mainstream jazz with big bands and combos; studio work; R&B bands; early fusion; exploratory free music; and contemporary improvisation. Like players such as New York’s Dave Liebman and Toronto’s Pat LaBarbera, John Coltrane’s influence has been Skidmore’s touchstone. A Supreme Love (Confront Core Series Core 33 confrontrecordings.com.bandcamp.com) shows his adaptation of the style in various settings on six CDs and 46 tracks from 1961 to 2019. If there’s one axiom that’s clear from the discs, it’s that Skidmore does his best work when challenged by other strong personalities, rather than being the focus of attention. Despite notable excursions on soprano saxophone, his most assured playing also comes as a tenor saxophonist. While there may be a few too many tunes associated with Coltrane here, Skidmore’s are honest interpretations with flashes of originality. His ballad style on song standards can’t be faulted, but a combination of familiar material played with lugubrious sounding usually Continental big bands weighs down the performances. Two one-offs are particularly instructive. During a 1971 jam with Weather Report – keyboardist Joe Zawinul, percussionists Alphonse Mouzon and Dom Um Romao, soprano saxophonist Wayne Shorter and bassist Miroslav Vitous – his building solos help push the others towards unhypnotened pure jazz. The recording explores both dark and introspective themes as related to the ongoing Armenian genocide. As such, engaged listeners once again bear witness to the power of art to comment upon, contextualize and humanize tragic events that, in our 24-hour news cycle, may wax and wane in our collective imagination, but are nonetheless important to be reminded of and educated about.

Read by the author in his fine voice and accompanied by Tollar on both flute and percussion utilizing a call-and-response trope of effective musical communication, the recording is not an easy listen, given the sobering magnitude of the subject matter. But for those looking to expand their knowledge of this unfolding world event through deeply personal and effective poetry and creative reflection, this recording comes highly recommended.

Andrew Scott

Taking place over three days in Kraków rather than multiple decades, The Small Group Formations (NotTwo MW 1027-2 Nottwo.com) is a slightly misnamed six-CD set celebrating the 50th anniversary of bassist Barry Guy’s London Jazz Composers Orchestra (LJCO). Consisting of 17 musicians from Switzerland, Spain, Germany, Norway, France and the UK, the first four discs showcase the dazzling and intricate styles of individual LJCO members in formations ranging from duos to sextets, while the final

improvisation,” there exists a sympatico relationship to the best poetry and musical collaborations. Great poetry is indeed musical, and the best musical offerings poetic.

Although prior to listening to the thoughtful, and thought-provoking, recording Poetry Is Blood by Keith Garebian (with musical contributions from the great Ernie Tollar), my reference for successful fusions of poetry and jazz was limited to Jack Kerouac’s October in the Railroad Earth or American Haikus, where the late Beat writer’s prose is accompanied by some combination of Steve Allen, Al Cohn, and Zoot Sims. While admittedly genre non-adjacent to my aforementioned Kerouac reference, Garebian’s 2023 release, supported by a Mississauga Arts Council grant, is an equally compelling offering. Presenting 18 poems taken from some 40 contained within Garebian’s 2018 book of the same name, this recording explores both dark and introspective themes as related to the ongoing Armenian genocide. As such, engaged listeners once again bear witness to the power of art to comment upon, contextualize and humanize tragic events that, in our 24-hour news cycle, may wax and wane in our collective imagination, but are nonetheless important to be reminded of and educated about.

