DEC/JAN
COMBINED ISSUE!

BEHIND THE SCENES
And the trombone shall sound?
The orchestra librarian’s nightmare

NEW MUSIC
The art of falling
Laurie Anderson at 21C

IN CONVERSATION
Scarlatti and beyond
Pianist Lucas Debargue

REARVIEW MIRROR
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Photographer Jag Gundu has been working with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra for a number of years and says that things definitely have become easier over time as they get to know him, as trust gets built and his presence becomes part of the routine. During concerts he has to be very low-key and inconspicuous, keeping to the perimeter, so the options are more limited. But in rehearsal photos, like this one, it’s easy to get in very close without disrupting things. “Shooting while they are playing, whether in performance or rehearsal, is great because that way it’s all more natural. There’s a flow that really comes through.”
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Very few topics stir the emotions of copy editors and proofreaders quite as much as the place and placement of the comma in written English. At The WholeNote we don’t quite come to blows about it, but only because we’re either too busy wrestling the next magazine into the dipping tank or, after the fact, too damned tired to fight. The formula: the number of correct opinions on whether or not to use any clearly optional comma is equal to the number of copy editors and proofreaders who examine the instance, plus one: the “plus one” being that the editor-in-chief, moi, is free to change copy editors and proofreaders who examine the instance, plus one: or not to use any clearly optional comma is equal to the number of tired to fight. The formula: the number of correct opinions on whether next magazine into the dipping tank or, after the fact, too damned foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds Frosty the Snowman the sound of a “Hallelujah” chorus, or in the service of the story being told. Or like the difference between where little heterogeneous knots of singers deploy all over the stage grouped by voice type, rank and file, and the sound of an opera chorus the difference between the sound of a choir where the singers are in terms of when to use a baton or set it aside, when to hold the voice of the writer, including when and where they pause, or not, either to catch breath or to caress some particular phrase. It’s analogous, perhaps, to the choices a conductor must make in terms of when to use a baton or set it aside, when to hold the orchestra tightly by the hand in order to help it across a busy street, or when letting it run free is the greater gift. Or perhaps it’s like the difference between the sound of a choir where the singers are grouped by voice type, rank and file, and the sound of an opera chorus where little heterogeneous knots of singers deploy all over the stage in the service of the story being told. Or like the difference between the sound of a “Hallelujah” chorus, or Frosty the Snowman for that matter, emanating from a sing-along audience, compared to the same things being sung by the choir on the stage.

For me it’s all about voices: about the way our writers make room wherever possible for the words of the people they are writing about; and about the extent to which their own individual voices shine through in what they write: whether, like me, they are vicarious observers of the scene or, as many are, passionate practitioners of the things they write about. Nothing gives me greater pleasure at moments like this, giving the pages about to go to press one final read, than hearing in my mind their individual voices, blending into a great collective musical murmuring from the heart, rising from these pages.

Finally, here’s jazz columnist Steve Wallace on the act of giving inherent to jazz: The exchange is circular, as there is an unspoken pact between jazz players and their audience which goes something like this: give us your attention, your ears, and we musicians will give you our very best – or at least try to – and make some music, out of thin air.

To all our contributors who month in and month out throw your voices into the thin air, and to all our readers who give us your ears, thank you for your gifts.
For many North American orchestras, playing in the pit for ballet performances of Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker is a common holiday tradition. This was my experience, first as a clarinetist and then as an orchestra librarian. My first encounter with Messiah as a professional, however, was during my interview for the librarian position of the Phoenix Symphony when I was asked, “What edition do you like for the Messiah?” It is an extraordinarily complex question – much more so than I would have known at the time. I managed to offer up something I’d learned from a couple of sing-along Messiahs I had attended – the organizer cautioning the audience/performers about the different numbering systems in various publications. But over the succeeding 30 years I have learned that there is much more to it than that, as I hope to share with you in this article.

The complexity begins with the fact that George Frideric Handel was a German who spent the last 49 years of his life in London and achieved his greatest successes there. He composed Messiah – in English – in 1742 and, over the next several years, conducted it 13 times. As might be expected, these performances featured varying casts of vocal soloists, so during those years Handel rewrote several of the solo pieces to better suit these different voices. With its extraordinary popularity (and copyright protection still in its infancy) came many publications of the music, each with its own system of organizing and numbering the content. Moreover, because of its timeless story and memorable tunes, Messiah became the object of updates by several composers (including Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart) who made new orchestrations to capture an expressive sonority more in keeping with their time. The TSO’s own Sir Andrew Davis is the most recent example of this.

Let’s pause right here to consider the things that could go wrong at a first rehearsal. The conductor might ask for “No. 44,” at which the chorus (reading from the Watkins Shaw edition) would sing, “Hallelujah!” while the alto and tenor soloists (reading from the Bärenreiter edition of the Handel version) would launch into “O Death, Where is Thy Sting?” and the orchestra (reading from Bärenreiter parts of the Mozart version) would chime in, “We don’t have a number 44!” Even worse, the additional flutes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trombones, tuba and percussion (variously required for versions by Mozart, Prout, Beecham or Davis) might not even show up! There are, in fact, so many performance variables that it really is necessary for each conductor to have a set of parts marked to his or her specifications.

I got that first library job in Phoenix, and that fall was presented with a score of Messiah into which the conductor had entered thousands of performance indications, which I was obliged to transfer into the parts (first ensuring, of course, that the soloists, chorus and orchestra would all be performing from that same edition). It took a couple weeks of constant work, but I vividly
Long before there was a Toronto Symphony, choral music was the dominant force in this city’s musical life. The first performance of Handel’s Messiah in Toronto took place in February 1873 and the founding of the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir predates that of the Toronto Symphony by some 28 years. In his history of the Toronto Symphony, Begins with the Oboe, Richard Warren suggests that it was the desire for a better orchestra to accompany oratorio performances that was partly responsible for the formation of a regular orchestra. The TSO and TMC collaborated to perform Messiah first in 1936, again in 1948 and have done so nearly every Christmas season since.

remember the conductor’s delight when he came to the library, opened the second violin part to a particular page and found his performance instructions copied there.

Messiah at the TSO

When I arrived for my first day at the Toronto Symphony in January 1992, I was greeted by a menacingly sizable pile of eraser bits on a corner of my new workstation—the remains of the TSO’s most recent performance of Messiah. At the same time, I learned that we would be performing it every year. And only a few weeks later, while sorting through old files, I came across a newspaper article about one of my predecessors, John Van Vuigt, Librarian for the Toronto Symphony from 1923 to 1967. The title, in large bold letters was, “Toronto Symphony Librarian Has Nightmares.” It made for a somewhat ominous beginning.

I should say, however, that my experiences with Messiah at the TSO have not always been difficult. On several occasions, for instance, Elmer Iseler, director of the TMC, led our performances using a set of parts that had been marked and remained unchanged for many years. “Unchanged,” I should say, except for an accumulation of cartoons drawn in the first oboe part by our former principal oboe, Perry Bauman.

A couple of Perry Bauman oboe score cartoons (from The Trumpet Shall Sound and For Unto Us a Child Is Born). You’ll have to use your imagination for He Was Cut Off.—GC

Tuesday December 17 at 8 pm

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Tuesday January 9 at 8 pm

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Mozart’s Messiah
This year is less routine. The TSO has engaged Alexander Shelley, music director of the National Arts Centre Orchestra, to conduct Mozart’s orchestration of Messiah. This eliminates a wide range of issues, but by no means all. Mozart’s Messiah is originally sung in German. Shelley wants English, but his preferred edition (Bärenreiter) does not produce a score with English text. For the chorus, this is no problem, since the choruses retain the same music and bar count as Handel’s original. TMC members can read from their familiar parts with a list that converts the Bärenreiter numbers to Watkins Shaw. Parts for the vocal soloists are, however, more complicated. Mozart chose some of Handel’s standard voice assignments, but also some of his optional ones. Most of these can be taken from the original Handel vocal score and its Appendix. So far, so good – until you get to an alto aria reassigned to the bass (the clef doesn’t work) or “The Trumpet Shall Sound” in which measures are deftly omitted, and the whole is rescored with horns taking prominence. In these cases, it was necessary to replace the German text with English in the Mozart vocal score. Sometimes matching the syllables is quite a challenge.

The TSO’s principal trombone, Gord Wolfe, had no idea what he was getting into when he first encountered the Mozart Messiah – in more ways than one.

In keeping with the orchestras of his time, Mozart augmented Handel’s instrumentation by two flutes, two clarinets, one bassoon, two horns, and three trombones, so players who might usually have enjoyed an extra holiday week are obliged to work. Trombones appear in only three short movements of the full score, however it was the performance practice of Mozart’s time that the three trombones would reinforce the alto, tenor and bass voices in all the choruses. Only a remark in the critical commentary, printed in a separate volume of the Bärenreiter edition, points to this. Bärenreiter doesn’t even print complete trombone parts. Quite ironically, the “trombone” does appear in the German title of “The Trumpet Shall Sound,” [Sie schallt, die Posaun’]. (In the German tradition, the trombone is the instrument of the last judgment, and Mozart would again use it as such in his Requiem.)

A Match Made by Mozart
Messiah is, as Elmer Iseler was fond of saying, a “big sing” for the chorus and nobody knew that better than Gord at the end of the first rehearsal. As he looked skyward in exhaustion, his eyes wandered over to the choir loft where Stephanie Fung, an alto in the TMC who was also singing her first Mozart Messiah, happened to be looking back.

“Oh, she’s cute,” Gord thought to himself. He looked for her on the subway, but she was living in Markham at the time and had driven. By some electronic holiday miracle, they booked a coffee before the final concert – and then agreed to a drink afterward. That was 13 years ago – the last time the TSO performed the Mozart Messiah. Steph and Gord got married in 2009 so in performing together again in these concerts they are celebrating the anniversary of their meeting.

On the topic of “Orchestra Librarian Nightmares,” next month the TSO will be giving four performances of Mozart’s Requiem – a work left unfinished at Mozart’s death and which exists in completed versions by Süssmayr, Robbins Landon, Beyer, Maunder, Levin, and Druce. If you want to see and hear how it goes – the Süssmayr version, that is – come to Roy Thomson Hall on January 15, 16, 17 or 18, 2020: tso.ca/concerts.

Gary Corrin is principal librarian of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, would-be scholar and eternal romantic. He met his wife, Ingrid Martin, a soprano with the Canadian Opera Company Chorus, at “Bravissimo!” the annual New Year’s Eve opera gala at RTH – but that’s another story.

God is in the Trombone
The trombone is said to have been invented in the middle of the 15th century, but until the 18th century was called a “saqueboute” (in French) or a “sackbut” (in English). Originally it was closely associated with Christian church music and for this reason was often used to symbolize God or supernatural phenomena when it began to be used for other kinds of music during the 18th century. Mozart is said to have picked up on this from Gluck and Salieri. In the impressive solo at the end of Mozart’s Requiem, the trombone announces the Last Judgment. And when Don Giovanni is sent to hell for his life of debauchery, the trombone is used to portray a supernatural force that reaches beyond human intellect. In Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony the trombone represents the powerlessness of man in the face of nature during the fourth movement which depicts a thunderstorm, and in the fifth movement the trombone voices mankind’s gratitude toward God.
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THE ART OF FALLING
Laurie Anderson at 21C

As to whether or not Anderson considers The Art of Falling a new work is something she herself questions: “I don’t know to what extent it will be a brand-new work or to what extent it will be a collection of things. So much of what I do looks back and forward at the same time, and so it will probably be something like that. And then again it might go another direction too.” However, one aspect of this performance she is unquestionably excited about is the opportunity to work with cellist Rubin Kodheli. “He’s just an amazing musician and it’s a huge amount of fun to improvise with him. I’m leaving a lot of accordion-like room in this piece for us to do things that go off the track a little bit and take their own time. I never used to have the nerve to do that, so I’m really happy to make things a little bit more luxurious in that way.”

Even the question of using projected images that are often part of her performances is unresolved. She is preparing some to use, but they might get edited out. “Sometimes I think: how about people just listen to this one. So we’ll see.” Musically, she’ll be using her familiar electronic setup that includes iPads, laptops, foot pedals and microphones, as well her electric string instrument which, although considered a violin in the world of its maker Ned Steinburger, is more like a viola with its low C string “which I like very much because it gives you access to a couple octaves down when used with the electronics. You can really get into double bass land with this instrument. It’s just a thrill to play down there.”

Later on in our conversation, she offers a few glimpses into what elements may appear in the Toronto performance of The Art of Falling. In September of 2019, she along with musicians Tenzin Choegyal, Jesse Paris Smith, Rubin Kodheli and Shahzad Ismaily released an album titled Songs from the Bardo. This recording grew out of an improvisational performance at the Rubin Museum of Art in 2014, and offers an 80-minute meditation on mortality, through word and sound, designed to help people face the challenges of being alive at this time. The chanted and spoken texts are a translation of the Tibetan Book of the Dead, also called Liberation Through Hearing, and are designed to guide one through the experiences the consciousness has after death while in the bardo, the interval between death and the next rebirth. An adapted version from this album arranged for two instruments (violin and cello) along with electronics may appear in The Art of Falling, she told me.

As well, Anderson’s Toronto performance may include a duet version of her orchestral piece, Amelia, a piece she created using texts from the legendary Amelia Earhart’s pilot logs and the telegrams Earhart sent to her husband. These excerpts appear alongside Anderson’s imaginings of Earhart’s experiences while flying solo, with the constant sound of the plane’s engine in her ears. Earhart was the first woman to fly nonstop and alone across the Atlantic in 1932, but disappeared without a trace during her voyage around the world five years later. Recently, on November 13, an updated version of this piece was performed by the Brno Philharmonic in the Czech Republic with duets by Anderson and Kodheli.
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In addition to the Koerner Hall performance, her 2016 film Heart of a Dog will be screened at the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on January 19, followed by a Q&A with Anderson present. This work is a contemplation on the themes of death and loss, and includes excerpts from the Tibetan Book of the Dead. This time however, her reflections are delivered through the perspective of her beloved rat terrier, Lolabelle. And why her dog? “Everyone thinks they have a special dog, and everyone does because dogs are so empathetic. I felt that way about my dog and wanted to try and see if I could learn to talk to her in some way. That was the motivation of all the adventures we had together, and that’s what the film is about.” One delightful scene occurs when Lolabelle takes up keyboard playing alongside Anderson’s music; while in an animated sequence that opens the film, Anderson’s “dream self” attempts to re-birth Lolabelle. She covers a great deal of ground in the film, with references to JFK, subversive software, millennialism, the emotional tone of NYC after 9/11, and to stories about individuals she has known who have passed over, including her late husband Lou Reed (who died in 2013, the same year as Lolabelle), and to whom the film is dedicated.

To the Moon, Laurie Anderson’s recent virtual reality installation, will be showing at the Royal Ontario Museum from January 11 to 25. She originally created the work in collaboration with Taiwanese artist Hsin-Chien Huang, with whom she has worked since 1995, for the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Copenhagen for an exhibit to mark the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing. “They wanted different artists to create something about the moon and said to us ‘Make your own moon. We don’t need a scientific moon. Make a version of it yourself.’ That took the pressure off having to represent anything that was real, so it was fun to make something like that.” The result is a 15-minute headset journey towards the moon, with whispered commentary from Anderson, in part on the state of our planet and our worsening impact on it. Passing through fields of space debris, the astronaut avatar morphes; the journey becomes progressively more and more of an “out of body” experience, fuelled by a mix of fear, anger, exhilaration and whimsy, to a moon that is at one and the same time a dystopic dumping ground for plastics and nuclear waste, and the stuff that dreams, and nightmares, are made of. “The reason I really love the stars,” Anderson says at one point, “is because we cannot hurt them.”

21C Festival-goers will also have an opportunity earlier in the day on January 18 to hear Anderson’s 2017 string quartet Shutter Island, commissioned by the Kronos Quartet as part of their Fifty for the Future: The Kronos Learning Repertoire initiative. As part of the 2016 edition of 21C, Kronos premiered another work from this project, Sivuntittinni (The future children) by Tanya Tagaq, and included Laurie Anderson’s Flow on this program. Anderson’s collaboration with the quartet began shortly after the release of her 2010 Homeland album that led ultimately to her string quartet, Landfall. Their collaboration entailed improvisations that Anderson initially recorded and subsequently refined to use in the composition of Landfall. It was this style of playing that Anderson utilized in Shutter Island. “I was able to really appreciate the nuance they would put into things. For example, when playing harmonics, they would pay such strict and beautiful attention to that, it was easier to say ‘Play harmonics for three bars’ and trust they will make something special.” During the festival, this work will be performed by musicians from the Glenn Gould School in a concert that will include pieces by Christos Hatzis, Kaija Saariaho and a world premiere by Ryan Davis.

My conversation with Anderson ended with her talking about an event she had just participated in the previous day – a free talk titled The Size of the Con commissioned by the Brooklyn Public Library. Audience members were given a copy of the talk in the form of a chapbook which they used for small group discussions afterwards, a format Anderson prefers over such activities as the panel discussions or Q&A’s that happen after a concert performance. One theme of that talk, she explained, was about how stories influence our lives. “Governments are like storytelling machines – you figure out which story you like the best, or which is the most true, and then you vote for that storyteller. The talk was also about stories that are very difficult to be told; the main one that is haunting everybody is, of course, climate change. That is a story that people are terrified to try to tell. It’s a story that has so much fear and awe in it – the possibility of human extinction.”

Anderson, as storyteller, has never flinched or turned away from addressing the most pressing concerns of our times, and her influence as an artist cuts across genres, freely using and combining elements from diverse art forms. In looking for how her work may have influenced the local musical community over the years, I found myself going beyond those boundaries to find some answers. A teacher of performance art at OCAD, Johanna Householder, mentioned to me that in the 1990s she inspired her students by introducing them to one of Anderson’s early pieces where Anderson played the violin while wearing skates frozen in a block of ice. She also cited Anderson’s pioneering CD-ROM pieces as being influential to students studying media-based art practices. Rob Bowman, a professor in popular music studies at York University, talked about Anderson’s ground-breaking work with interactive technologies. In my view, the gift of Laurie Anderson’s artistic practice is the way she has combined, and continues to explore, diverse and often complex elements to create a simple and direct commentary on the multifaceted questions of life. When one looks around at the plethora of current artistic expression, one finds traces everywhere of how her quest to bring meaningful insight on contemporary living has been intuitively absorbed into 21st-century artistic language and practices.
21C FESTIVAL PREMIERES

This year’s 21C Music Festival will include eight concerts over three weekends, from Saturday, January 11, to Saturday, January 25, 2020, including the opportunity to hear several premieres of new compositions.

In the Afterhours Concert on January 11, violinist Véronique Mathieu and pianist Stephanie Chua perform the Canadian premiere of Four Seasons by Alice Ping Yee Ho, and the world premiere of a new work by Odawa First Nation composer, Barbara Croall.

January 19 sees the Glenn Gould School New Music Ensemble presenting a concert to honour the late American-Canadian composer Michael Colgrass, a longtime Toronto resident. In addition to performing his 1999 composition Hammer and Bow - A Fantasy for Violin and Marimba, they will also present a world premiere by Bekah Simms titled Bestiary I & II for soprano, ensemble and electronics.

On January 24, guest conductor Zakir Hussain from the National Symphony Orchestra of India leads the Royal Conservatory Orchestra in a world premiere performance of American John Patitucci’s Hypocrisy for orchestra and jazz trio as well as the Canadian premiere of his own tabla concerto, Peshkar.

A commissioned work, Fronteras (Borders) by Panamanian jazz pianist and composer Danilo Pérez, receives its Canadian premiere on January 25 during a concert in which Pérez leads musicians from Palestine, Greece, Jordan, and Panama. And the world premiere of Canadian saxophonist Allison Au’s piece, Migrations, will be performed during the same evening by the Allison Au Quartet and vocalist Laila Biali.