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Andrew Scott
discs are full-band performances of Guy’s compositions, Flow I and Flow II and Harmos-Krakuw. Especially on the latter piece, singular reflections such as Swiss percussionist Lucas Niggli’s brace of noise makers couple with linear riffs; German Konrad Bauer’s and Brit Alan Tomlinson’s bouncing flutters and portamento blasts; Spanish pianist Agustí Fernández’s sly comping; and UK tenor saxophonist Simon Picaldi’s linear routes contrasted with Swiss alto saxophonist Jürg Wickihalder’s more delicate options are expressed in solo breaks that are brief but more orchestrally integrated than in the smaller formation. Harmos-Krakuw is arranged with a symphonic flair, linking the leitmotifs of the initial theme statement which appear through to compositional evolution and a restatement at the climax. Plus the additional players mean that the program includes as many passages of polyphonic connective swing as miasmic fragmentation and exuberance. Interludes include heraldic fanfares from the six-member brass section and screaming and sway group section work from the five-person reed section. There’s slightly less intensity on the two Flow variations. But that’s before the entire group is involved in dynamic interpretations including a reed overlay of honks and smears, shuddering brass triplets and slick piano glissandi, the piece begins as a face-off between Guy’s moderated, but rugged double bass thumps and slaps and stunning string bending from violinist Phil Wachsmann involving whiny spicicato runs, pizzicato plucks and picking and a brief hoedown pivot. Overall, the set provides a complete LJCO sound picture in micro and macro forms.

Similar instrumental virtuosity, but expressed in a minimalist fashion, is what distinguishes next generation improvisers from those of the LJCO as the three-CD set Live at Plus-Etage Volume 1 (New Wave of Jazz mwoj 0060 newwavofjazz.bandcamp.com/album/live-at-plusetage-volume-1) demonstrates. The duos of trumpeter/flugelhornist Charlotte Keefe and drummer Andrew Lisle from the UK; double bassists Martina Verhoeven from Belgium and Portuguese Gonçalo Almeida; and the trio of Belgian guitarist Dirk Serries, UK violinist Benedict Taylor and German saxophonist Stefan Keune show that collaborating improvisers are as international as always and with one CD for each configuration, all have space to display what they can do. Except for an unaccompanied interlude of cymbal vibrations and drum rumbles during the second and concluding set Lisle mostly limits himself to claves-like resonations, bass drum plops and rim shots accents. That way the figurative spotlight shines on Keeffe’s brass prestidigitation. Emphasizing non-value movement breaths, broken-chord smears, avairy-like puffs, throaty squalls and tremolo brassiness her spiky asides don’t preclude portamento affiliation however. As much as her tongue jujutsu, swerves and swallows exposing usually unexplored inner portions of her horn’s lead pipe for unexpected tone variations each time sections are repeated, passages of near-lyrical melodies and feathery brassiness are also heard. Vaguely related to the William Tell Overture, a riff that gallops through her improvised variations during the first set is sounded again before the concert is completed adding a connective leitmotif. Contrastingly arco and pizzicato techniques characterize the Verhoeven/Almeida single track as they constantly switch roles with buzzing spicicato tones from whistling screams to woody rubs met with repeated strums and低ing stops that sometimes approximate a washtub bass’ single-string thud. More sophisticated than that primitivism, the sequences include interludes of ratcheting slices, string pops, vibration of implements placed among the strings, and heightened pressure that suggests the bow is cutting through the instrument’s wood finish. During the penultimate section bell shakes and ratcheting whirs add novel patterns as stopped strings expose the highest pitches and col legno pops the lowest. Eventually billowing arco strokes are heard from both, which gradually fade from staccato to connective. Interestingly enough, the two improvisations from three players seem most separated. The transformative program includes multiple instances of almost complete silence, while, except near the conclusion where Serries unleashes a string of mandolin-like twangs, the guitarist restricts himself to connective comping.

Emphasis is on how Keune’s often singular irregularly vibrated split tones and narrowed peeps meet Taylor’s equally jagged bow slices, stops and sul tasto pressure. Although the two confront one another head on at intervals, fury among the calm is commonly given over to sequential timbral elaboration. Emphasizing melodic and rhythmic ambiguity, alternating expressions include the saxophonist’s dexterous bubbling trills, tongue stops and vibrated tone scoops, while the violinist’s strained glissandi and squeaky rests are as distinctive as they are numerous. Preceding and expanding on the guitarist’s one showcase, linear advances is deepened in climactic motifs paired string scrubs, reed whorls and finger-style guitar chords are patched together.

Sometimes exemplary creativity must be expressed in larger than usual forms and these multiple sets prove that truism.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Tchaikovsky – Eugene Onegin (Glyndebourne)
Soloists; London Philharmonic Orchestra; Andrew Davis
Opus Arte OA1374D
(naxos.com/Search/KeywordSearchResults/?q=OA1374D)

Glyndebourne, England’s private opera house is close to 90 years old, supported entirely by private donations. It was established in 1934 by John Christie on the principle “Not just the best we can do, but the best that can be done anywhere!” and ever since it has been a great honour for any artist to be invited as a guest of the Christie family. In 1994, they built a state-of-the-art opera theatre, and this archive production is from the very first season in 1994.

Tchaikovsky’s masterpiece, this most beautiful of Russian operas, is based on Pushkin’s epic poem which is a morality tale. Tatjana’s innocent love is rejected by a bored, high-handed Onegin but later he regrets it bitterly. Now desperately in love himself he is rejected by Tatjana who in the meantime has become rich and married into high society. During the opera Onegin because of a foolish, jealous quarrel even kills his best friend in a duel that he regrets all his life. Tatjana’s rejection is the ultimate tragedy for him. Sad story.

The director, the late Sir Graham Vick rightly concentrates on two key scenes, the two rejections and emphasizes the arrival between Onegin and Tatjana. The stage is empty except for two chairs diagonally opposite at either end, as if they don’t even want to listen to each other and hear the pronounced rejection.

Waytech Drabowitz, a mellifluous baritone is an elegant Onegin; his friend Lensky is Martin Thompson, a passionate tenor, whose famous aria before the duel is movingly sung. The crucial Letter Scene is sung passionately by Elena Prokina (Tatjana) and basso profondo Frode Olson as Prince Gremlin, who sings proudly to Onegin about how much he loves Tatjana in another highlight. All these are interspersed with the dances Tchaikovsky is so famous for, the lovely Waltz and the Mazurka in the second act and the gorgeous Polonaise in the finale.

The London Philharmonic in the orchestra pit is conducted sensitively by Toronto’s beloved Sir Andrew Davis.

Janos Gardner

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There’s a fascinating story behind the release of Ofra Harnoy Elgar & Lalo Cello Concertos. When Harnoy joined the international artists roster of RCA Victor Red Seal in 1987, she became the first Canadian classical instrumental soloist since Glenn Gould to gain an exclusive worldwide contract with a major record label. The Elgar was recorded with George Pehlivanian and the London Philharmonic Orchestra in April 1996 at the Abbey Road studios, but was never edited and released, apparently due to the ending of Harnoy’s association with RCA/BMG, now part of Sony Classical.

After repeated enquiries and searches over the years the master tapes were finally located in 2022. Fortunately, notes from the sessions survived, and the original producer, Andrew Keener, was available to advise Harnoy’s husband and manager Mike Herriott, who edited the tapes in their own home studio. Ron Searles of Red Maple Sound in Toronto mastered the final edit, as well as remastering the Lalo Concerto in D Minor, a reissue of the 1995 recording with Antonio de Almeida and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

In an interview just after the recording sessions Harnoy said that the Elgar “is one of those pieces that just wrings me dry; I always end up crying.” It’s a truly beautiful performance, emotionally searching and full of warmth. There is also a direct link to Jacqueline du Pré, with whom the concerto is inextricably associated, through mutual teacher William Pleeth as well as Harnoy’s participation in a du Pré masterclass.

Lalo’s Concerto in D Minor was recorded at the Poole Arts Centre in Dorset in May of the previous year. It’s a fine addition to a significant release.

Terry Robbins
‘TIS THE SEASON

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