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

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On Sunday evening, December 8 at 8:30, pianist, impresario and all-around creative spark plug, Cheryl Duvall, is doing something at the Tranzac Club she’s never done before: launching her first full-length recording as a piano soloist. It’s not that she hasn’t been in the recording studio numerous times, but this time it’s a special project for her, one in which she’s invested her creativity on many levels. (It’s also been a special project for me.)

The title of the CD, Harbour, is taken from a major new work by Victoria-based composer Anna Höstman, commissioned by Duvall expressly for this project. Duvall told me that when she first encountered Höstman’s music in 2012, “I was immediately drawn to her poetic use of harmony, texture and time, as well as her unexpected melodic turns. I found myself inspired to create pianistic colours that would help evoke the different atmospheres in her music.” Duvall and violinist Ilana Waniuk, had co-founded the Thin Edge New Music Collective in 2011, and they had commissioned Höstman to create a chamber work for their series. Duvall said, “I loved puzzling my way through her fascinating uses of rhythms and counterpoint, which often went from static and sparse to jumbled and tangled within moments. Since then I have performed at least 15 of her works in different contexts, and premiered at least seven or eight. She is very inventive in how she approaches the piano and I feel I am witness to her ever-evolving relationship with the instrument.”

The broader story of Duvall’s incessant commissioning activity lies in her experience with the Thin Edge New Music Collective (TENMC). In its first nine years of operating, TENMC has commissioned 70 new works, a remarkable number for such a small, young organization. Some of these can be heard on a recording I produced in 2017, one which Duvall co-organized and co-supervised, Raging Against the Machine, which features TENMC, alongside the Montreal group, Ensemble Paramirabo. That recording includes music by American composer Steve Reich, Dutch composer Louis Andriessen, Canadians Patrick Giguère, Brian Harman, and, not surprisingly, Anna Höstman. That recording is available on the Red Shift label at redshiftmusicociety.bandcamp.com.

This latest recording, Harbour (for which I was, again, happy to serve as producer) is also available on the Red Shift label, and is a complete collection of the works for solo piano by Höstman. Harbour, the title work, is also the longest composition on the recording, a sprawling, 26-minute work that weaves its way through a varied musicscape of textures, themes, counterpoints and dynamic shadings that leaves the listener filled with a multiplicity of experiences. The scale and complexity of Harbour is thrust starkly into relief by the much simpler, perhaps gentler qualities of the works that surround it. Harbour is available as both a CD and digital download at: redshiftrecords.org.

The very first commissions for TENMC, Duvall freely acknowledges, were born out of necessity, to fill repertoire gaps for the available instrumentation, but they have become a major part of her activities as co-artistic director of TENMC, as well as in her solo endeavours.

“I loved puzzling my way through her fascinating uses of rhythms and counterpoint, which often went from static and sparse to jumbled and tangled within moments.” — Cheryl Duvall

“They were an exciting step,” she says. “Being the very first person to hear a piece of music is a fascinating experience and a huge artistic risk in many ways. You never know what you are going to get and what challenges you’ll face in the process – but this keeps me motivated, the constant element of surprise and the always evolving directions and concepts that different composers are exploring.”

Duvall’s partner in TENMC, Ilana Waniuk tells their story in somewhat more practical terms. “Cheryl and I decided that we wanted not only to create a means of exploring/performing contemporary chamber music on our own terms, but to actively take part in the commissioning and development of new works,” Waniuk says. “Starting an ambitious project with limited funds and minimal prior...
Ilana Waniuk

administered experience is an amazing litmus test for the strength of a collaborator. Cheryl’s passion, tenacity, creative vision and willingness to take artistic risks was apparent from the outset and has carried us through nine seasons and counting. Together, we have tackled scores which have required us to decipher highly complex/individualistic notation, interpret light sculptures, operate on musical instruments wearing hospital scrubs and explore virtual sonic worlds through interactive video game technology … Perhaps even more importantly, as a collaborator, she makes it a conscious priority to ensure that her fellow artists have a safe and welcoming space within which they can create and rehearse. “

Anna Höstman echoes Waniuk’s observations about Duvall’s strengths as a collaborator. “On the one hand, Cheryl has an amazing ability to crystallize fragments of tumbling when they occur in my music, allowing direction and impulse to shift with swift fluidity,” she says. “On the other hand, one sinks into the warm timbre and depth of feeling she achieves in more shadowed, tender passages. Cheryl is a remarkably inclusive performer, programmer and thinker – with energy like a rushing river. She has transformed our Canadian artistic landscape with her devotion to new music creation.”

Innermost Songs

The concluding track on Harbour is Höstman’s 2019 composition, Adagio, originally commissioned by Duvall for another of her initiatives, an upcoming solo piano performance she calls Innermost Songs. “A year and a half ago,” Duvall explains, “I approached seven Canadian composers to write new works for me, while I created a documentary exploring the composer/performer relationship. I chose composers with completely different aesthetics, processes, sound worlds and approaches, in order to give my research diversity and scope. Composers Daniel Brandes, Patrick Giguère, Anna Höstman, Emilie LeBel, James O’Callaghan, Monica Pearce and Kotoka Suzuki are featured in this event. There are two pieces with electronics, one with a harmonica, and another with video, as well as purely acoustic pieces that explore different aspects of pianism, making an eclectic mix of piano music.”

As wide-ranging as these commissions are, they all refer back specifically to Duvall, the artist for whom they’re being written. One example – Monica Pearce describes her work, Silks, as follows: “This work was written for and dedicated to Cheryl Duvall, a pianist who has an avid interest in aerial silks. Duvall choreographed, performed and filmed an aerial silks routine, and for the process of composing, I mapped each movement of the routine to music. The held poses are mapped to a series of chords, which were handpicked from my absolute favourite chords from Romantic/20th-century piano literature (Brahms, Messiaen, Poulenc, Rachmaninoff, Scriabin). Pearce has worked with Duvall on many projects over the years. “I’ve written for her ensemble, Thin Edge; she has played in my operas; and so on – but this was the first time to write something for her as a soloist. Knowing her as a good friend as well as a musical collaborator, I wanted to write something that felt very ‘her.’ She is someone who is always searching and striving towards musical beauty and transcendence.”

Innermost Songs will take place at the Canadian Music Centre, 20 St. Joseph St. in Toronto on January 16, 2020 at 8pm.

Waniuk gets the last word: “Cheryl is incredibly inventive and has the ability to examine all facets of an idea, often coming up with surprising and innovative solutions to complex problems. Whether insisting we climb Mount Fuji eight hours after arriving in Japan for a concert tour, or taking aerial silks classes to gain a better understanding of our ongoing circus/contemporary music project Balancing on the Edge, she has an adventurous spirit and great sense of humour – two qualities which I consider essential ingredients in our musical/artistic partnership. It has been so exciting to watch her branch out in new directions through her various solo projects. I can’t wait to see what adventures, artistic and otherwise, await!”

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

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“Anyone can make aloo gobi, but who can bend a ball like Beckham?”

One of the most exciting shows coming up in December is a new production of Bend It Like Beckham: The Musical, the musical version of the beloved hit film by British South Asian filmmaker Gurinder Chadha. For anyone who loved the movie this is a must-see event that promises to be both thrilling and a lot of fun.

What was it about the movie Bend it Like Beckham that resonated so profoundly on both sides of the Atlantic when it came out in 2002? Was it the football (soccer)? Yes, in part, particularly in an exciting World Cup year when the whole world seemed to be mad about English star player David Beckham; but even more, it was the universal story of two girls fighting against all odds to follow their dreams that caught the imagination and hearts of audiences.

Jules – played in the film by Keira Knightley – is a rather bossy, confident girl who dreams of turning pro. But her mother doesn’t understand and does everything she can to have her daughter act in a more ladylike fashion. Jules discovers Jess – played in the film by Parminder Nagra – playing football in the park and recruits her to join her girls’ team. Jess, as a younger daughter in a traditional Punjabi Sikh family, has even tougher obstacles to face, with neither parent wanting her to play, but instead, to act like a lady, focus on going to university and learn how to cook traditional Indian dishes such as aloo gobi. The story is centred on Jess with Jules as the best friend who encourages her. This struggle and friendship, and the ultimate success that both girls find – including getting their families to eventually understand and support them – is very satisfying to watch, as well as fun. Chadha, the creator, director and co-writer, has a light touch with her subject matter, and an irreverent, witty hand with the context, drawing on her own adolescence and struggle to break the rules and forge a new path.

So successful was the movie’s initial release that, as Chadha told me, “for the longest time people tried to get [her] to make a sequel,” something she was never interested in doing. Then, by chance, she saw the musical version of another hit film, Billy Elliot, and was struck by how “different and yet the same,” the show was from the film; here, she thought, might be a way to satisfy people’s longing for more BILB by exploring the possibility of making a musical version. Things began to move fairly quickly. She pitched the idea to producer Sonia Friedman who suggested composer Howard Goodall (Classical Brit Composer of the Year Winner) and lyricist Charles Hart (Phantom of the Opera and Aspects of Love); Chadha herself began creating the new script with her husband and screenwriting partner Paul Mayeda Berges, then spending intense “wonderful” hours working with the composer and lyricist, until the show started coming alive – on the way becoming, Chadha believes, “a much deeper experience emotionally.”

Composer Goodall echoed much of Chadha’s delight in the working process and the story when I talked to him, though he told me when he was first approached that his initial response was, “It was very flattering to be asked but shouldn’t they be getting an Indian composer to do it?” He was reassured by the writer and producer saying that they wanted his expertise in creating musical theatre and that, while the show “does have a strong Punjabi Bhangra element to it, it is...
not the only element,” so he said yes. He soon found an associate, “a wonderful chap named Kuljit Bhamra” who would supply the Indian percussion and became what Goodall described as “my tutor, in a way, for the Indian aspect of the score.” This was essential, Goodall says, to avoid any of the music feeling like a pastiche of another culture’s sounds; he “passionately wanted to absorb all those influences and then write from within myself the music that belongs to each character.”

From the song for Jess’ parents when we first meet the parental generation, “the ones whose sacrifices made everything possible,” which is reminiscent of the Indian diaspora, to the lyrical anthemic solo for Jess, Glorious, which runs through the piece, to the “more pop-y, thriving rhythmic sounds for the football matches,” all the music is based on character and story, “not a copy of anything, not at all anchored to the film’s exact time period, but aiming to create a musical world that only belongs to this piece – so that it belongs to these people in this place, to who they are and their feelings at this moment.”

Part of the process to achieve this goal was the usual one in musical theatre: holding multiple workshops to zoom in on various aspects of the show, from a simple piano-and-singers workshop to fine tune the narrative and score, to a unique workshop where they “got together with some dancers and the England Women’s Football Team, the Lionesses, to try and work out how to do the football.”

This, Goodall says, was something that had to be solved through movement and dance, but it also had to be solved musically and structurally, “particularly as the great climax of the story, onstage, as in the film, is when Jess is playing in a final football match at the same time as her sister is getting married. In a movie you can cut between the two as much as you like and in the audience’s mind these two things are happening simultaneously. You can’t really do that onstage. So, in the end, how we achieved a similar effect was by my creating a wedding/football final that was one huge piece of music where all the different songs and themes from the football and Sikh wedding, and all the other characters from earlier in the story, were interwoven into a great vertical climax, with everything layered on top of each other and happening at the same time - and that of course is the wonderful alchemy of musical theatre.”

This became one of the things the creative team was most proud of in their original world premiere production in London’s West End in 2015 (that ran for almost a year to full houses and critical acclaim). It will feature again in the Toronto production currently in rehearsal.

This new production in Toronto came about through an invitation to Chadha from Canadian Corey Ross, CEO of Starvox Entertainment, who saw and loved the show in London, Chadha and the team agreed: as she said, “the movie originally launched at TIFF years ago, so I thought it was a great idea, and that people in Toronto would understand and appreciate the sentiments of the show.” The new production is also giving the creators the chance to fine tune the musical in preparation for a potential further life on tour in North America and around the world. To do so they have assembled a new international team that includes Canadians Madeline Paul (director), Mark Camilleri (music director), Sue LePage (set designer) Sean Mulcahy (costume designer), John Lott (sound designer) and – to heighten the excitement of the football matches – the new choreographic team of Daniel Ezralow (Sochi Olympics) and Longinus Fernandes (Slumdog Millionaire). Chadha is overseeing the whole as artistic producer, and composer Howard Goodall is working with the team non-stop, though mostly online from London. The cast is also almost entirely Canadian with a couple of performers from New York, and one from London.

Bend It Like Beckham: The Musical begins performances on December 7 and runs to January 5 at the Bluma Appel Theatre at the St Lawrence Centre: benditmusical.com.

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.
Lucas Debargue has already had a storied career. When he was 24, he finished fourth in the 2015 Tchaikovsky Piano Competition but, more importantly, the Moscow Music Critics Association bestowed their top honours on him as “the pianist whose performance at the Competition has become an event of genuine musical significance, and whose incredible gift, artistic vision and creative freedom have impressed the critics as well as the audience.”

Immediately SONY signed him to a recording contract. Now he’s just released his fourth CD for the company – 52 sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti on four CDs – and he will play ten of them on January 16, 2020 in his fourth appearance in Toronto in less than four years. This, after sharing a Koerner Hall program with Lukas Geniušas (runner-up in that same 2015 competition) on April 30, 2016, a TSO debut in Liszt’s Piano Concerto No.2 in April 2017, and a memorable chamber music concert with Janine Jansen, Torlief Thedeen and Martin Fröst, highlighted by Messiaen’s ineffable Quartet for the End of Time in December 2017. He will make his third Koerner Hall appearance – and Koerner Hall solo debut – in an impressive program headed by those ten Scarlatti sonatas. I caught up with him mid-November, via an email conversation, in Lausanne, Switzerland where he was on tour.

His playing has a spontaneity, an improvisatory quality that seems to come from getting completely inside the music. “Has this been a characteristic of your approach from the beginning of your relationship with the piano?” I asked.

“I always felt that interpretation, improvisation and composition are the three faces of a healthy musical practice,” he replied. “Spending eight hours in front of a piano with no interest in the scores themselves, nor in the musical culture and literature, cinema, paintings – that always seemed to me like a betrayal of the Arts. I never think about my relationship with the instrument. I think about music, and how much more I want to learn about it, to give more to the people who are in need of Beauty.”

When Debargue was ten in 2000, he writes in the booklet notes to his Scarlatti CD, and just beginning to play the piano, he was “devouring one of the early issues of the magazine Pianiste” when he discovered the shortest of Scarlatti’s 555 sonatas, K431 in G Major. As he put it, from the beginning there was always something totally obvious in his relationship with this music.

“I told myself, maybe not now, but I will devote a big part of my life to this music” he said. “Actually, I couldn’t imagine how right I was. It’s a visceral reaction, rather than something clicking in my brain.”

“What was it about Scarlatti’s sonatas that attracted you?” I asked. “Everything: concision, precision, savagery, nobility, discomfort, freedom, knowledge, sweetness… These words are more relevant to this music than to any other.”

He chose the repertoire for the SONY Scarlatti recording by reading the 11-volume Heugel Edition, the full collection of sonatas (approximately 37 hours of music), several times. “I let my taste lead me in this. He selected the ten sonatas for the Toronto recital the way he always builds a recital program. “It should create the impression of a little drama, or at least a story,” he said. “Starting gently and going deeper and deeper.” He chose the tempos and keys to create contrast. And of course, he added, “These ten are among my favourites.”

As for the overall program selection? “I choose pieces that go...”
well together for me — sensitive logic you could call it.”

He will follow the Scarlatti group with Ravel’s *Gaspard de la nuit*, a piece he played in the second round of the Tchaikovsky Competition and on his first SONY recording, as well as in his first appearance in Toronto in 2016.

I asked what it is that he finds so compelling about *Gaspard*.

“It’s one of the few big masterpieces written on modern piano,” he said. “All the techniques are used there, to create what I call a pianistic trance, and an atmosphere that is at the same time magical and scary … It’s a jewel of music writing. Every single harmony is well thought-out and all construction is insanely precise. It’s an intellectual and sensual joy to perform this, always a memorable experience for me …”

So has his approach to it changed over the years? “Interpretation can never be fixed, otherwise it’s dead music,” he replied.

As for Medtner’s Sonata in G Minor Op.22 which will follow the intermission in his Toronto recital: “It’s a very deep and clever work, impressively compact, considering the density of the musical material” he said. “The shape is the same as that of the Liszt B-minor sonata. The subject matter is also quite Faustian, but with a big Russian touch with the lyrical theme that has a folkish character … I feel saddened by the lack of recognition for Medtner’s music. He was a genius of piano writing, very respected by his close friend Rachmaninoff. They don’t have so much in common: the music of Medtner really has its own characteristics. It’s important for me to use the opportunities I have to perform, to share this wonderful music with the audience …”

Debargue has been playing Liszt’s *After a Reading of Dante: Fantasia quasi Sonata* – the piece that concludes his program – for a long time. “One could wake me up in the middle of the night, I would perform it with joy! It makes the performer face challenges that are typical of Liszt’s music: it could easily become a technical demonstration. But the pianist should overcome this temptation and be like a conductor on the keyboard, creating the orchestral effects that Liszt desired and imagined so well through his genius for piano writing.”

If Debargue’s backstory weren’t true, few would believe it as fiction. He heard the slow movement of Mozart’s Piano Concerto No.21 K467 when he was ten, fell under its spell and into the world of music. He played a friend’s upright piano by ear before beginning lessons at 11 with his first teacher, Madame Meunier, in the northern French town of Compiègne. He credits her with helping him to find his way as an artist, but when he moved to Paris to study literature at Diderot University – yes, he learned English by reading Joyce’s *Ulysses* – he stopped playing piano (“I had no great guide, no one to share great music with,” he told the BBC), instead turning to the bass guitar as a musical outlet. After being away from the piano for years, he accepted an invitation to a competition in his home province. He won, and began an intense pupil-teacher relationship with Rena Sherevskaya in Paris at 21. Three years later, he made history.

Now, having just turned 29, his uniqueness as a performer is becoming more evident with each passing year. “What do you enjoy about your life as a concert pianist?” I asked. “Stage time, of course,” was the simple four-word reply. And also, when he’s at home, he added, working on his programs in order to prepare his next shows.

Back in 2016 I asked him about pianists he admired. “Horowitz, Sofronitsky and Gould for their boldness and freedom,” he replied, then added that no pianist had reached the dimension of Rachmaninoff’s own playing, and that Sokolov and Pletnev are his favourite living pianists. And finally: “How can one forget Art Tatum, Monk, Powell and Erroll Garner?”

So has his relationship with any of these pianists changed since then, I asked?

“I could repeat exactly what I told you in 2016; this has not changed at all!”

Show One Productions presents Lucas Debargue in his Toronto solo debut in Koerner Hall, January 16, 2020 at 8pm.

*Paul Ennis is the managing editor of The WholeNote.*
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On two recent performances I experienced epiphanies which reminded me of something that often gets overlooked amid the hubbub and organized chaos of gigs: that, at the core of live jazz there is a process of generosity and giving, an exchange of gifts, which is the essence of what we celebrate during Christmas and other religious holidays. The exchange is circular, as there is an unspoken pact between jazz players and their audience which goes something like this: give us your attention, your ears, and we musicians will give you our very best – or at least try to – and make some music, out of thin air, you’ve never heard before and will never hear again. This commitment to playing one’s very best holds for all good musicians, but because jazz involves so much improvising, and thus risk, the giving in a jazz performance is much more personal, coming from deep inside the musicians themselves in a sort of spontaneous, high-wire communion. It has very little to do with money. Yes, musicians are paid for performances and must be – after all, it is their work and they have to survive like everyone else. But the level of effort and commitment put forth by jazz players has nothing to do with how much a gig pays: indeed I’ve been involved in many sessions and after-hours jams where there is no money involved and everyone plays out of their skin. Why? Simply because they love music and wouldn’t think of letting it, or each other, down. Jazz players give to each other, too.

The first of these epiphanies came courtesy of singer Karin Plato in back-to-back concerts at Jazz in the Kitchen, October 20 and 21. Karin is one of my favourite singers today, to hear or play with. She has a beautiful, slightly smoky voice in the alto range and sings with flawless intonation and unerring musicality. And she has a special brand of sincerity and open soulfulness as a person and performer; there’s real feeling there. Beyond her vocal talents, she’s also a first-rate musician – plays some piano, is a good songwriter and arranger with big ears and a thorough knowledge of harmony which allow her to improvise freely. She also has a touch of the poet about her, a love of words which comes to the fore in her interpretation of other’s lyrics and the thoughtful ones she writes herself. While utterly contemporary, she also has a special gift of recasting old songs, finding something new and fresh in them in quite imaginative ways. Best of all is her open and generous attitude toward performance. She’s modest to a fault and there’s never a sense while playing with Karin that she’s “out front” and the band is simply there to back her. She sees herself as part of the band and takes great delight in the spontaneous contributions of the other players; she never wants to get in the way of the creative process. Indeed she’s a central part of that process; a poised risk-taker, which makes playing with her so rewarding.

These concerts were to be a reunion of sorts between Karin, pianist Mark Eisenman and me. Quite a few years ago when the CBC was adequately funded and still a cultural institution we could all be proud of, Mark led a quintet accompanying a selection of jazz singers from across Canada in a series of concerts at the Glenn Gould Studio, which were recorded and broadcast. Karin, who hails from Saskatchewan but has lived in Vancouver since 1985, was among the singers and made a strong impression on Mark and me. On the strength of this initial bond, Karin asked me to be part of her Ontario tour with pianist Nancy Walker and drummer Joel Haynes, which culminated in her 2008 CD, Downward Dancing. We’ve been friends ever since and have stayed in touch, so I very much looked forward to this chance to play with her again, knowing she would love the special intimacy of JITK. I also looked forward to the instant musical rapport I knew would form between Karin and drummer Mark Micklethwaite, who had never even met before. This is a big part of the giving spirit in jazz I’m referring to, the willingness and capacity of musicians who don’t know each other to set aside preconceptions or personal agendas and put out the antennae to make music together. It’s called listening, and like the listening of an attentive audience, it is perhaps the greatest musical gift of all.

Karin brought along a selection of charts for songs she loves and which she thought would be suitable for the JITK audience, a nicely

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Karin Plato
varied program of standards and some seldom-heard songs, many bearing her deft arranging touch. She also brought along her ukulele, a new wrinkle she played on a couple of numbers. As I’ve come to expect, there was nothing cutey or gimmicky about this. In her hands the tiny four-string guitar added a special sound and texture appropriate to the given songs. And hers is not just any old ukulele, it’s a J.F. Martin with a lovely plangent sound. In no time at all she had the audience spellbound, not just with her singing, but with her sincere presentation and effortless inclusion of them. She has a way of talking about herself to the audience between numbers which is not self-indulgent, but serves to draw back the curtain for the listeners and make them feel a part of what’s happening. She talked about what some of the songs meant to her or why she chose them and how privileged she felt to be there making music for people who appreciate it.

The epiphany came as we were about to start the second set and Karin said that she wanted to begin with a tune accompanying herself at the piano, with trumpeter John Loach and her friend Geoff Claridge, who was in the audience and had brought along his clarinet. I took a chair at the entrance to the music room, glad to unexpectedly be a part of the audience while in mid-performance. She told the audience she was going to sing her new arrangement of an old song that would be very familiar to them, especially to any who had played piano when they were kids. It was Heart and Soul, along with Chopsticks; one of the cliché duets all young piano students end up playing with their teachers or parents.

She began s-l-o-w-l-y with a contemplative pattern of simple gospel chords voiced in ringing tenths, ascending on off-beats, immediately stirring and hypnotic. Then she entered with that subtle sultry voice in unmistakable jazz rhythm: “Heart and soul, I fell in love with you. Heart and soul, the way a fool would do, madly....” and it was goose-bump time. Meanwhile, behind her, John on cup-nuted trumpet and Geoff on clarinet, shared a written obligato part which beautifully complemented what she was doing. Once again, musicians giving to each other and to the rapt audience, putting themselves on the line in a humble and fearless off-the-cuff offering. I was gone, swept away and surprisingly — or perhaps not — tears welled in my eyes at the sheer beauty of it. This is it, I thought, this is what music is. It felt like being in church in the best sense, or like Christmas morning. With this emotional reaction, there was some self-chiding: “Steve, you old softie, you.” But I couldn’t help it, Karin had lifted the song from the parlour into something haunting and inspiring. Such is the generosity of her transformative imagination. I’d completely forgotten that the song had such lovely words and was originally a ballad by Frank Loesser and Hoagy Carmichael, no slouches. Like all good things in life, it was over far too soon and in typical fashion, Karin didn’t tie it all up in a neat bow but left the song hanging with an unresolved dominant chord, hovering in the silent air like a question mark.

Disclosure: those who want to hear this wonderful rendition may do so on Karin Plato’s latest CD, This Could Be the One (and believe, me, it is), or in a live performance available on YouTube.

The second epiphany came during a gig with Mike Murley’s trio at The Homesmith Bar on November 6. During the first break, an elderly lady asked Mike if he could play Love For Sale, and he was so charmed by her and surprised by her request that he assented, even though he doesn’t often play that tune and was a little unsure of it in spots. It came off quite well and indeed may become a permanent part of our repertoire. On the second break, I was outside taking some nicotine when a silver-haired elderly lady, well-wrapped against the cold evening, came out and sat on her walker waiting for her friend to fetch the car. I went over to her and asked if she had requested Love For Sale and she smiled shyly and answered in her English accent, “Yes, and I really enjoyed it. I asked for that tune because I really love the way Sidney Bechet played it on one of his records.” I replied that I didn’t know Bechet had recorded it, adding that had Mike known he might have played it on his soprano rather than tenor, although Mike plays the curved model rather than the straight horn like Sidney. “Oh there was nobody like Bechet on that soprano,” she said. “Such passion and authority, and that sound... God, I love him.”

“And Muggsy!” she continued. I started vibrating a little at this – she was talking about cornetist Muggsy Spanier, whose playing I’ve loved since I became a jazz fan. “People talk about Louis (Armstrong) doing so much to bring jazz out of the rinky-tink and he did, but Muggsy was great, he could break your heart!” I told her I was a big Muggsy fan, too and that he had that heart-on-his-sleeve streak of Irish sentimentality that could make you cry. I asked her if she knew the wonderful one-off session Bechet and Muggsy recorded together in 1940 and her face went blank for a moment then her eyes widened in recognition. “Oh my, yes! Those two got to some romping!” She told me that she was 91 and lived in a seniors’ apartment near Christie and Bloor. “My husband died some years ago but I’ve made friends with a 93-year-old blind man named George who lives down the hall. You wouldn’t believe what he has in his apartment, everything that Muggsy ever recorded and lots of other goodies. I go round to his flat and we listen to these wonderful records. We have such fun, jazz makes you feel so happy, so alive.” I thought... at 91 or otherwise, we should all be so lucky. She was so lovely and interesting that despite the cold I wanted to stay and talk with her some more, but I had to go back inside and play. She said “My name is Joyce East and it’s been so nice meeting you.” I couldn’t resist, I leaned down and hugged her and she reached up and hugged me back warmly and gave me a peck on the cheek. The pleasure was all mine, Joyce, mighty-night.

As Eats Waller once said, “One never knows, do one?” Karin Plato’s stunning transformation of Heart and Soul and this chance encounter with an nonagenarian hipster brought Christmas early to me this year. I can’t thank either of them enough. My best wishes to you all for a joyous Holiday Season and a Happy New Year.
Messing with Winterreise is a growing and delightful industry within classical music performance. Schubert’s best-known song cycle has been fully staged and orchestrated for a chamber ensemble (Netia Jones/Hans Zender/Ian Bostridge), divided between three female singers (Toronto’s Collecti ensemble), multi-mediatised (William Kentridge’s video projections), arranged for singer, puppet, guitar, and piano with animated drawings (Thomas Guthrie) and staged with the piano and illustrated backdrops (Ebbe Knudsen). On January 17, Toronto will have a chance to see another contribution to the conversation on the meaning of Winterreise, when Le Chimera Project, with baritone Philippe Sly, bring their klezmer- and Roma-inflected take on it to Koerner Hall.

“The inspiration came when I saw a video clip of two friends, Félix de l’Étoile and Samuel Carrier, performing Gute Nacht on accordion and clarinet at a recital,” says Philippe Sly on a Skype call from San Francisco. “I thought, Oh my God, that sound suits this musical content so well. I approached Félix and asked what he thought would be the best arrangement if we were to continue with this klezmer-Gypsy-like aesthetic and he came up with the idea of having trombone, clarinet, violin and accordion instead of the piano.” De l’Étoile and Carrier wrote the draft arrangement and the entire group with Sly worked intensely on the piece for two secluded wintry weeks at the Domaine Forget in Charlevoix, where the Chimera Winterreise had its premiere.

“The interesting thing is that the arranging process became a process of reduction,” Sly recalls. We realized that there was intimacy between voice and one instrument which is at the heart of what lieder is about. You have this dynamic between two people, this dyad – we wanted to highlight that, even in the multi-instrumental setting.” The show begins with one version of Gute Nacht, and ends with another version of it – after the cycle’s final song, Der Leiermann. “The narrator asks the Leiermann (hurdy-gurdy player) if he would play his song. And we never get an answer to that. What if Gute Nacht was the song that the narrator would finally sing? What if singing a song about one’s suffering lets us transcend it? What if it’s through the artistic process that we save ourselves and that we elevate the narrative of our lives?”

Director Roy Rallo’s staging of the piece is open to different kinds of interpretation; it’s up to the audience to decide if they’d like to read this Winterreise in the traditional way, as one heartbroken man’s journey through a bleak winter landscape at the end of which perhaps he meets his end – or to experience it in a very different way. “I work in the world of opera where we have stories told in a certain way, with sets and costumes, and you’re getting singers to impersonate somebody inside of a story that’s not a story of their lives,” says Rallo, during our joint San Francisco Skype call. “Luckily, Winterreise doesn’t have a clear narrative. To me the main narrative of the evening isn’t that we’re all pretending that there’s a guy who’s had something happen to him and we’re trying to figure out what his story is. What’s going on is there are some people in the room with you, the audience members, and they’re making noise, and through the making of noise and through moving around in space, and through the framing devices that we use as part of the staging, we are creating a series of different constellations that may lead to different feelings. That is
the content might be, the thing that’s really going on is making an attempt at communication. I think that going through this ordeal of performing is innately dramatic and theatrical.”

While there will always be music lovers who will find a narrative in Winterreise, this particular group of creators are more interested in its symbols, feelings, colours of language. “The performance of lieder is not storytelling in the traditional sense,” Sly says. “The idea is not to subvert the tradition, but to actually lay it bare. We’re going deeper into Schubert.” And they are treating the cycle as if it’s been recently written. “This is something we talked about a lot in the course of the making,” says Rallo. “Because we live in the world of recordings, video and audio, we can consume countless versions of Winterreise today. But the fact of the matter is, somebody wrote a song and they’d like you to sing it. I don’t think that Schubert composed with only one idea in mind regarding how it should be performed. And when we freed ourselves from the piano, a lot of the baggage that comes with performing Winterreise in recital went away. We are exploring the notes that are there. We are not changing any music – and some Winterreise versions do that.”

Sly and Le Chimera – which, aside from Rallo, de l’Étoile and Carrier, includes designer Doey Lüthi, Jonathan Millette on violin and Karine Gordon on trombone – have performed the piece a few times, including in Rouen and Vichy in France, and each time, Sly and Rallo tell me, actually going on – there is no pretending.”

A more abstract, visceral and, to a degree, spontaneous Winterreise, then? All the musicians will have their music memorized, and within the preset parameters of the staging, there is freedom for individual performers to do what they choose in the moment. “We’d like to show some of the dynamics between musicians in space,” says Sly. “That’s what I find fascinating about watching musicians in general; whatever performing Winterreise in recital went away. We are exploring the notes that are there. We are not changing any music – and some Winterreise versions do that.”

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this is through my experience. In lieder, the mask is off.” Schubert, Schubert is interpreting the poetry – but the only way to a singer, you’re part of a lineage of interpretation: I am interpreting performing lieder that I enjoy. Just getting through it is something. As for that amount of time. So there’s an almost masochistic quality to you can’t say in opera. “In opera, you are not vulnerable continuously he describes them – let you say things about poetry and music that fantastic. Lieder – “little gems that contain the whole universe,” as he describes them – you say things about poetry and music that you can’t say in opera. “In opera, you are not vulnerable continuously for that amount of time. So there’s an almost masochistic quality to performing lieder that I enjoy. Just getting through it is something. As a singer, you’re part of a lineage of interpretation: I am interpreting Schubert, Schubert is interpreting the poetry – but the only way to truth is through my moment. In lieder, the mask is off.”

Which is, for Sly, what performing lieder is all about. Unlike many singers his age, the young baritone takes the art song, especially of the German kind, extremely seriously. He eagerly performs and records Lieder and continues to study the poetry. “It’s meeting Dr. Deen Larsen, the founder of the Franz Schubert Institute, that opened a whole new world for me,” he says. “There is deep satisfaction in making those works intelligible. I am in search of a state of the seed of the evening which informs how the rest of the evening unfolds.” Adds Sly: “I’m not the only performer, let’s keep that in mind. All these people have their own agency and they’re making their decisions that will be different. We’re forced to engage in the moment.”

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The Toronto Consort
2019-2020: The Fellowship of Early Music

“The Search for SALAMONE ROSSI”
A documentary film screening and Q&A
TUESDAY, JANUARY 21 at 7pm
INNIS TOWN HALL, U of T, 2 SUSSEX AVE.

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Lydia Perović is an arts journalist in Toronto. Send her your art-of-song news to artsofsong@thewholenote.com.
November’s early twilights serve as a reminder of the upcoming festive season, a harbinger of what is to come. As the days grow shorter, we see a transition taking place in the world around us, a gradual evolution in which sandboxes are overtaken by Santa and road trips by reindeer. Lights and decorations are extracted from their hibernating hiding places until, one house at a time, our neighbourhoods begin to look like those in cheesy TV movies, though perhaps without the requisite miracles and an ageless, white-bearded neighbour conspicuously named “Nick.”

Musical programming undergoes similar changes at this time of year, following the seasonal trajectory in a way that mirrors the outside world: one by one, concerts are announced which accumulate in quantity until the month of December is saturated with choral, orchestral and many other presentations, each celebrating the spirit of the season in different ways. Scores and parts are extracted from their orchestral and many other presentations, each celebrating the spirit of the season in different ways. Scores and parts are extracted from their boxes – Messiahs, Christmas Oratorios and Concerti – in the same way as household decorations, ready to be dusted off and brought back to life for a few short weeks.

But then, on December 26, it’s over – the mad rush has reached its end. Soon the boxes will appear again, empty this time, to carry us through another 330 days. While this annual cycle follows a pattern as predictable as it is satisfying, this year’s selection of seasonal concerts promise to add a little variety as usual, perhaps a bit tighter than they were a few days ago, to fill the void of previous weeks’ efforts, and we are soon left with memories (and the realization that our favourite jeans are perhaps a bit tighter than they were a few days ago) to carry us through another 330 days. While this annual cycle follows a pattern as predictable as it is satisfying, this year’s selection of seasonal concerts promise to add a little variety as usual, perhaps a bit tighter than they were a few days ago, to fill the void of previous weeks’ efforts, and we are soon left with memories (and the realization that our favourite jeans are perhaps a bit tighter than they were a few days ago) to carry us through another 330 days.

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Tell me a Story of Christmas

Heinrich Schütz is one of antiquity’s most renowned yet infrequently performed composers. Widely regarded as the most important German composer before Johann Sebastian Bach, as well as one of the most important composers of the 17th century, Schütz is credited with bringing the Italian style to Germany and continuing its evolution from the Renaissance into the early Baroque. So recognized is his influence that Schütz is commemorated as a musician in the Lutheran Calendar of Saints alongside Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frideric Handel.

Schütz was of great importance in bringing new musical ideas to Germany and had a significant impact on the German music which was to follow. The style of the North German organ school derives largely from Schütz, which later culminated in the work of J.S. Bach. After Bach, the most important composers to be influenced by Schütz were Anton Webern and Brahms, who is known to have studied his works; an entire movement of Schütz-based study then permeated 20th-century German church music, with Hugo Distler, Ernst Pepping and Arnold Mendelssohn synthesizing Schütz’s modal counterpoint with modernist musical ideas to create ingeniously original works.

On December 13, 14 and 15, the Toronto Consort presents Schütz’s Christmas Story alongside works by fellow countrymen Schein, Scheidt and Praetorius (most famous for his Christmas chorale Es ist ein Ros’ entsprung). Unlike Bach’s Christmas Oratorio, which is a series of cantatas for use during Christmas and the days thereafter, Schütz’s Christmas Story is a Historia, a setting of the Gospel intended to be performed during a service instead of the Gospel reading. The music was likely first performed in a Christmas service at the court chapel of Johann Georg II, Elector of Saxony, in Dresden in 1660, with text taken almost exclusively from the Luther–translated version of the Bible.

The Christmas Story, like many of Schütz’s choral Passion settings, features an Evangelist narrator singing secco recitative (a tradition which Bach continued) and other solo characters including an angel, shepherds and King Herod. The chorus is used to open and close the work as well as provide chorale interpolations throughout, while instruments are utilized in what we now consider a traditional Baroque manner: recitatives are accompanied only by continuo; pastoral flutes imply shepherds; and the majestic King Herod is heralded by trumpets.

Written when he was 75 years old, after living through the ravages of the Thirty Years’ War, Schütz’s Christmas Story is a testament to the composer’s skill and ingenuity, melding influences into a style that would later be adapted and codified by the late-Baroque masters, and undeniably well worth a listen.

Mr. December

For 11 months of the year, the Italian composer Arcangelo Corelli makes infrequent appearances on concert programs; perhaps a concerto grosso will appear from time to time, or even a trio sonata, but it is much more likely to hear early Italian music from Vivaldi or even Monteverdi. In December, however, Corelli’s Christmas Concerto can be heard across the country, played ad infinitum by modern and period performance ensembles alike, making him classical music’s own seasonal superstar, a “Mr. December” of the 18th century. (Historical sidebar: In October 1977, Regge Jackson hit three straight home runs in game six of the World Series, earning him the nickname “Mr. October” for his clutch hitting.)

To uncover more about what Corelli composed for the rest of the

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The Four Seasons by Vivaldi and Piazzolla

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Violinist Mark Fewer and Orchestra

Violin playing at its most electrifying!

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Markfewer.eventbrite.com

February 9th at 1:30pm

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Tickets:

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The Four Seasons by

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Violinist Mark Fewer and Orchestra.
Jubilant choral works by the greatest composers of the Baroque period.

Magnificat, Francesco Durante
Gloria, Antonio Vivaldi
Magnificat, Johann Sebastian Bach

Pax Christi Chorale featuring Megan Miceli & Elizabeth Polese, sopranos; Georgia Burashko, mezzo-soprano; Daevyd Pepper, tenor; Bradley Christensen, baritone; and the Toronto Mozart Players

A Baroque Celebration

DECEMBER 15, 2019, 3:00PM
St. Andrew’s Church
73 Simcoe Street

BUY TICKETS ONLINE AT PAXCHRISTICHORALE.ORG

In the Bleak Midwinter

Winter arrives in earnest in January and February, the bleakest of the bleak midwinter months, which often couple with post-holiday exhaustion to form a brief period of universal hibernation. Fortunately for us, this January contains a notable exception to that trend – Toronto Consort’s “Hebreo: Rossi’s Mantua,” with works by Salamone Rossi and guest ensemble Profeti della Quinta.

An unfamiliar name to many, Rossi was an Italian-Jewish violinist and composer and a transitional figure between the late Italian Renaissance period and early Baroque, a time period dominated by the historical importance of Monteverdi. In fact, Rossi served at the court of Mantua from 1587 to 1628, where he entertained the ducal family and their highly esteemed guests and, along with Monteverdi, provided fashionable music for banquets, wedding feasts, theatre productions and chapel services. (Rossi was so well-thought-of at this court that he was excused from wearing the yellow badge that was required of other Jews in Mantua.)

An innovative composer, Rossi deserves to be mentioned for a number of reasons: he was one of the first composers to apply the principles of song to instrumental music, in which one melody dominates over secondary accompanying parts; and his trio sonatas, among the first in the literature, provided for the development of an idiomatic and virtuoso violin technique. Rossi also published a collection of Jewish liturgical music in 1623, written in the Baroque tradition and almost entirely unconnected to traditional Jewish cantorial music, a synthesis of Monteverdian monody and Hebrew texts.

Toronto Consort’s focus on Rossi incorporates two January events: the first is the Canadian premiere of the 2012 documentary, The Search for Salamone Rossi, and Q&A with Elam Rotem, founding director of Profeti della Quinta, on January 21; this is followed by “Hebreo,” a concert of Rossi’s music itself, taking place on January 31 and repeated on February 1. Although new music nomenclature is most often understood to refer to contemporary music, it is incredible to consider that works written almost four centuries ago can be considered new, in the most practical sense – and how exciting this is! With expert performers and a captivating back story, “Hebreo” deserves to be on our must-see list this January.

Although supposedly “the most wonderful time of the year,”
Matthew Whitfield is a Toronto-based harpsichordist and organist. His music on earth that warms the soul as thoroughly as Bach’s. I encourage you to explore the vibrant musical offerings that are on display this December and January, whether hearing Schütz’s take on a classic biblical story, discovering the unknown masterworks of Corelli and Rossi, or any of the other listings in this double issue of The WholeNote.

Happy Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Festivus and New Year – see you in February! Until then, keep in touch at earlymusic@thewholenote.com.

### EARLY MUSIC QUICK PICKS

- **DEC 9, 7:30PM:** University of St. Michael’s College, Palestrina’s Missa Gabriel Archangelus. St. Basil’s Church, University of St. Michael’s College, 50 St. Joseph St. Palestrina also wrote some of the most stunning and beautiful choral music in the history of the genre. This less-known work celebrating the Archangel Gabriel is sure to please the ears of all who favour the sound of Renaissance polyphony.

- **JAN 25, 8PM:** Tafelmusik. “More Bach Motets.” Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, 427 Bloor St. West. One of Canada’s finest interpreters of Bach’s choral works, Ivars Taurins and the Tafelmusik Chamber Choir present a selection of Bach’s motets interwoven with movements from his suites for solo cello, played by Keiran Campbell. Much like the concert above, this performance is well worth braving the elements for, as there is perhaps no other music in the history of the genre. This most stunning and beautiful choral masterpiece of a work, my interest for it never wavering. Even after singing it several times and watching a number of performances, I have yet to tire of the soaring harmonies and elegant solos.

### Handel’s Messiah and the Glee Effect

A long with gift exchanges and eggnog giggles with loved ones, listening to Handel’s Messiah has become a Christmas staple for me. Especially in recent years, I repeatedly listen to this masterpiece of a work, my interest for it never wavering. Even after listening to it once was fantastic but also enough, you may be tempted to rethink things, based on the range of Messiah performances among the Christmas concert listings provided by The WholeNote this season. Especially if you are willing to open yourself up to different interpretations of this beloved work, Messiah is kept alive, and constantly renewed, by composers and directors making it their own.

**Grand River Philharmonic:** This year, I’m looking forward to Messiah as performed, in an annual tradition going back decades, by the Grand Philharmonic Choir in Kitchener. With orchestral accompaniment by the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, the concert will be conducted by Mark Vuorinen and will feature soloists, soprano Mireille Asselin, mezzo-soprano Maude Brunet, tenor Asitha Tennakoon and baritone Samuel Chan. Choosing to see this particular version is part of my quest to broaden my knowledge of the choirs around me, and attend concerts outside of the Greater Toronto Area. Their Messiah will be held at the Centre in the Square in Kitchener, Ontario on December 7. Ever the one to want to introduce the Messiah to new ears, I have gifted a ticket to a friend of mine who (aside from knowing the “Hallelujah” chorus) has yet to listen to the Messiah to new ears, I have gifted a ticket to a friend of mine who (aside from knowing the “Hallelujah” chorus) has never listened to the work in its entirety.

Whether like me you make Messiah attendance a Christmas staple, or feel that listening to it once was fantastic but also enough, you may be tempted to rethink things, based on the range of Messiah performances among the Christmas concert listings provided by The WholeNote this season. Especially if you are willing to open yourself up to different interpretations of this beloved work, Messiah is kept alive, and constantly renewed, by composers and directors making it their own.

**Wayne Gilpin Singers:** Snap along if you will, as the Wayne Gilpin Singers hold an annual Christmas concert where they deliver a jazzy rendition of the work at the Evangelist Anglican Church in Kitchener.

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**Beat by Beat | Choral Scene**

**Handel’s Messiah and the Glee Effect**

**MENAKA SWAMINATHAN**

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**TIS WINTER NOW**

**Tuesday, December 17, 2019 @ 7:30pm**

**Grace Church on-the-Hill**

300 Lonsdale Road, Toronto, ON M4V 1X4

Indulge in the sweet nostalgia of the season! Enjoy a memorable evening of festive carols and tales, narrated by Stratford and Shaw Festival’s Benedict Campbell.

Tickets $20-$45. For information call 416-530-4428 or visit OrpheusChoirToronto.com
on December 7 at 8pm. As the choir describes it, they will deliver “beautiful melodies, rocking sax solos, [and] edgy new jazz arrangements of Handel’s Messiah, courtesy of resident composer and accompanist Andrew Gilpin.” Having never witnessed such a performance, I had trouble imagining it being done, so I used YouTube to hear a variety of jazz renditions, and I think the Gilpin Singers will deliver a treat of a concert. Using YouTube to look up different arrangements of the Messiah is a real eye-opener! Not just jazz, but also soulful renditions by gospel choirs and solo artists.

Soundstreams: Meanwhile, Soundstreams’ annual Electric Messiah, billed as an “electro-improv reimagining of Handel’s masterpiece,” groups four soloists and band “combining jazz, gospel, blues, hip-hop, classical, world music and hypnotic dance.” Directed by Rob Kempson, the evening will also feature DJ SlowPitchSound and a dancer by the name of Lybido. Tagged as “the familiar becomes fresh,” these performances are at the Drake Underground in downtown Toronto, Dec 10, 11 and 12 at 8pm. On YouTube, there is a short video giving a taste of what to expect. It is a performance you will not want to miss.

Pax Christi: If you are looking to introduce children to the work, there is also Messiah for the little ones! “Children’s Messiah” is an entertaining family-friendly night out with the members of Pax Christi Chorale, where children are called forward to engage with soloists and the orchestra, and “simple narration brings the story to life in young imaginations.”

Singing along: Just because you are in the audience does not mean you cannot also experience singing it yourself. Both the Bach Elgar Choir and Tafelmusik Chamber Choir present a welcoming environment where lovers of Messiah can sing their hearts out. Under the direction of Alexander Cann, with soloists soprano Sara Schabas, counter-tenor Richard Cunningham, tenor Ernesto Ramirez and baritone Dion Mazerolle, the Bach Elgar Choir will sing at Melrose United Church on December 8 at 3pm. And along with Tafelmusik’s more formal concert performances of Messiah (December 17 to 20 at Koerner Hall), on December 21 at 2pm, the organization continues an unbroken 34-year tradition of.

Great seats start at only $32!
416-964-6337 | TorontoConsort.org
There was a dichotomy between performance-oriented professional choirs and singing groups such as glee clubs. One was seen to be very serious, the other, with its fun and relaxed environment, often struggling to be taken seriously, even though it took as much energy and enthusiasm to form a glee club. There was rarely an in-between. I appreciated Lane Osborne and the GCVI choir for pointing to a way to bring that “in-between” to fruition.

Handel’s Messiah rap, anyone? Maybe next year.

CHORAL SCENE QUICK PICKS

(details in the listings sections)

**SO MUCH MESSIAH, SO LITTLE TIME!**
- **NOV 29 AND 30, 8PM:** The Georgetown Bach Chorale present Choruses from Messiah and Bach’s Christmas Oratorio Parts 1 and 6. Directed by Ron Greidanus with accompaniment by the Baroque Orchestra. At St. Elias The Prophet Ukrainian Church on November 29 and Christ Church Anglican on November 30.
- **DEC 1, 2PM:** With the Welland-Port Colborne Concert Association, Choralis Camerata will present Handel’s Messiah with soloists Melissa-Marie Shrirn, soprano; Christina Stelmakovich, mezzo; Laurence Wilford, tenor; and Michael York, bass. At the Dr. J.M. Ennis Auditorium at Welland Centennial Secondary School.
- **DEC 17, 18, 19 AND 20, 7:30PM:** Tafelmusik partners with Evergreen Brick Works for this year’s Messiah, with one dollar from each ticket sold going towards Evergreen’s Don River Valley revitalization project. With soloists Margot Rood, soprano; Lucile Richardot, mezzo-soprano; Thomas Hobbs, tenor; and Peter Harvey, baritone; under the direction of Ivars Taurins. At Koerner Hall in Toronto.

For a full list of Messiah performances visit thewholenote.com/just-ask and type “Messiah” into the search.

**DECEMBER DEFINITELY NOT THE MESSIAH!**
- **DEC 6, 8PM:** The Exultate Chamber Singers present “Holidays with a Twist: A Merry Romp Through Some Festive Favourites,” at St. Thomas’s Anglican Church in Toronto.
- **DEC 7, 7:30PM; DEC 8, 2:30PM:** Tchaikovsky’s The Nutcracker. Enjoy the music of the ballet, presented by the Niagara Symphony Orchestra in “A Symphonic Bon-Bon: The Nutcracker in Concert.” Joined by Chorus Niagara Children’s Chorus with chorus director Amanda Nelli and conductor Bradley Thachuk. At FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines, Ontario.
- **DEC 8, 4PM:** Joined by the Salvation Army North York Temple Band, the Toronto Youth Choir offers “On Winter’s Night,” showcasing works by Chilcott and Rutter. At St Andrew’s Church in Toronto.
- **DEC 10, 11 AND 12, 8PM:** Also with a matinee performance DEC 11, 2PM. Vocal powerhouse Measha Brueggergosman joins the TSO, with the Etobicoke Schools of the Arts Holiday Chorus, for TSO Holiday Pops at Roy Thomson Hall under the direction of conductors Steven Reinecke (Dec 10 and 11) and Lucas Waldin (Dec 12).

**A CAPPELLA, ANYONE?**
- **DEC 6, 7:30PM:** Join local masters of the art form, the a cappella group, Cadence, in a holiday concert at St. Paul’s United Church in Scarborough.

**A FLYING START TO THE NEW YEAR**
- **JAN 12, 3PM:** Now in their 54th season, the Vesnivka Choir presents “A Ukrainian Christmas.” Along with the Toronto Ukrainian Male Chamber Choir, a collection of traditional and contemporary Ukrainian Christmas carols and New Year’s songs, with folk instrumental ensemble. At Islington United Church.
- **JAN 24, 7PM:** The VIVA! Youth Singers of Toronto present “Beethoven’s 250th Anniversary Concert” at the Regis College Chapel.
- **JAN 25, 7:30PM:** “Last Night of the Proms,” Evan Mitchell conducts the Kingston Choral Society and Kingston Symphony in lively British music. At the Grand Theatre in Kingston.
- **FEB 02, 2:30PM:** University of Toronto Faculty of Music presents the Macmillan Singers and Men’s Chorus, under the direction of conductors David Fallis and Mark Ramsay, in “Choirs in Concert: All Creatures Great and Small.” At Church of the Redeemer in downtown Toronto.

Menaka Swaminathan is a writer and chorister, currently based in Toronto. She can be reached via choralscene@thewholenote.com.
Advent & Christmas
@ Yorkminster Park Baptist Church

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A TAPESTRY OF YULETIDE MAGIC
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 29TH
7:00PM

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A Fundraiser for the House of Compassion
TICKETS: $26 at the door
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CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15
4:30PM
A candlelight choral presentation featuring choirs and musicians of Yorkminster Park Baptist Church.

FREE ADMISSION. Doors open at 3:30 pm.

* THE ANNUAL *

City CAROL SING
SATURDAY, DEC. 7 - 2:00 PM
WITH SPECIAL GUESTS
Dina Pugliese • Murray McLauchlan
Marc Jordan • Ian Thomas

FREE ADMISSION
A collection will be taken for the Churches on-the-Hill Food Bank

NINE LESSONS & CAROLS
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22
4:30PM
Following the historic tradition of King’s College in Cambridge.
Featuring the Choirs of YPBC.

FREE ADMISSION. Doors open at 3:30 pm.

GLORIOUS SOUNDS OF HANDEL:
Messiah
Elmer Iseler Singers with the Amadeus Choir
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13
7:30 PM
TICKETS:
$55 REGULAR
$50 SENIOR
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Looking Ahead to 2020

PAUL ENNIS

Seong-Jin Cho, the 25-year-old South Korean winner of the 2015 Chopin Competition in Warsaw, is a polished performer whose life changed as a result of his Warsaw triumph. From playing 20 to 30 concerts a year, he went to 80 to 90; and, thankfully, no longer needed to participate in competitions. Because of The WholeNote’s production schedule, I missed his sold-out Koerner Hall recital on October 26, 2018, so I’m looking forward to his upcoming TSO appearance January 8, 9 and 11 in Beethoven’s revolutionary Piano Concerto No.4 conducted by Sir Andrew Davis.

Some critics have called Cho’s playing “poetic,” something he discussed on the British blog, Where Cherries Ripen, published on October 1, 2019. “What others say about my performances may accurately reflect some aspects of my playing style, but I cannot say I ever intend to sound ‘poetic’. If I may put it differently, there are times when I receive bad reviews, but I never intend to play badly. I think an instrumentalist’s unique sound is like the human voice. Everyone has a unique voice given to them, regardless of their intentions. For example, a tenor can never be a bass. Of course, I can force myself to perform wearing my heart on my sleeve, but this would not change who I fundamentally am. Everyone has a natural way of performing, and I play in my given way. I think audiences have been able to sense that personality.”

In the same interview, he also had interesting things to say about how he approaches playing a concerto with an orchestra, commenting on how most ideas are in the score already, so it is important to carefully study the score. “In my performances, what is most crucial is to be confident. That confidence, in my opinion, comes from the certainty that I know the score more than anyone else. Sitting between the orchestra and the audience, I must be ready to say, ‘I know this score much more than all of you.’ For this to happen, I have to carefully learn the score. For instance, if some dynamics markings are not taken into account because one wants to be different, such creativity should not come out from instinctive feelings. One should be able to explain why such liberties were taken, because one has ideally thought through one’s decisions before.” With this in mind, he says that before performances, rather than practise, he prefers to read the score again. “During performances, I don’t think much, as what I envisioned is fully internalised in my body and hands.” That being said, he also admitted that he gets particularly nervous and pressured when playing with a conductor who knows the piano well.

Signed by the prestigious Deutsche Grammophon yellow label after his Chopin triumph, he’s already released three CDs, the latest of which, Debussy, garnered wide acclaim. The Guardian wrote that Cho “brings his understated, coiled-spring pianism to Debussy, and his playing is as riveting as ever.”

In another interview, Cho told The Cross-Eyed Pianist (November 2018) that the most important influence on his musical life was meeting great musicians, “people like Myung-Whun Chung, Radu Lupu, Krystian Zimerman, Mikhail Pletnev, Alfred Brendel, Murray Perahia and many others … I learned a lot even while having a conversation with them.” And he revealed that taking part in competitions may have been the greatest challenges of his career so far. “I wanted to play for audiences across the world and I thought winning the competition was the easiest way to reach that goal,” he said. “And it was true. The Chopin Competition gave me a lot of opportunities, but I’m still against competitions. Many great musicians like Arcadi Volodos or Piotr Anderszewski didn’t win any competitions. The competition kills the musical idea, imagination and freedom. I felt so free after I won the Chopin Competition because I realized that I don’t have to do this kind of thing anymore.”

One rarely hears such candour expressed by an up-and-coming performer.

Two more must-see TSO programs

Acclaimed French pianist, the prolific Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, brings his wide-ranging musical compass to bear on Mozart’s first major piano concerto, the “Jeunehomme” K271, when he joins Bernard Labadie and the TSO, January 22, 23, and 26. Bavouzet is currently immersed in a Mozart concert project and Labadie is an expert on the composer; their confluence augurs well for a delightful concert, made

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Seong-Jin Cho

Beat by Beat | Classical & Beyond
all-the-more appealing with the addition of Mozart’s most melodious and heartfelt symphony, No.40, K550.

On January 31 and February 1, TSO principal cellist, Joseph Johnson, brings his consummate skill set to Dvořák’s Cello Concerto, with its contagious passion trumped only by its lyricism. Rising star – the TSO calls him “electrifying” – 31-year-old Uzbekistani conductor Aziz Shokhakimov leads the orchestra in Smetana’s indelible The Moldau from Ma Vlast and Mendelssohn’s Symphony No.3 “Scottish,” written 13 years after the composer’s extensive tour of Scotland when he was 20, and the last of his five symphonies despite its designation. The remarkable Shokhakimov, making his second appearance with the TSO, is currently the Kapellmeister at Deutsche Oper am Rhein, principal guest conductor at La Verdi Orchestra, Milan and artistic director of Tekfen Philharmonic Orchestra.

Music Toronto’s appealing lineup

Now in its 26th year, the much-loved Gryphon Trio has had a continuous relationship with Music Toronto since 1995, including ten years as their ensemble-in-residence from 1998. In what has become a regular late-autumn visit, the Gryphons this time (December 5) will be joined by Toronto-born international operatic bass, Robert Pomakov for a performance of Mussorgsky’s Songs and Dances of Death (arranged by Gary Kulesha). Beethoven’s delightful Kakanu Variations Op.121 opens the program which ends with Dvořák’s opulent Piano Trio No.3 in F Minor, Op.65.

With a long list of critically acclaimed, award-winning performances and recordings to his name, yet another distinguished Hyperion Records artist, 60-year-old Brit, Jonathan Plowright, has been described as “one of the finest living pianists” by Gramophone magazine. For his Toronto recital debut on December 17, Plowright has chosen an appealing program comprised of Brahms’ early Ballades, Op.10, Schumann’s ever-popular Kinderszenen, Op.15, Mozart’s delightful Variations on “Ah! Vous dirai-je, Maman,” K265 and Paderewski’s rarely heard excerpts from Humoresques de Concert, Book I Op.14. Once upon a time, the first-movement Menuet was world famous; it’s still instantly recognizable today. Plowright will also give a masterclass (free and open to the public) on December 18 at 11am in Walter Hall.

For their fourth concert with Music Toronto since 2001, on January 9, the Miro Quartet (winners of the Banff International String Quartet Competition in 1998) will perform a replica of the program the Kneisel Quartet performed on January 28, 1910 at the Schubert Club in St. Paul, MN. It’s part of the Miro’s Archive Project to evoke the flavour of a bygone time – the Kneisel Quartet was active from 1885 to 1917; Dvořák was a friend. Unlike concerts today, in which multi-movement works are typically performed in full, the Kneisel Quartet often programmed individual movements of new and recent works. This is reflected in the 1910 program, which features selections from string quartets by their contemporaries César Franck and Reinhold Glière. Also unlike today, the quartet often devoted a portion of their programs to the cello repertoire, as evident here in Adrien-François Servais’ Fantaisie sur deux Airs Russes for cello and piano. When touring works that required additional players, the quartet was joined by local musicians. In keeping with this spirit, the Miro collaborates with a local pianist wherever they perform this program, in this case with Lydia Wong, head of U of T’s piano department. Two pillars of the repertoire fill out the bill: Mozart’s Quartet in B-flat Major, K458 “The Hunt” opens the program; Schubert’s Quartet in D Minor, D810 “Death and the Maiden” brings it to a close.

To celebrate their 30th anniversary season, the scintillating St. Lawrence Quartet (founded in Toronto in 1989) has planned a special program on January 30 with each piece signifying an aspect of their musical life. For their love of Haydn, his Quartet Op.20 No.4 in D Major; for their fierce commitment to living composers, R.
Murray Schafer’s String Quartet No.3 (1981), which the SLSQ played at Music Toronto in 1996 and 2007; and Franck’s emotionally powerful Piano Quintet in F Minor, with guest pianist Stephen Prutsman (who performed the piece with the SLSQ here in 1997).

The Passion of Scrooge

It wouldn’t be Christmas without Charles Dickens’ A Christmas Carol and its redemptive protagonist Ebeneezer Scrooge. Last year, filmmaker H. Paul Moon’s adaptation of Jon Deak’s opera, The Passion of Scrooge; or A Christmas Carol, arrived too late to be included in our year-end issue, but it’s a worthwhile and timely addition to the joys of the season and deserves to be mentioned. Not only for Deak’s acclaimed score but even more so for Moon’s inventive cinematic adaptation. Part documentary, part performance piece, with a dash of fiction thrown in, the film is structured as a radio play with baritone William Sharp (who premiered the opera in 1997) performing all the parts. Deak, himself takes up the conductor’s baton for the orchestral rounds out the intriguing program.

CLASSICAL AND BEYOND QUICK PICKS

> DEC 8, 8PM: Gallery 345 presents CBC Music’s “next big cellist star,” 24-year-old Cameron Crozman and friends (among them, Pocket Concerts’ co-director, pianist Emily Rho) performing music by Britten, Schubert and Fauré (his masterful Piano Quartet No.1).

> DEC 14, 8PM: Kindred Spirits Orchestra presents 16-year-old prodigy Leonid Nediak playing Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No.4 at Flato Markham Theatre. Another teenager, violinist Ellis Sievers, is the soloist in Vaughan Williams’ exquisite The Lark Ascending; Kristian Alexander also conducts Prokofiev’s Symphony No.4.

> DEC 16, 8PM: The Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Music Society (KWCMS) presents the Penderecki String Quartet in the first installment of Beethoven’s complete string quartets – played in chronological order – beginning on his 249th birthday with Op. 18 Nos. 1, 2, and 3 and finishing on his 250th birthday, December 16, 2020.

> JAN 4, 3PM: 5 at the First Chamber Players presents some fancy string players – Yehonatan Berick, violin, Theresa Rudolph, viola, and Rachel Mercer, cello, among others – in “String Extravaganza IX” highlighted by Mendelssohn’s timeless Octet.

> JAN 18, 7:30PM: “Tooting Mozart’s Horn, Naturally!” the latest Pay What You Decide concert from Academy Concert Series features COC Orchestra principal hornist, Scott Wevers, in Mozart’s Horn Quintet in E-flat Major K407 and Hoffmeister’s Horn Octet in E-flat Major. Mozart’s String Quartet in B-flat Major K458 “The Hunt” rounds out the intriguing program.

> JAN 19, 2:30PM: The Gryphon Trio joins with conductor Bradley Thachuk and the Niagara Symphony Orchestra for a performance of Beethoven’s Triple Concerto. Completing the Beethoven trifecta are the Egmont Overture and the stirring Symphony No.5.

> JAN 19, 8PM: KWCMS presents Ensemble Made in Canada performing Mahler’s Piano Quartet and Brahms’ Piano Quartet No.3 in C Minor Op.80, written within a year of one another.


> JAN 27, 7:30PM: U of T Faculty of Music presents violinist Mark Fewer and pianist James Parker performing “Hall of Beethoven’s Complete Sonatas for Violin and Piano.” But which five will they play?

> FEB 2, 2PM: RCM presents Gábor Tarkóvi, principal trumpet of the Berlin Philharmonic since 2005, with Benjamin Smith, piano, in works by Hindemith, Gliere, Hovhaness, among others. In Mazzoleni Hall. Tarkóvi will give masterclasses (free and open to the public) in Walter Hall on February 6 at 1:10pm and 5pm and on February 7 at 10am and 2pm in Mazzoleni Hall.

Paul Ennis is the managing editor of The WholeNote.
January’s Distinguished Visitors

U of T New Music Festival

WENDALYN BARTLEY

One thing that has been consistent with the University of Toronto’s annual New Music Festival over the years is the presence of a visiting composer from another country or Canadian city. During last year’s festival in January 2019, it was Toshio Hosokawa, a leading composer from Japan, and the year before that in 2018, Canadian Nicole Lizée was given the honours. This visitorship is named the Roger D. Moore Distinguished Visitor in Composition, and was established by Roger Moore, a longtime supporter and philanthropist of new music. Sadly, Moore passed away in March of this year, and there will be a concert, as part of the festival, to honour him on January 21. More about what is on the program for that night below. This year’s visiting composer is André Mehmari, a leading Brazilian composer, pianist and arranger in both classical and popular music. Because of his diverse artistic accomplishments many of the events of the festival span both the jazz and contemporary music worlds, with the opening concert on January 12 combining electronic jazz, visuals and live electronics.

The festival continues to January 21 and interestingly, the various concerts, masterclasses and talks will be interwoven with the Royal Conservatory’s 21C Music Festival (see my story on Laurie Anderson elsewhere in this issue) which runs almost concurrently, a short walk from the U of T Faculty of Music. Having a plethora of new music events to choose from in the dead of winter is shaping up to be one way to beat the cold and gloom of January.

André Mehmari: As has been the case with some U of T festival Distinguished Visitors in Composition, you probably know less about André Mehmari now than you will come the end of January, by which time you will have introduced yourself to his wide-ranging repertoire. The January 15 concert, “From Bach to Latin America,” will feature a mixture of Baroque and jazz works with Mehmari on piano and Emmanuele Baldini on violin. These two performers will team up again the next evening, January 16, along with members of Orquesta de Camara de Valdivia, an ensemble from Chile directed by Baldini, for a concert of chamber works. Mehmari’s jazz and improvised music will be heard on January 18 in an evening with the U of T’s DOG Ensemble along with U of T jazz faculty members. Check his two composition masterclasses, January 14 and 15 at 10am in Walter Hall; and a songwriting class, January 17 at 7:30pm in Walter Hall, when students and the public alike will have an opportunity to engage with Mehmari in a more informal setting.

Karen Kieser Prize Concert: Another regular event at the New Music Festival is the Karen Kieser Prize Concert, with this year’s happening on January 14. This award is given annually to a promising graduate student in composition and this year’s winner is Francis Ubertelli, whose piece, Quartetto 2, will be performed by Montreal’s Quatuor Cobalt. The program this year will also feature the work of two Vancouver artists: Rachel Kiyó Iwaasa, on piano, performing two works by composer Hildegard Westerkamp – Klavierklang and Like A Memory – as well as a third electroacoustic work, Attending to Sacred Matters, to be diffused by Westerkamp.

Clear Things May Not Be Seen

BOB BECKER

VOCAL CHAMBER MUSIC OF

Never in Word (1998)
To Immortal Bloom (2017)
Cryin’ Time (1994).
Clear Things May Not Be Seen (2018)

featuring sopranos
Lindsay Kesselman and
Andrea Ludwig with string quartet,
clarinets, piano and percussion

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Walter Hall, University of Toronto
Faculty of Music FREE CONCERT SERIES music.utoronto.ca

Andre Mehmari
Marginalized genders access to opportunities and visibility. That all the works on this January 21 concert are composed by women, a piece that plays with ideas of union and separation. She was recently a translation of a Rumi poem by Coleman Barks and sought to create a solo violin and an ensemble of 15 musicians. Lim was inspired by a work composed by Australian-born Liza Lim in 2015 for Be Silent -- comes from the name of one of the works on the program -- works designed to the memory of Roger D. Moore. As I mentioned earlier in the column, Moore was passionately committed to supporting musical practices the composer encountered while visiting India. During Westerkamp’s visit to Toronto in January, she will also be participating in the Weather Soundings series of events supported by the U of T’s Jackman Humanities Institute. On January 13, a conversation with Westerkamp, Iwaasa, and British musicologist Daniel Grimley will take place at the Canadian Music Centre with playback of some of Westerkamp’s electroacoustic works along with a group discussion of sonic practices, listening and creative activism in the context of climate change.

**Remembering Roger D. Moore**: One final highlight of the U of T New Music Festival will be the January 21 concert, Speak, Be Silent, performed by U of T’s Contemporary Music Ensemble and dedicated to the memory of Roger D. Moore. As I mentioned earlier in the column, Moore was passionately committed to supporting musical life in Toronto, with a particular fondness for contemporary music, supporting both large and small musical organizations and individual artists. The title of this concert that honours his contribution comes from the name of one of the works on the program – Speak, Be Silent – a work composed by Australian-born Liza Lim in 2015 for solo violin and an ensemble of 15 musicians. Lim was inspired by a translation of a Rumi poem by Coleman Barks and sought to create a piece that plays with ideas of union and separation. She was recently appointed a professorship at Sydney’s Conservatorium of Music and part of her post is to be involved in a national women composer’s development program. I mention this here as a way of highlighting that all the works on this January 21 concert are composed by women, an important statement towards normalizing the practice of giving all marginalized genders access to opportunities and visibility.

The other works on the program include Kaija Saariaho’s *From the Grammar of Dreams*, composed in 1988 for solo voice(s) and up to six players; Bekah Sims’ *Foreverdark*, a 2019 cello concerto work for amplified cello with live electronics and chamber orchestra; and Unsuk Chin’s large ensemble work, Gougalon: Scenes from a Street Theatre, composed in 2009/2011 which is about an imaginary folk music. An additional note about these featured composers is that both Saariaho and Chin have been visiting composers during past 21C Festivals.

**The Mouths That Roar**: Expect your ears to pop at this lively January 10 concert, co-produced by New Music Concerts and the Music Gallery, with vocalists Gabriel Dharmoo and Janice Jackson. Montreal-based Dharmoo will be performing his *Anthropologies Imaginaires*, a work for solo voice and video which has been described as a mockodrama, all combining to invite the listener to imagine other possibilities and worlds from those already known. Using extended vocal techniques and elements of improvisation, this piece is both satirical, playful and profoundly serious, and is made up of 11 songs, each with accompanying gestures. Halifax-based Jackson will perform her solo program, “Voice Dance,” which features several works of contemporary music. Known as an adventurous performer of vocal music that pushes all boundaries while conveying a deep emotional connection with her out-of-the-box soundmaking, Jackson will perform compositions by Canadian composers Marie Pelletier, Derek Charke, Alice Ping Yee Ho and James Rolfe. Jackson’s willing exploration of the voice opens the door to the full array of what the human voice is capable of, and through her collaboration with composers, she is able to use her creative intuition to connect to the underlying stories within each piece.

**Tafelmusik Commissions**: During the 2019/2020 season, the Baroque orchestra Tafelmusik has undertaken a commissioning program to introduce contemporary works to their audiences. This past fall, world premieres by Cree composer Andrew Balfour, Italian composer Guido Morini, and Toronto-based James Rolfe were performed. Upcoming from January 16 to 19 during their “Gone with the Winds” concerts, they will perform a world premiere by Canadian Cecilia Livingston; and from February 6 to 9 in their “Dreaming Jupiter” program, Italian composer and gambist Vittorio Ghielmi joins the orchestra performing various Baroque works and the premiere of a composition of his own. ●

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**IN WITH THE NEW QUICK PICKS**

**DEC 6 AND 7, 8PM**: Music Gallery with Bad New Days present “Melancholiac: The Music of Scott Walker.” Part concert, part spectacle, part existential talk show.

**DEC 8, 8:30PM**: Red Shift Records presents the CD launch at the Tranzac Club of Harbour featuring six works for piano by Anna Höstman and performed by Cheryl Duvall

**DEC 10 TO 12 8PM**: Soundstreams presents their annual tribute to the holiday season with the electro-improv Electric Messiah, an upbeat reimagining of Handel’s classic Messiah.

**DEC 12, 7:30PM**: Canadian Music Centre presents both world and Ontario premieres of works performed by Arraymusic’s artistic director David Schotzko. Works by Bolton, Sherlock, Smallwood and others.

**DEC 12, 7:30PM**: Bunker Lane Press and the Piano Lunaire Project present their monthly full-moon event, “Cold Moon,” with works by Crumb, Kendall, Liebermann, Copland and Sherkin; with pianists Stephanie Chua, Adam Sherkin, Gregory Millar and Lisa Raposa.

**DEC 13, 8PM**: Spectrum Music at the Small World Music Centre presents their next concert, “Seven Wonders,” with compositions that focus on the theme of celebrating the beauty and preservation of our planet. New works created by Spectrum composers and guests James Ervin, William Lamoureux and Sina Fallah, along with jazz/world musician collective So Long Seven.

Wendalyn Bartley is a Toronto-based composer and electro-vocal sound artist. sounddreaming@gmail.com.
Against the Grain Theatre’s Ayre and other works by Osvaldo Golijov
SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, 8PM
KOERNER HALL
Performers include Miriam Khalil, Joel Ivany, Jamey Haddad, Barry Shiffman, Gabriel Radford, Michael Ward-Bergman, Juan Gabriel Olivas, Roberto Occhipinti, and Cantor Alex Stein.

21C Afterhours: Véronique Mathieu
SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, 10:30PM
TEMERTY THEATRE
A program titled True North, featuring works by Alice Ping Yee Ho, Derek Johnson, Adam Scime, and Barbara Croall.

Laurie Anderson: The Art of Falling
SATURDAY, JANUARY 18, 8PM
KOERNER HALL SOLD OUT!
Grammy Award-winning NYC composer Laurie Anderson will perform solo works and in collaboration with her long-time musical partner, cellist Rubin Kodheli. Perform solo works and in collaboration with her long-time musical partner, cellist Rubin Kodheli.

The GGS New Music Ensemble – “For Michael Colgrass”
SUNDAY, JANUARY 19, 1PM
MAZZOLENI CONCERT HALL FREE (TICKET REQUIRED)

Zakir Hussain and John Patitucci with Danilo Pérez, Brian Blade, and the Royal Conservatory Orchestra conducted by Zane Dalal
FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 8PM / ARTIST TALK 7PM
KOERNER HALL
Hear the Canadian premiere of Hussain’s tabla concerto, Peshkar, and the world premiere of Patitucci’s Hypocrisy for orchestra and jazz trio.

Danilo Pérez’s Global Messengers and Allison Au Quartet
SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 8PM
POSTLUDE PERFORMANCE
KOERNER HALL
The Royal Conservatory has commissioned both Pérez and Au to write new pieces, which will premiere at this concert.

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The only way to stay at the cutting edge of anything for 40 years, as Tapestry Opera has done, is to zigzag with the changing times – to go big when opportunity knocks, to hunker down when danger threatens, and, most important, to be able to recognize the difference between the two scenarios.

TAP:EX is Tapestry Opera’s instrument for just that – figuring out when to go for broke and when to duck and cover. The name is short for Tapestry Explorations and TAP:EX Augmented Opera, presented this past November 20 to 23 at Sidewalk Labs, was its fifth iteration since its founding in 2014 by Michael Hidetoshi Mori, Tapestry’s artistic director.

TAP:EX’s stated goal is to redefine the “elemental bounds of opera by challenging its notions of tradition, legacy, and purity, emphasizing emotional and artistic power over rules and norms.” Each of the four iterations so far has been different from the ones that preceded it: exploring the limits of the voice’s resistance to extreme physical exertion; probing the intersections between turntablism, film, soundscape and opera; inviting “local hard-core heroes F’cked Up to help frame a work that asked punk to look at opera and opera to look at punk”; and most recently, in 2018, bringing together Iranian composer Afarin Mansouri with emcee, playwright, librettist, agitator Donna-Michelle St. Bernard “in a conversation with the devil.”

With Augmented Opera, Tapestry again heads out into uncharted and potentially dangerous territory, both literally and figuratively. Sidewalk Labs, at 307 Lakeshore Blvd. E., where the opera was mounted, is a self-described “sister company” of Google spearheading Toronto’s eastern waterfront as a neighbourhood of the future. Their proposal is based in part on bringing cutting-edge technologies to bear on finding scalable solutions to profound issues relating to sustainable urban living. One example: the massive pillars and beams of the one-story Sidewalk Lab building are fabricated from “sustainable mass timber” (compressed sawdust) and could support a future 10- to 15-story building on the site. Fundamental to their vision is also almost unrestricted aggregation of personal digital data, from people buying in to the vision.

The imaginative reach of the proposal, manifested everywhere one looks in the space, is staggering both in scale and fineness of detail – as well worth a visit as any Museum of Contemporary Art could be. The implications of the proposal are equally staggering, in both their social and ethical implications, dividing participants in the ongoing consultation into camps and houses as plagued as any in the grandest of operas. The premise of Augmented Opera, might be fanciful elsewhere. Here (comfortably or uncomfortably, depending on your point of view), it fits right in.

The premise is that we, the audience, have walked into a Silicon Valley-style product launch, where we will be offered the opportunity to become early adopters of Elysium, “a new cloud-based technology that re-imagines the afterlife as a perfect curation of our best memories.” Debi Wong is co-director of the show (and founding director of Tapestry’s key partner in this project, Vancouver-based re:Naissance Opera). Playing the role of CEO of Elysium, she calls for volunteers to test the technology; mezzo-soprano Lauren Segal, in the role of Eurydice, leaps up from the audience and puts the virtual reality hood over her head before the rest of us can figure out whether participating would be likely to result in embarrassment. And it’s chocks away!

Segal is joined vocally in exploring composer Benton Roark’s intriguing vocal score by two “memory Eurydices” (mezzo Lyndsay Promane and soprano Vanessa Oude-Reimerink), as she revisits younger and older memories of key life events that she will have to choose between in constructing her ideal afterlife. Roark’s intricate score is delivered by the composer himself on synth, guitar and Lumatone, along with Michael Shannon, Tapestry’s music director, on piano and keyboard. As audience members we don black masks for the first while – a kind of sympathetic sensory deprivation, only removing them on instruction at a certain point in the narrative.

I came away from the event with a strong sense of the towering thing Augmented Opera might potentially turn out to be (a bit like the potential of the sustainable mass-timber ground floor of the space the event took place in). But equally with a sense that in its present state it was annoyingly less than the sum of its considerable parts, because of inattention to one of the “rules and norms” of legacy opera that, from a purely pragmatic perspective doesn’t deserve to be ditched – namely that sopranos singing in English need surtitles, especially in a space where acoustics are an afterthought. As I sat with my Elysium sleeping mask on, straining to hear any of the words, let alone follow the plot, I kept myself going by imagining that when I took the mask off, everything that had been sung would be there, in all its mundanity and glory, on the giant screens at the back of the stage, and would, from that point on, become part of the construct of the show itself: the intersection between virtual and analogue reality. No such luck.

That the work had the incipient power to make me care enough to be pissed off about its deficiencies is a big deal though, speaking to the importance of the exploratory work the company is continuing to do. All the remaining shows in this remarkable 40th season speak to how the importance of the exploratory work the company is continuing to do.

The premise is that we, the audience, have walked into a Silicon Valley-style product launch, where we will be offered the opportunity to become early adopters of Elysium, “a new cloud-based technology that re-imagines the afterlife as a perfect curation of our best memories.” Debi Wong is co-director of the show (and founding director of Tapestry’s key partner in this project, Vancouver-based re:Naissance Opera). Playing the role of CEO of Elysium, she calls for volunteers to test the technology; mezzo-soprano Lauren Segal, in the role of Eurydice, leaps up from the audience and puts the virtual reality hood over her head before the rest of us can figure out whether participating would be likely to result in embarrassment. And it’s chocks away!

Segal is joined vocally in exploring composer Benton Roark’s intriguing vocal score by two “memory Eurydices” (mezzo Lyndsay Promane and soprano Vanessa Oude-Reimerink), as she revisits younger and older memories of key life events that she will have to choose between in constructing her ideal afterlife. Roark’s intricate score is delivered by the composer himself on synth, guitar and Lumatone, along with Michael Shannon, Tapestry’s music director, on piano and keyboard. As audience members we don black masks for the first while – a kind of sympathetic sensory deprivation, only removing them on instruction at a certain point in the narrative.

I came away from the event with a strong sense of the towering thing Augmented Opera might potentially turn out to be (a bit like the potential of the sustainable mass-timber ground floor of the space the event took place in). But equally with a sense that in its present state it was annoyingly less than the sum of its considerable parts, because of inattention to one of the “rules and norms” of legacy opera that, from a purely pragmatic perspective doesn’t deserve to be ditched – namely that sopranos singing in English need surtitles, especially in a space where acoustics are an afterthought. As I sat with my Elysium sleeping mask on, straining to hear any of the words, let alone follow the plot, I kept myself going by imagining that when I took the mask off, everything that had been sung would be there, in all its mundanity and/or glory, on the giant screens at the back of the stage, and would, from that point on, become part of the construct of the show itself: the intersection between virtual and analogue reality. No such luck.

That the work had the incipient power to make me care enough to be pissed off about its deficiencies is a big deal though, speaking to the importance of the exploratory work the company is continuing to do. All the remaining shows in this remarkable 40th season speak to how learning from exploration is in Tapestry’s DNA. No reason this show should be any different.
Against the Grain: Hard on the heels of the triumphal cross-country ten-year-anniversary pub crawl of their version of their La bohème, Against the Grain remounts another of their landmark shows, Figaro’s Wedding (music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, libretto by Joel Iwany, with new string quartet arrangement). Staged as a real wedding with audience members attending as guests, it runs at the Enoch Turner Schoolhouse (itself an occasional wedding venue) from December 3 to 20. Writing about the original 2013 production for the blog Musical Toronto, critic John Terauds said: “Stage director Joel Iwany and music director Christopher Mokrzewski have fashioned an all-new English-language libretto that rollicks along at a brisk clip. There is plenty to entertain an opera newbie – and a steady volley of inside-joke material to keep opera diehards chuckling from beginning to end.” For details, see our music theatre listings or visit againstthegraintheatre.com.

Toronto Operetta Theatre: Starting December 28, for a five-show run that leapfrogs into the new year, Toronto Operetta Theatre continues its successful tradition of being just about the only show in town to offer significant musical escapism during the Christmas-to-New Year artistic doldrums. This year it’s The Gypsy Baron by Johann Strauss II. Derek Bate, conducts; Guillermo Silva-Marin, stage director, will as always make the most of the cozy confines of the lane Mallet Theatre, with the music itself as the star of the show.

And if operetta is your thing: Starting January 31 and continuing February 1, 7, 8 and 9, at the Don Wright Faculty of Music in London, Opera at Western offers up The Mikado in the Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University. See our Beyond the GTA listings for details. And on January 24, St. Anne’s Music and Drama Society, the foremost community proponent of the operettas of Gilbert and Sullivan in these parts, commences a seven-performance run of Patience in the St. Anne’s Parish Hall, 651 Dufferin St.

Salute to Vienna: Twenty-five winters ago, Attila and Marion Glatz took the plunge. The previous year they had acted on a hunch and rented the George Weston Recital Hall in North York for a New Year’s Day performance of “Salute to Vienna” (the “salute” of the title being a nod to the Vienna Philharmonic’s New Year’s Concert from the Golden Hall in Vienna’s Musikverein). The cautionary wise had told the Glatzes they were crazy – that attempting to get Torontonians to go out to such a thing on New Year’s Day was folly. So they switched from the 1,100-seat George Weston to the 2,500-seat Roy Thomson Hall, at 2:30pm on New Year’s Day, and the rest, as they say, is history! For details on this year’s Salute to Vienna, and its New Year’s Eve sister show, Bravissimo! Opera’s Greatest Hits, see the listings or visit www.glatzconcerts.com.

David Pelman can be reached at publisher@thewholenote.com.
From Pinocchio to Poppins
A Cornucopia of Family Fun

JENNIFER PARR

The holiday season is almost here, overflowing with family-oriented musical theatre offerings, beginning with YPT’s beautiful new production of The Adventures of Pinocchio in a musical version by Canadians Neil Bartram and Brian Hill. Originally commissioned by the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, this is the Canadian premiere of a delightful 75-minute version of Carlo Collodi’s classic tale of the wooden puppet who longs to become a real human boy.

I have to admit that Pinocchio has never been one of my favourite fairy tales, even in the iconic 1940 Disney animated film, but I was completely won over by this version. At its heart is a warmth and gentleness that focuses on how the impulsive puppet learns through his (sometimes scary) misadventures and impulsive mistakes how to start thinking of others before himself, that life is about making (sometimes very hard) choices, but if he has courage, and looks inside himself, he can find the right choices to make and achieve his dream of becoming a real boy. Sheila McCarthy’s imaginative production is fast-paced and fun, with the young dynamic cast moving nonstop through multiple scene and character changes. Veteran Shawn Wright himself, he can find the right choices to make and achieve his dream of becoming a real boy. Sheila McCarthy’s imaginative production is fast-paced and fun, with the young dynamic cast moving nonstop through multiple scene and character changes. Veteran Shawn Wright as a sympathetic Geppetto and Malindi Ayienga as a majestic Blue Fairy anchor the story while Connor Lucas as Pinocchio, though wearing a half Harlequin-like mask, wins the audience’s heart with his impulsive energy and vulnerability – and fantastic tap dancing. Joanna Yu’s storybook design for set and costumes perfectly matches his impulsive energy and vulnerability – and fantastic tap dancing. Joanna Yu’s storybook design for set and costumes perfectly matches the material, and hearing the children in the theatre reacting audibly as events unfold adds to the fun.

Pinocchio continues at Young People’s Theatre until January 5 (suggested for ages five and up).

The Nutcracker: Another tale of magic and children learning through adventure is the National Ballet of Canada’s The Nutcracker, an annual tradition for many families. In choreographer James Kudelka’s version set in 19th-century Russia, we meet quarrelling brother and sister, Misha and Marie, at their family’s fabulous Christmas party complete with a dancing horse, performing bears, and the magician-like Uncle Nikolai who gives all the children presents, including a wooden Nutcracker doll for Marie. That night, while the clock strikes midnight, the Christmas tree grows immeasurably tall and the children enter a magical world where first they have to work together to help the Nutcracker (who has transformed into a real young soldier) in an epic battle against the evil Mouse Tsar before travelling to the magical lands of the Snow Queen and Sugar Plum Fairy. One of the delights of this sumptuous production is the number of young people onstage: 98 out of the total cast of 233 each night are students from every class of the National Ballet School as well as younger “associates” from various public schools who play mice and Little Bo Peep’s sheep. Of course, there is also Tchaikovsky’s beautiful score underlying everything, played live by the NBOC orchestra.

The Nutcracker plays from December 12 to January 4 at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts.

The Panto: On the more raucous side of holiday fare is the “Panto,” made an indelible part of Toronto’s Christmas season by Ross Petty Productions for the past 23 years. Following the centuries-old British tradition of starting with a well-known fairy tale and turning it into a not-so-veiled commentary on the current state of the world at large, then filling it with broad comedy, fabulous dancing and top-notch singing of well-known tunes with new lyrics, the Panto is a great mix of entertainment for both children and parents. This year’s offering is Lil’ Red Robin Hood (with a book by Matt Murray), clearly a mix of a couple of favourite stories. Aply for the setting of both stories, it takes place not in the Elgin Theatre as usual, since the superb company of Come From Away are still in residence, but upstairs in the same building in the beautiful Winter Garden Theatre with its ceiling of tree branches and “real” leaves. Given this setting, director Tracey Fyle is going to literally immerse the audience in Robin Hood’s world using not just the stage but the entire theatre space to tell this fun-filled tale. Robert Markus, from Dear Evan Hansen, will have a chance to bring back the wacky side he showed in Stratford’s The Rocky Horror Show last season as Lil’ Red, and Sara-Jeanne Hosie, who was a hit in the Panto last year as the Wicked Witch of the West, returns as the evil Sheriff of Naughtingham. (No, that’s not a typo, this is Panto.) Lil’ Red Robin Hood plays until January 4.

Pantos are popping up all over Ontario, summer stock in effect becoming holiday stock for the next six weeks or so, with versions of Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and Jack and the Beanstalk taking place alongside lots of musicals, and many versions, both musical and not, of A Christmas Carol, including Tim Burton’s adaptation with music by Paul Sportelli at the Shaw Festival’s Royal St George’s Theatre (with the charismatic Michael Therriault returning as Scrooge). Shaw is also presenting a second holiday show this year (running now until December 22). Irving Berlin’s classic musical, Holiday Inn, (best known from the film starring Fred Astaire and Bing Crosby) directed by Shaw Festival associate artistic director, and author of the Last Wife play series, Kate Hennig.

Mary Poppins: While the Stratford Festival doesn’t offer a holiday show, nearby in London at the Grand Theatre, a selection of Stratford and Shaw stars can be found in Mary Poppins including Deborah Hay (most recently Roxanne in Cyrano at Shaw) as Mary, Ben Carlson (The Front Page) as Mr. Banks, and Alexis Gordon (Brigadoon, Guys and Dolls) as Mrs. Banks. This is the stage version of the beloved 1964 film based on the stories of P.L. Travers, with some new songs added to favourites such as Chim Chim Chir ee, and Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, and a revised book by Downton Abbey’s Julian Fellowes. In Mary Poppins, it is not just the children, but the whole family, who go on a journey of discovery, and it is famously the children who begin it all by writing a letter looking for the perfect nanny. Luckily, it is Mary Poppins who answers and who, although she is a disciplinarian, is so in a way that always includes kindness, generosity, and fun. With her philosophy of “anything can happen if you let it” she helps the Banks family back onto the right path once more, along the way taking them, and us, on a wonderful journey full of the discovery of the magic all around us. Another wonderful show to share with family in the holidays. Mary Poppins plays November 29 to December 29.

For more musical choices to see in the holidays and new year, both family friendly and more experimental fare, please see our musical choices to see in the holidays and new year, both family friendly and more experimental fare, please see our
MUSIC THEATRE QUICK PICKS

▶ ONGOING TO JAN 5, 8PM: Piaf/Dietrich: A Legendary Affair, Mirvish Productions, CAA Theatre. Not for children unless they have parents who play the songs of Edith Piaf and Marlene Dietrich all the time, this intriguing show about the deep friendship between the two stars has been extended again by popular demand.

▶ NOV 26 TO DEC 15, 8PM: Stars: Together, Crows Theatre, Guloien Theatre. Not for children. Described by its creators as a “theatre/concert hybrid by one of Canada’s most theatrical Indie-rock bands.” Two years in development by Crows’ Artistic Director Chris Abraham and members of the band Stars, notably actor/musician Torquil Campbell, this is a no-holds-barred concert/play about the “family” dynamics of a band that has played and toured together for 20 years.

▶ NOV 27 TO JAN 5: Cats, Mirvish Productions, Princess of Wales Theatre. The magical combination of T.S. Eliot and Andrew Lloyd Webber is back, but, in a possibly audience-polarizing move, with new choreography by Andy Blankenbuehler, inspired by, but replacing, the original dances by Gillian Lynne.

▶ ONGOING FROM NOV 29: Stand! A movie musical in movie theatres. Usually I don’t include movie musicals in my listings but I am making an exception as this is based on the acclaimed 2005 Canadian stage-musical Strik! by Danny Schur and Rick Chafe. A Romeo-and-Juliet tale set amidst the country-changing Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, there are all too many analogies to be made to our own times.


▶ DEC 7 TO JAN 5: Bend It Like Beckham: The Musical. St Lawrence Centre for the Arts. A highly anticipated new, mostly Canadian, production of the musical based on the beloved 2002 film.

▶ DEC 12 TO JAN 14: The Nutcracker. Meridan Hall (formerly the Sony Centre). Toronto International Ballet Theatre and the Bolshoi Ballet join forces to bring a different version of this classic ballet, with a cast including many young Toronto dancers led by two guest stars from the Bolshoi: Anastasia Stashkevich and Vyacheslav Lopatin.

▶ JAN 7 TO 18: The Solitudes, Aluna Theatre in association with Nightwood Theatre. Inspired by Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s One Hundred Years of Solitude, this new experimental-group creation uses original musical compositions by Brandon Valdivia, along with spoken text, to tell the story of eight women exploring the threads of history and bloodlines.

▶ JAN 17 TO FEB 1: Legally Blonde, Hart House Theatre. The new year begins with a high-energy, fun story of female empowerment through witty dialogue, based on the iconic movie starring Reese Witherspoon, and with a score and lyrics that effect a perfect translation from screen to stage. This is a university production but it will be directed by Saccha Dennis who sings the heartbreaking I Am Here in the Toronto company of Come From Away.

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.
Sound the Bugle!

JACK MACQUARRIE

Last night, as I drove home after a rehearsal, I heard on the radio to expect a once-in-a-lifetime event at precisely 11:15 pm—the most spectacular meteor shower in over 30 years. As I looked out of the window, though, I was barely able to see the road in front of me, through the dense fog. Now, sitting at the computer, staring at the screen, I am dealing with a dearth of information, unusual at this time of year, about happenings in the band world. Usually at this time of year, I would expect to receive quite a quantity of information on Christmas concerts, festive-season events or holiday shows. A temporary blip perhaps, or maybe just a sign of the busy times we live in. Since I can’t write about what I haven’t been sent, though, it gives me permission to write about what I like.

Speaking of signs of the times

At a recent concert of the combined bands of HMCS York from Toronto and HMCS Star from Hamilton, I was stunned to see Lieutenant Commander Jack t’Mannetje sitting in the audience rather than on stage conducting. I then learned that Jack, who has been the Director of the York Band for many years, has been promoted. He is now executive officer of HMCS York, Navy lingo for second-in-command. It’s rare to see a military band conductor promoted to a position of command. Congratulations, Jack. As for the duties of band director, that falls to longtime band member, chief petty officer Maggie Birch. Again, congratulations to Maggie.

At this time of year it is quite common for community bands to hold a seasonal party for band members and partners, or friends. After having such a party for years, the Newmarket Citizens Band is taking a different approach. They will be holding a “Band Festival Social” at their last rehearsal of the year on Tuesday, December 17, beginning with a 45-minute rehearsal of selections suggested by all band members. After that, the rest of the evening will be a time to mingle, get to know fellow bandmates and guests, and celebrate the end to another successful band year. If I were to have a say in what gets rehearsed, I would be requesting the march On the Square. As mentioned in a previous column, that march is one of my most perversely ear worms. I have heard it on recordings over the years, but never heard it, or played it in a live performance. It’s time.

Bugles again

As my regular readers know, over the past few years I have lamented, in this column, on the demise of the ceremonial bugle. Whether the basic bare copper model with the brass trim on the bell, or a more grandiose silver-plated version, the sound was the same. Since it is possible to play all bugle music on a standard trumpet, many bands abandoned the need to own bugles, usually for convenience. The warm, mellow, soothing tone of the bugle was almost universally replaced by the more strident crisp tone of the trumpet.

Then, this past summer, during the funeral service for Fred Barnard of Uxbridge, who, as a member of The Queen’s Own Rifles regiment, landed on Juno Beach in Normandy on D-Day in 1944, during the customary playing of The Last Post from the rear of the chapel, I was stunned to hear a real bugle, not a trumpet, being played, in full uniform, by the bugler from The Queen’s Own Rifles Band, flawlessly and with beautiful tone.

As mentioned in previous columns, the key to this unexpected development was that this bugle was modified to take a standard trumpet mouthpiece, one of the problems with the traditional copper bugle being that the mouthpiece has a very different shank from a trumpet. With most trumpet players reluctant to play bugle calls on an unfamiliar mouthpiece, this new instrument allows any trumpet player to just use their regular trumpet mouthpiece. As an additional benefit, it also has a tuning slide so that it may be tuned with a band or orchestra. It’s a win-win situation. Best of all, the instrument is made to order, locally, and I was able to track down the craftsman who makes them, who, in a recent telephone conversation confirmed that all of the components to make them to order are now on hand. Since Fred Barnard had been a longtime member of Branch 170 of The Royal Canadian Legion in Uxbridge, I raised the idea at a recent legion meeting that it might be fitting for his branch of the Legion to acquire such a bugle in Fred’s honour. Within minutes the concept was approved, and before the end of that meeting, one member made a substantial financial donation towards such a purchase. A bugle-purchase fund was established. On Remembrance Day many more donors came forward, and the bugle will soon be a reality. I also mentioned this new bugle to Jack t’Mannetje of HMCS York, and have learned that they too will be getting one!

Both of these organizations intend to have these as commemorative instruments with appropriate engraving. For the one in Uxbridge, the engraving will be to honour Fred Barnard. In the case of HMCS York, it will probably commemorate some significant Canadian Naval action such as the Battle of The Atlantic. Now, these two bands have one final decision to make: will these bugles be given a lacquer finish, or be silver plated?

Flutes

In last month’s issue I mentioned a joint concert of Toronto-based Flute Street choir and Les flûtistes de Montréal. After that concert I chatted with Flute Street’s founder, Nancy Nourse, about the many different sizes of flute and suggested that I would love to get a photo of all of the different sizes with some descriptions of the unique characteristics of each. I am looking forward to that opportunity. I also learned that the monster instrument that I referred to as the giant “sub contrabass flute” has now been renamed the “double contrabass flute.”

On my local scene

Living in the small hamlet of Goodwood, we are regularly treated to interesting musical performances in nearby Uxbridge. Last month I mentioned a concert with The Fanfarones performing a new work, Canoe Dancing, by local composer Stu Beaudoin. This past month we were treated to a performance of Tchaikovsky’s little-known Manfred Symphony, played by the local Orpheus Symphonietta under the direction of the same Stu Beaudoin. I was stunned to see the wind section of this small orchestra. There they were: four trumpets, four French horns, three trombones, four flutes and four clarinets, plus two oboes and two bassoons. After the performance I was chatting with Ralston Evans, one of the trombonists who I had played with some years ago. I had not seen him for some time, since he had moved to another town some distance away. However, I was sure that he was playing a new trombone that I had not seen him play before. When I asked him about this new instrument, his reply stunned me. “It’s the one that I bought from you years ago.” Great memory!

New instrument

Recently, I learned about a new instrument which has nothing to do with standard concert bands, but fascinated me. The instrument, developed by composer and instrument-builder Benton Roark, is a glass marimba called the lumiphone. When I heard of this instrument I went to YouTube, and there it was being played by a true virtuoso of that instrument. I would strongly recommend a visit to that site.
**Just missed**

Almost every month we receive notices of concerts which are scheduled in the last days of a month. They will take place after the due date for this column, when the copy is headed for the printer, but before the issue of *The Wholenote* is printed. One such event will be a concert on Saturday, November 30 at 2pm in Victoria College Chapel, University of Toronto. Peter Margolian and Friends will have presented a chamber music concert featuring a wide range of small chamber groups. The one number on the program which particularly interested me was the *Sonata for Trombone and Piano* by composer Halsey Stevens. As I write, I hope to attend this performance. A few months ago, I received a copy of this work from Peter to see if I might be interested in playing it. As I skimmed over the trombone part, frequently skipping from bass clef to tenor clef and treble clef, I decided that I should not attempt it. I showed the music to a number of friends who are quite proficient on the trombone. They all declined any opportunity to attempt this work. In the announcement which I received from Peter, I see that Ian Cowie will be the trombonist. I am looking forward to hearing him perform it.

**Coming events**

In addition to its regular monthly noon-hour concert, which occurs on the first Thursday of every month, the Encore Symphonic Concert Band will present its annual Christmas concert on Saturday, December 7 at 7pm, in its regular rehearsal/concert venue, Wilmar Heights Event Centre, 963 Pharmacy Ave. Featured soloists will include special guest vocalist Sharon Smith, along with various band members (including band director John Liddle) in an upbeat program of holiday favourites. Everyone is invited for a photo op with Santa at intermission, when refreshments will also be served.

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**QUICK PICKS**

Finally, from our listings, in chronological order, “bare bones” information about a few upcoming concerts that, while not necessarily part of my official beat, caught my eye for one reason or another. Please consult *The WholeNote* listings sections for details.

- **DEC 1, 7PM:** Barrie Concert Band. *Christmas at the Beach*. Lighthouse Community Church, Wasaga Beach.
- **DEC 1, 3PM:** Guelph Concert Band. *Holiday Traditions*. E.L. Fox Auditorium, John F. Ross Collegiate Institute, Guelph.
- **DEC 1, 3PM:** York University Department of Music. *York University Wind Symphony*. Tribute Communities Recital Hall, Accolade East, YU, Toronto.
- **DEC 4, 12:30PM:** Don Wright Faculty of Music. *Western University Symphonic Band*. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, London.
- **DEC 7, 2PM:** Barrie Concert Band. *A Christmas Chocolate Box*. Collier Street United Church, Barrie.
- **DEC 8, 1:30PM:** Borealis Big Band. *A Little Taste of Christmas*. Newmarket Old Town Hall, Newmarket.
- **DEC 12, 7PM:** Blythwood Winds. *Be Our Guest: Batman, Dragons and Disney*. Bur dock Music Hall, Toronto.
- **DEC 13, 8PM:** Aurora Community Band. *Hooked on Classics*. Trinity Anglican Church (Aurora).
- **DEC 14, 7:30PM:** The Salvation Army. *Christmas with the Salvation Army*. Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto.
- **JAN 25, 7:30PM:** Flute Street. *Goin’ Places*. Heliconian Hall, Toronto.
- **JAN 26, 2PM:** St. Anne’s Music and Drama Society. *Gilbert & Sullivan’s Patience*. St. Anne’s Parish Hall, Toronto.
- **FEB 6, 7:30PM:** University of Toronto Faculty of Music. *Wind Ensemble Concerts: Sharing*. MacMillan Theatre, Edward Johnson Building, Toronto.
- **FEB 7, 7:30PM:** University of Toronto Faculty of Music. *Wind Symphony Concerts*. MacMillan Theatre, Edward Johnson Building, Toronto.

Jack MacQuarrie plays several brass instruments and has performed in many community ensembles. He can be contacted at bandstand@thewholenote.com.

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**CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT**

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 4:30PM**

A traditional candlelight choral presentation featuring choirs and musicians of Yorkminster Park.

**NINE LESSONS & CAROLS**

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 4:30PM**

Following the historic tradition of King’s College in Cambridge.

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Admission is FREE for both events. Doors open at 3:30pm.
The WholeNote listings are arranged in five sections:

**A. GTA (GREATER TORONTO AREA)** covers all of Toronto plus Halton, Peel, York and Durham regions.

**B. BEYOND THE GTA** covers many areas of Southern Ontario outside Toronto and the GTA. Starts on page 64.

**C. MUSIC THEATRE** covers a wide range of music types: from opera, operetta and musicals, to non-traditional performance types where words and music are in some fashion equal partners in the drama. Starts on page 69.

**D. IN THE CLUBS (MOSTLY JAZZ)** is organized alphabetically by club. Starts on page 71.

**E. THE ETCETERAS** is for galas, fundraisers, competitions, screenings, lectures, symposia, masterclasses, workshops, singalongs and other music-related events (except performances) which may be of interest to our readers. Starts on page 73.

**F. A GENERAL WORD OF CAUTION.** A phone number is provided with every listing in The WholeNote—indeed, we won’t publish a listing without one. Concerts are sometimes cancelled or postponed; artists or venues may change after listings are published. Please check before you go out to a concert.

**G. HOW TO LIST.** Listings in The WholeNote in the four sections above are a free service available, at our discretion, to eligible presenters. If you have an event, send us your information no later than the 8th of the month prior to the issue or issues in which your listing is eligible to appear.

**H. LISTINGS DEADLINE.** The next issue covers the period from February 1 to March 7, 2020. All listings must be received by 11:59pm, Wednesday January 8.

**I. LISTINGS.** Listings can be sent by email to listings@thewholenote.com or by using the online form on our website. We do not receive listings by phone, but you can call 416-323-2232 x27 for further information.

**J. LISTINGS ZONE MAP.** Visit our website to search for concerts by the zones on this map: thewholenote.com.

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**Sunday December 1**

- **1:00:** Royal Conservatory of Music. Sunday Interlude Series: Jinjoo Cho, violin. Mazoleni Concert Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0020. Free (ticket required). Tickets available a week prior to concert date.
- **2:00:** Candelina. The Music Speaks. Schubert: Arpeggione Sonata; Mendelssohn: Sonata No.1 Op.45; Debussy; Sonata; Chopin: Polonaise Op.26/7; Fauré: Elégie Op.24 and others. Peter Cushey, cello; Mariko Kamaichi-Cushey, piano. St. Andrew-by-the-Lake Anglican Church, Cibola Ave., Toronto Island. 416-822-0613. $30. Brunch ($20) at 12:30pm. Reservations required. Also Dec 27 (9:30pm, St. George by the Grange - concert only).
- **2:00:** Gallery 345. The Art of the Piano. Shoshana Telmer: Four Ballades; Debussy: Twelve Etudes. 345 Sorauren Ave. 416-822-9781 or info@gallery345.com or eventbrite.ca. $25, $15(st). Cash only at the door.
- **2:00:** Gallery 345. The Art of the Piano: Shoshana Telmer; Alexina Louie: Memories in an Ancient Garden; Bach: Italian Concerto; Liszt: Sonetto 104 del Petrarch; Liszt: Valse d ’ Obermann; Chopin: Four Ballades. 345 Sorauren Ave. 416-822-9781 or info@gallery345.com or eventbrite.ca. $25, $15(st). Cash only at the door.
- **3:00:** Studio 21. Silent Night; Twelve Days of Christmas; Hal lelujah Chorus. Sara Papini, soprano; Rocco Rupolo, tenor; Paolo Busato, conductor. Villa Colombo, Sala Caboto, 40 Playfair Ave. 416-789-2113. $35; $20(youth 13-16); free(12 and under). Fundraiser for the purchase of new beds.
- **3:00:** Off Centre Music Salons. Runaway Waltz. Works by Strauss, Debussy, Poulenc, Glinka, Tchaikovsky and others. Allison Angelo, soprano; Ernesto Ramirez, tenor; Ilana Zarankin, soprano; Helen Becque, piano; Inna Perkis, piano; Boris Zarankin, piano. Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, 427 Bloor St. W. 416-466-8233. $50; $40(stsr); $15(13-25); $5(12 and under).
- **3:00:** Syrinx Concerts Toronto. Chamber Music. Haydn: Gypsy Trio; Mendelssohn: Piano Trio No.2; Schumann: Piano Trio; Ka Nin: “Among Friends”; Jean-Luc Therrien, piano; Mai Tagagami, violin; Ziadoum Fung, cello. Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave. 416-654-0877 or syrinxconcerts.ca/tickets. $30; $20(st), Cash or cheque only at the door.
- **3:00:** Thomas Beil. Organ Concert. John Paul Farahat, organ, St. Paul’s Bloor Street, 27 Bloor St. E. 416-961-8194.
- **3:00:** York Symphony Orchestra. Romantic Promises. Brahms: Piano Concerto No.1; Sibelius: Symphony No.1. Jarred Dunn, piano. Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, 10268 Yonge St., Richmond Hill. 905-787-8871. $32; $27(st); $15(st). Also Nov 30(8pm, Trinity Anglican, Aurora).
- **3:00:** York University Department of Music. York University Wind Symphony. Bill Thomas, director. Tribute Communities Recital Hall, Accolade East, YU. 4700 Keele St. 416-736-5888. $15, $10(stsr).
- **4:00:** Andrew Adair. Seven Allegorical Pictures by Svirceff: Efstath. Andrew Adair, organ. Church of St. Mary Magdalene.
Monday December 2

12:00 noon: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. U of T Percussion: Post Restitut. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park St. 416-978-3750. Free. Open to the public.
12:30: York University Department of Music. Instrumental Masterclass in Concert. Tribute Communities Recital Hall, Accolade East, YL. 4700 Keele St. 416-775-2700 x20054. Free.
7:30: Twas the Night Before Christmas. In Concert. Blessedsong Church, 24 Chertian Ave. $35/$25(slr/ht). Also Dec 22(Our Lady of Sorrows Church).
7:00: Chorismus. An Evening of Christmas Music: Guests: Alex Blvd; flute; Damian Richardson; percussion; Lorna Richardson, accompanist; Bob Richardson, conductor. Thornhill United Church, 25 Elgin St., Thornhill. 905-731-8383. Free, but a non-perishable offering for the food bank.
7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Guitar Orchestra. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park St. 416-978-3750. Free. Open to the public.
8:00: University of Toronto Campus Philharmonic Orchestra. Spring Concert. Tchaikovsky: Swan Lake Suite, Op.20a; Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No.2; Emery: New work. Alexander Panizza, piano; Lorenzo Gugenheim, conductor. Royal Conservatory of Music, Upper Jazz Studio, 90 Wellesley St. W. 416-408-0208 or tmchoir.org. $35-$78; $20(VoxTix 30 and under). Also Dec 4.
7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Jazz Concerts. U of T 12tet; Kris Davis piano and composer; Terry Promise, conductor; Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park St. 416-408-0208. $20($10(st)). Of U of T students admitted free with a valid Tcard, space permitting.
8:00: Royal Thomson Hall. Orchestral: Royal Wood and Friends. Guests: Toronto Symphony Orchestra, 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. $40-$62(40).

Wednesday December 4

12:30: Organix Concerts/All Saints King-sway. Kingsway Organ Series Concert. Dudley Oakes, organ. All Saints Kingsway Anglican Church, 2850 Bloor St. W. 416-571-3680 or organixconcerts.ca. Free, or a free-will offering appreciated.

Thursday December 5

8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. TD Jazz Concerts Series: Chuchu Valdés: Jazz Batá. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. $40-$95.
9:30: Danie Friesen. Opera Revue. Opera classics, art song and other works. Danie Friesen, soprano; Claire Harris, piano; and others. The Emmett Ray, 904 College St. 647-637-7491. PWYC. Also Oct 2, Nov 6.
Concerts in the GTA

December 5 at 8pm GRYPHON TRIO with ROBERT POMAKOV

- 8:00: Music Toronto. Gryphon Trio with Robert Pomakov. Beethoven: Kakadu Variations Op.121a; Mussorgsky: Songs and Dances of Death (arr. Kulesha); Dvorak: Piano Trio No.3 in D. Aneliye Patipatanakoon, violin; Roman Borisy, cello; Jamie Parker, piano; Robert Pomakov, bass. Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. 416-596-7723. $47.50-$52. $10(students). Also Dec 6, 8, 9, 9:00pm. Family-friendly concert on Dec 8.

- 8:00: Tafelmusik, Orpheus Chamber Singers. Christmas with a TWIST. Betty Oliphant Theatre, 404 Jarvis St. 416-877-7256. PWYC. Also Dec 6, 7, 8, 8:00pm. Family-friendly concert on Dec 8.

Saturday December 7

- 11:00am: University Settlement Music & Arts School. End of Term Student Concert. St. George the Martyr Church, 30 Stephanie St. 416-598-3444 x243. Free. Donations welcome at the door. Also 1pm; Dec 6(7pm).

- 1:00: Tafelmusik/Evergreen Brick Works. Christmas Choruses From Messiah at Evergreen’s Winter Village. Tafelmusik Chamber Choir; Members of Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra; Ivars Taurins, conductor. Evergreen Brick Works, 550 Bayview Ave. tafelmusik.org. Free. Also 1pm. In support of revitalizing the Don River Valley for the Toronto community.

- 7:30: University Settlement Music & Arts School. End of Term Student Concert. St. George the Martyr Church, 30 Stephanie St. 416-598-3444 x243. Free. Donations welcome at the door. Also Dec 7(7pm).

- 2:00: Yorkminster Park Baptist Church. City Carol Sing. Diana Pugliese, host. Guests: Murray Mclauchlan, Marc Jordan and Ian Thomas. Houghton Brass; Bach’s Children’s Chorus; Yorkminster Park Baptist Church Choir; Hedgerows Singers; William Maddox, organ; Eric Robertson; conductor; 1585 Yonge St., 416-922-1167. Free. A collection will be taken for the Churches-on-the-Hill Food Bank.

- 2:00: University Settlement Music & Arts School. National Ballet Theatre of Odessa: The Nutcracker. 440 Locust St., Burlington. 905-681-6000. $69.50; $64.50(students); $35(youth). Also Dec 7(7pm), 8(2pm).

- 8:00: Raging Asian Women Taiko Drummers. Undaunted: Into the Open. Japanese Taiko drumming combined with singing, movement and video-stories. Betty Oliphant Theatre, 404 Jarvis St. 416-877-7256. PWYC. Also Dec 6, 7, 8, 8:00pm. Family-friendly concert on Dec 8.

- 8:00: Tafelmusik, Orpheus Chamber Singers. Christmas with a TWIST. Betty Oliphant Theatre, 404 Jarvis St. 416-410-4561. $30; $25(students). Wheelchair accessible; free parking; reception following with cash bar.

- 7:30: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Home Alone in Concert. Requiem Youth Choir; Constantine Kitsopoulos, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 80 Simcoe St. 416-598-3375. From $49. Partial-view seats from $35. Also Dec 7(7pm) and 7:30pm.

- 7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. PianoFest. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750. Free. Open to the public.


- 8:00: De Bouche / A Orelle. In Concert. Pierre Flynn; Quatuor Etule Magique (Brigelle Goheen, Aline Horzaty, Catherine Gray, Beth Silver), Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave. 647-892-7387 or dba productions.ca. $30.

- 8:00: Music Toronto. Gryphon Trio with Robert Pomakov. Beethoven: Kakadu Variations Op.121a; Mussorgsky: Songs and Dances of Death (arr. Kulesha); Dvorak: Piano Trio No.3 in D. Aneliye Patipatanakoon, violin; Roman Borisy, cello, Jamie Parker, piano, Robert Pomakov, bass. Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 27 Front St. E. 416-596-7723. $47.50-$52. $10(students). Also Dec 6, 7, 8(2pm). Family-friendly concert on Dec 8.

- 8:00: Tafelmusik, Orpheus Chamber Singers. Christmas with a TWIST. Betty Oliphant Theatre, 404 Jarvis St. 416-877-7256. PWYC. Also Dec 6, 7, 8, 8(2pm). Family-friendly concert on Dec 8.

- 8:00: Exultate Chamber Singers. Holidays with a Twist: A Merry Rump Through Some Festive Favours. Mark Ramadan, conductor. St. Thomas’s Anglican Church (Toronto), 383 Huron St. 416-410-4561. $30; $25(students); $20(arts workers/under 30); $10(students).

- 8:00: Music Gallery/Bad New Days. Melancholic: The Music of Scott Walker. Part concert, part spectacle, part existential talk-show. Music Gallery at 918 Bathurst, 918 Bathurst St. 416-204-1080. $25/$20(adult); $15(students/teachers). Also Nov 7(7:00 pm) and Dec 7(7:00 pm).


- 8:00: Tafelmusik, Orpheus Chamber Singers. Christmas with a TWIST. Betty Oliphant Theatre, 404 Jarvis St. 416-877-7256. $35/($25(students)). Also Dec 5, 7, 8(2pm). Family-friendly concert on Dec 8.

- 8:00: Upper Canada Choristers. Christ- mas Fantasy. Featuring carols from the 15th century to the modern era. Boris’ Head Carol and Noel for the Darkness (arr. L.E. Fraser); Vaughan Williams: Fantasia on Christmas Carols; and other works. Bradley Chris- tensen, baritone; Hye Won Cecilia Lee, piano; Cantemos Latin ensemble; Laurie Evan Fraser, conductor; Grace Church on-the-Hill, 30 Londsdale Rd. 416-256-0510 or info@uppercanadachoristers.org. $25/($15/adult); free-perishable items for the Daily Bread Food Bank appreciated.


Sunday December 8


8:00: The Barra MacNeils. Hammerson Hall, Living Arts Centre, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga. 905-305-6000 or livingartscentre.ca. $42. PWYC.

9:00: Mississauga Symphony Orchestra. An East Coast Christmas. Seasonal music from the Maritimes and beyond. Guests: The Barra MacNeils. Community Centre, 2300 Sheridan Garden Dr., Oakville. 809-351-1574. $30; $25(adv); $15(st); free(child 12 & under). Also Dec 8. PWYC.

9:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Home Alone in Concert. Resonance Youth Choir; Constantine Kitsopoulos, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-368-5000. $46; $39(sr); $25(16-24); $12 & under. Also Dec 10. Group discount for 10 or more. Info: 416-368-5000.

9:30: VOCA Chorus of Toronto. Comfort and Joy. Vivaldi: Gloria; Vaughan Williams: Fantasia on Christmas Carol; works by Gjeilo, T.Lauten, Pantasitis and others. Toronto Centre for the Arts, 440 Locust St., Burlington. 905-681-6000. $46; $39(sr); $25(16-24); $12 & under. Group discount for 10 or more. Info: 905-681-6000.

9:45: Toronto Children’s Choir. Undaunted: Into the Open. Japanese Taiko drumming combined with singing, movement and video-stories. Betty Oliphant Theatre, 404 Jarvis St. 416-671-7256. $35; $25(st/income challenged). Also Dec 5, 6, 7(7:30pm), 8(8:00pm). PWYC.

10:00: O Come, Shepherds. See 3:00.

11:00: Vivaldi: Gloria; Letourneau, Pentatonix and others. Toronto Centre for the Arts, 440 Locust St., Burlington. 905-681-6000. $46; $39(sr); $25(16-24); $12 & under. Group discount for 10 or more. Info: 905-681-6000.
**Concerts in the GTA**

**Monday December 9**

- **7:00** A. Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra. HPO at the Library: Brass Holiday Concert. Burlington Public Library - Central Branch, 329 Main Street, Burlington. 905-526-7158 or hpo.org. Free.


**Tuesday December 10**


- **7:30** Tafelmusik. O Come, O Shepherds. George Weston Recital Hall, Meridian Arts Centre (formerly Toronto Centre for the Arts), 5040 Yonge St. See Dec 4 for details.

**Wednesday December 11**

- **12:30** Yorkminster Park Baptist Church. Noonday Organ Recital. Stefani Bedin, organ. Enter by donation.

- **2:00** Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Symphony Pops. Maasa Brueghersgoman, vocalist; Etobicoke School of the Arts Holiday Choir; Steven Reineke, conductor (Dec 10, 11); Lucas Waldin, conductor (Dec 12). Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. Starting at $52. Also Dec 11(2pm & 8pm), 12.

**Thursday December 12**

- **12:00 noon** Canadian Opera Company. Jazz Series: A Cool Yule with Cadence. Seasonal classics. Cadence, a capella vocal quartet; Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. 416-363-8231. Free. First come, first served. No late seating.

- **1:00** Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre. The Night Is Cold but the Music’s Hot: A Swing Era Concert and Dance. Alex Pangman and Her Alleys. Miles Nadal JCC, 750 Spadina Ave. 416-393-1045 x10 or miyda.ca. $18. Post-show reception.

- **7:00** Blythwood Winds. Be Our Guest: Bat- man, Dragons and Disney. Music from films. Merken: Little Mermaid; Beauty and the Beast; Aladdin; Mrs. Doubtfire; Pocahontas; Pirates of the Caribbean; Powell: How to Train Your Dragon (arr. Curtis Vander Hayden). Sarah Moon, flute; Elizabeth Eccleston, oboe; Anthony Thompson, clarinet; Kevin Harris, bassoon; Curtis Vander Hayden, horn; Burdock Music Hall, 1184 Bloor St. W. 905-355-8237. $20/$15(adv). Tickets eligible for free admission to Nothing Man, starting at 9:30pm following the Blythwood performance.

- **7:00** Shakespeare in Action/Weston Sil- ver Band. A Weston Christmas Carol. Actors of Shakespeare in Action; Weston Silver Band Quintet. Artscape Weston Common, 35 John St. shakespeareinaction.org. PWYC. Bring a non-perishable food item. Also Dec 10 & 11.

- **7:30** Edison Singers. In the Bleak Mid- winter. Esenal: In the Bleak Midwinter; Darke: In the Bleak Midwinter; Gjello: In the Bleak Midwinter; Britten: Ceremony of Carols. Noel Edson, conductor. The Oriel. 444 Yonge St. 416-597-9313. $35. Also Dec 9(‘ Niagara on the-Lake’), 15(4pm, Elora). See ad on p. 65.

- **7:30** Toronto Welsh Male Voice Choir. Christmas Concert. Calvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave. welshchoir.ca. $40. $30(adv before Dec 1).

- **8:00** X-Balted! Cold Night, Warm Song: Midwinter Music with B-Xalted! Vivaldi: Magnificat; Teedan: Dormi Jesu; Gjello: Second Eve; Es is ein Ros’ Entsprüngung (arr. Distler); S. Martin: Choral works. Dallas Chorley & Rebecca Gray, sopranos; Meagan Larios & Georgina Lin, altos; David Walsh & Alain Paquette, tenors; and others; Andrew Adair, organ; Ellen Meyer, piano; Charles Davidson, assistant conductor & tenor; Simon Walker, conductor. Church of St. Mary Magdalene (Toronto), 477 Manning Ave. 647-823-1225. $25-$35; $15(unemployed). b-xalted.com.

- **8:00** Soundstreams. Electric Messiah. Electric improv reimaging of Messiah. Lindsay McIntyre, soprano; Chloe Charles, alto; Jonathan MacArthur, tenor; Andrew Adridge, bass; SlowPitchSound, DJ and others. The Drake Underground, 1510 Queen St. W. 416-408-0208. $25-$45. Also Dec 11, 12. Venue not wheelchair accessible.

- **8:00** Toronto Symphony Orchestra. 750 Holiday Pops. Maasa Brueghersgoman, vocalist; Etobicoke School of the Arts Holiday Choir; Steven Reineke, conductor (Dec 10, 11); Lucas Waldin, conductor (Dec 12). Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. Starting at $52. Also Dec 11(2pm & 8pm), 12.

- **8:00** Tafelmusik. O Come, O Shepherds. George Weston Recital Hall, Meridian Arts Centre (formerly Toronto Centre for the Arts), 5040 Yonge St. See Dec 4 for details.
Joseph St. 416-961-6601 x202. $20/$15(adv); $15/$12(CMC members/arts workers/adv); ($10/st).

7:30: The Piano Lunare. Cold Moon. Crumb: A Little Suite for Christmas, Proces-
sional; Kendall: Processional; Liebmanner: Improvisum Op.68/7; Copland: The Cat and the Mouse; Sherkin: Postludes from Adlivun Op.29. Stephanie Chuah, Adam Sherkin, Greg-

6:00: DB Works & The Ward Productions/ Small World Music Society/Harbourfront Centre. The Ward Cabaret. David Buch- binder, trumpet, flugelhorn, alto horn; Jacob Gorzalzysan, double bass, bass clarinet, saxo-
phone, flute; Derek Kwan, vocals, actor, flute; Michael Occhipinti, guitar, banjo, bass; ZI Wen Qin, guzheng; Louis Simão, acoustic bass, accordion, piano. Harbourfront Centre The-
atre, 255 Queen’s Quay W. 416-973-4000. $25.50-$60. Also Dec 13, 14, 15 (2pm & 7pm). 12, 19, 20, 21 (2pm & 8pm), 22 (2pm & 8pm).

8:00: Soundstreams. Electric Messiah. Electro-improv reimagining of Messiah. Lind-
say McIntyre, soprano; Chloe Charles, alto; Jonathan MacArthur, tenor; Andrew Adridge, bass; Slowley Sound, LJ and others. The Drake Underground, 1150 Queen’s St. W. 416-
408-0208. $25-$44. Also Dec 10, 11. Venue not wheelchair accessible.

6:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. 730 Holiday Pops. Messiaha Brueggergosman, 
vocalist; Etobicoke School of the Arts Holiday 
Concert. 787-8811. $34; $29(sr); $20(st). rhpo.ca.

Nathaniel Dett Chorale; Brainerd Bylden-Tay-
lor, conductor; All Saints Kingsway Angli-
can Church, 2850 Bloor St. W. 416-736-2100 
$x3068. $30; $25(¢); $15(st).


7:30: Vesuvius Ensemble. Quanno Nisacette 
Ninno: Christmas in Southern Italy. Tomasso Solazzo, zampogna/guitar; Romina di Gasbarro, 
voice/guitar. Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave. 416-921-3802. $30; free(under 12).

8:00: Aurora Community Band. Hooked on Classics. Works by Beethoven, Mil-
er, Gershwin, Bach, Copland and others. 
Gord Shephard, conductor. Trinity Anglican 
Church (Aurora), 79 Victoria St., Aurora. 
Aurarocommunityband@gmail.com, $15; 
$10(st).


8:00: Etobicoke Philharmonic Orchestra. The Gift of Christmas. Bach: Brandenburg 
Concerto No.4; Fantasia on Greensleeves; Sleigh Ride; and other works. Matthew Jones, Nate Houston, recorders; Mark Whale, violin. Humber Valley United Church, 76 Anglesey Blvd., Etobicoke. 416-239-5865. $30; $25/82(adv/st); $15(st).

8:00: Spectrum Music. Seven Wonders. Spectrum composers turn to the natural 
world as a muse to inspire new works that 
celebrate the beauty and preservation of 
our planet. Seven new works by the Spec-
trum composers and guest composers. James Evans, William Lamoureux and Sina Fallah. So Long 
Seven (jazz/world musician collective). Small 
World Music Centre. Artscape Youngplace, 
180 Shaw St. www.bemusednetwork.com/ 
events/detail/729. $20/$15(adv); $15/$10(st/ 
adv).

8:00: York Symphony Orchestra. YSO Holiday Spectacular. Seasonal favourites and 
audience sing-a-long. St. Mary’s Anglican 
Church, 10030 Yonge St., Richmond Hill. 647-
849-8403. $30; $25(¢); $15(st). Also Dec 21 
(3:30pm, Aurora).

1:30: Oakville Choir for Children and Youth. Community Carol Concert. St. John’s 
United Church (Oakville), 262 Randall St., 
Oakville. oakvillechoir.org. $25; $20(st); 
$15(12 and under), Also 4pm. 4:00: Oakville Choir for Children and Youth. Community Carol Concert. St. John’s United Church (Oakville), 262 Randall St., Oakville. oakvillechoir.org. $25; $20(st); 
$15(12 and under), Also 13:30. 7:00: Richmond Hill Philharmonic Orches-
tra. Sounds of the Season. Anderson: A Christmas Festival; Prokoviev: Overture on Hebrew Themes; Hutchison: A Carol Symphony; Lawson: Christmas in Lapland; 
Rebikov: Christmas Tree Suite; Harris: Chris-
tmas Festival Medley. Jessica Kun, conductor. 
Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing 
Arts, 10268 Yonge St., Richmond Hill. 905-
787-8811. $34; $25(¢); $20(st). rhpc.ca.

7:00: Ruckus: The UTSC Alumni & Com-
nunity Choir. Christmas Through the Ages. 
Works and arrangements by Victoria, Han-
del, Darke and Langford/King’s Singers; 

Friday December 13

12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company. Opera Express: Winter Whimsy. Opera high-
lights. Artists of the COC Ensemble Studio. West Wing of Union Station, 65 Front St. W. (at York St.). coc.ca/operaconnect. Free. No ticket required.

7:30: Confluence & Ensemble Masques. The Boy from Bologna: Corelli Explored. 
Works by Corelli, Murad, Lonati, Vitali and 
Handel. Tuomo Suni, Kathleen Kajoka, violin; 
Octavie Dostaler-Lalonde, cello; Olivier Fortin, harpsichord. St. Thomas’s Anglican Church 
(Toronto), 383 Huron St. 647-678-4923 or bemusednetwork.com. $40; $30(¢/st).

7:30: Elmer Iseler Singers. Glorious Sounds of Handel: Messiah. Elmer Iseler Singers; Amadeus Choir; Leslie Fagan, sop-
nano; Daniel Cabena, countertenor; Michael Colvin, tenor; Alexander Dobson, baritone. Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, 1856 Yonge St. 416-962-1167. $55; $50(¢); $35(under 30). A fundraiser in support of the Yorkminster Park Baptist Church Refugee Fund.

Nathaniel Dett Chorale; Charles Daniels, tenor (Evangelist); David Fal-
is, artistic director. Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, 
427 Bloor St. W. 416-964-6337. $20-$77. Also Dec 14 (8pm), 15 (3:30pm).

8:00: Toronto Consort. Schütz’s Chris-
tmas Story. Schütz: The Christmas Story; and 
works by Schein, Schütz and Praetorius. 
Charles Daniels, tenor (Evangelist); David Fal-
is, artistic director. Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, 
427 Bloor St. W. 416-964-6337. $20-$77. Also Dec 14 (8pm), 15 (3:30pm).

11/24/2019 11:13:49 PM
**A. Concerts in the GTA**

**Performance Academy for Young Artists Series - Academy Chamber Orchestra.** Features string students. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. Free (ticket required). Tickets available a week prior to concert date.

- **7:30:** The Salvation Army. Christmas with the Salvation Army. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. $25-$35.
- **8:00:** Burlington Performing Arts Centre. Buzz Brass Christmas with the Elmer Iseler Singers. 440 Locust St., Burlington. 905-881-6000. $25-$50. $54.50 (members).
- **8:00:** Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra. Subscription Concert #3: Beethoven and More. Beethoven: Symphony No. 5 in c; Mozart: Overture to The Magic Flute; Finals of the 2019 CBSO Clifford Poole Vocal Competition. Village Voices Community Choir of the 2019 CBSO Clifford Poole Vocal Competition. Music Hall, 351 Ferrier St. #1, Scarborough, 416-473-1502. $25; $5 (25 and under).
- **8:00:** Mississauga Symphony Orchestra. Highlights from Messiah. Angela Yoo, soprano; Lillian Brooks, mezzo; Zachary Rioux, tenor; Christopher Dunham, baritone; Mississauga Festival Chamber Choir. Living Arts Centre, Hammonder Hall, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga. 905-356-6000 or mississaugasympo.ca. $40-$50.
- **8:00:** Oakville Performing Arts Centre. Sultans of String Christmas Caravan. Caribbean Sleigh Ride; Jessy, Joy of Man’s Desiring; Little Drummer Boy; Greensleeves; Django Christmas. Guests: Rebecca Campbell, Lynn Miles, Donné Roberts, Shannon Thunderbird and Ken Whiteley. 130 Navy St., Oakville. 905-815-2021 or oakvillecentre.ca/sultans-of-string-christmas-caravan.html. $46-$57. In support of the United Nations Agency for Refugees.
- **8:00:** Ontario Pops Orchestra. The Sounds of Christmas. Takahovsky: Nutcracker Suite; Schubert; Ave Maria; How the Grinch Stole Christmas; Mendelssohn: Symphony No. 4 “Italian”; Moffett: Orchestra Suite No. 2. Gabrielle Turgeon, soprano; Swansea Dance School; Carlos Bastidas, conductor; Humber Valley United Church, 76 Anglesley Blvd., Etobicoke. 416-473-1502. $25-$50 (members).
- **8:00:** Royal Conservatory of Music. Quiet Please, There’s a Lady Onstage Series: Holly Cole. Happy Holidays. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. $50-$100.
- **8:00:** That Choir Carols. That Choir Carols. Guests: Bach Young Chamber Choir; Craig Pike, conductor; St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church (Toronto), 73 Simcoe St. thatchoir.com, PWYC.
- **8:00:** Toronto Consort. Schütz’s Christmas Story. Christmas. Works by Schein, Scheidt and Praetorius. Charles Daniels, tenor (Evangelist); David Fallis, artistic director. Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-872-4255. $20-$75. Also Dec 19 (4pm), 26 (7:30pm).

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**Redemption**

**Kindred Spirits Orchestra**

**Saturday, December 14, 2019, 8 pm**

**416-358-5107**

**Markham Theatre**

**Tickets:** $25-$35 (online); $30-$40 (at door)

**Concert I. Dohnányi: Piano Quintet No. 1 Op. 1.**

**Brahms: Piano Quintet in f Op. 34.**

**Michael Esch, piano; Joyce Lai and Marcus Scholtes, violins; Ian Clarke, viola; Andreas Weber, cello.**

**Highlights from Messiah.** Angela Yoo, soprano; Lillian Brooks, mezzo; Zachary Rioux, tenor; Christopher Dunham, baritone; Mississauga Festival Chamber Choir. Living Arts Centre, Hammonder Hall, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga. 905-356-6000 or mississaugasympo.ca. $40-$50.

**8:00:** Oakville Performing Arts Centre. Sultans of String Christmas Caravan. Caribbean Sleigh Ride; Jessy, Joy of Man’s Desiring; Little Drummer Boy; Greensleeves; Django Christmas. Guests: Rebecca Campbell, Lynn Miles, Donné Roberts, Shannon Thunderbird and Ken Whiteley. 130 Navy St., Oakville. 905-815-2021 or oakvillecentre.ca/sultans-of-string-christmas-caravan.html. $46-$57. In support of the United Nations Agency for Refugees.

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**Burlington Performing Arts Centre.**

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**Brahms: Piano Quintet in f Op. 34.**

**Michael Esch, piano; Joyce Lai and Marcus Scholtes, violins; Ian Clarke, viola; Andreas Weber, cello.**

**Highlights from Messiah.** Angela Yoo, soprano; Lillian Brooks, mezzo; Zachary Rioux, tenor; Christopher Dunham, baritone; Mississauga Festival Chamber Choir. Living Arts Centre, Hammonder Hall, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga. 905-356-6000 or mississaugasympo.ca. $40-$50.

**8:00:** Oakville Performing Arts Centre. Sultans of String Christmas Caravan. Caribbean Sleigh Ride; Jessy, Joy of Man’s Desiring; Little Drummer Boy; Greensleeves; Django Christmas. Guests: Rebecca Campbell, Lynn Miles, Donné Roberts, Shannon Thunderbird and Ken Whiteley. 130 Navy St., Oakville. 905-815-2021 or oakvillecentre.ca/sultans-of-string-christmas-caravan.html. $46-$57. In support of the United Nations Agency for Refugees.
Saturday Dec. 14, 2019 8 pm

BEETHOVEN & MORE

Mozart: Overture to The Magic Flute

Beethoven: Symphony No. 5 in C minor
concert also features the finals of the
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2019/20

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LISTEN TO US ON YOUTUBE
A. Concerts in the GTA

Berlin, Carey, McCartney and Lightfoot. Harvey Patterson, conductor; Bruce Harvey, piano. Humber Valley United Church, 76 Anglesley Blvd., Etobicoke. 416-239-5821. $20; free (child under 10).

3:00 Mississauga Symphony Orchestra/Mississauga Symphony Youth Orchestra. A Merry Little Christmas. Guests: Mississauga Children’s Choir; Living Arts Centre, Hammermill Hall, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga. 905-306-6000 or mississuasymphonyc.org. $40-$50.

3:00 Mississauga Symphony Orchestra/Mississauga Symphony Youth Orchestra. A Merry Little Christmas. Guests: Mississauga Children’s Choir; Living Arts Centre, Hammermill Hall, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga. 905-306-6000 or mississuasymphonyc.org. $40-$50.

3:00 Pax Christi Chorale. A Baroque Celebration. Durante: Magnificat; Vivaldi: Gloria; Bach: Magnificat. Megan Miceli and Elizabeth Polese, sopranos; Georgia Burashko, mezzo; Davey Pepper, tenor; Bradley Christiansen, baritone; Toronto Mozart Players. St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church (Toronto), 73 Simcoe St. 416-729-3830. $50; $45 (sr); $25 (under 30).

3:30 Toronto Concert. Schütz’s Christmas Story. Schütz: The Christmas Story; and works by Schein, Scheidt and Praetorius. Charles Daniels, tenor (Evangelist); David Falisz, artistic director. Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, 427 Bloor St. W. 416-964-6337. $20-$77. Also Dec 13 & 14 (8pm).


4:00 Good Kind Productions/Small World Music Society. TBA Series Chapter 4. Small World Music Centre, Artscape Youngplace, 180 Shaw St. 416-536-5439. To $50.


4:30 Yorkminster Park Baptist Church. Carols by Candlelight. Choir and Musicians of Yorkminster Park Baptist Church. 1585 Yonge St. 416-922-1167. Free will offering.

6:30 Diar. Syrian & Arabic music with Diar, Tarek Qhrin, guitar; Nour Kassan, cajon; Leen Hamo, vocals. Burdock, 1184 Bloor St. W. eventbrite.ca/e/diar-tickets-79273421939. $20/$15 (adv).

7:00 Mississauga Symphony Youth Orchestra. A Merry Little Christmas. Guests: Mississauga Children’s Choir; Living Arts Centre, Hammermill Hall, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga. 905-306-6000 or mississuasymphonyc.org. $40-$50.

7:30: Toronto Road Village Concert Series. Sultans of String Christmas Caravan: Turkish Greensleeves; Jesous Ahatonhia (Huron Carol); The Little Swallow (Carol of the Bells)/ Al Vuelo; Little Drummer Boy; A Django Christmas. Chris McNold, violin; Kevin Laliberte, guitar; Drew Benton, bass; Eddie Paton, guitar; Chendy Leon, percussion. Guests: Rebecca Campbell, Lynn Miles, Donné Roberts, Tamar Ilana, Shannon Thunderbird. Kingston Road United Church, 975 Kingston Rd. 416-699-6091. $30/$25. In support of the United Nations Agency for Refugees.
Thursday December 19

7:00: Yorkminster Park Baptist Church. John McDermott: Family Christmas. Guests: DALA, 1065 Yonge St. eventbrite.ca. $25.

Friday December 20

7:00: Sharon Hope United Church. Ron Korb Christmas Concert in Sharon. Ron Korb, flute; Bill Evans, piano; Steve Lucas, bass; Larry Crowe, percussion. 16648 Leslie St., Aurora, ON. $30 (adv). Also December 21(2pm & 8pm), 22.

7:30: Tafelmusik. Handel: Messiah. Margot Rood, soprano; Lucile Richardot, mezzo; Thomas Hobbs, tenor; Peter Harvey, baritone; Tafelmusich Choir; Ivars Taurins, conductor. Toronto Symphony Centre, 73 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. From $39 (Tue, Wed, Thur) from $46 (Fri); discounts for sr/under 36/under 19. Also December 17, 18, 19, 20.

8:00: DB Works & The Ward Productions/Small World Music Society/Harbourfront Centre. The Ward Cabinaret. See December 12. Also December 20, 21(2pm & 8pm), 22.

8:00: Small World Music Society/Harbourfront Centre. See December 12. Also December 17, 18, 19.

8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Messiah. Handel/arr. Mozart, Jane Archibald, soprano; Emily D’Angelo, mezzo; Isaiah Bell, tenor; Russell Braun, baritone; Toronto Mendelssohn Choir and others. Roy Thomson Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. From $39 (Tue, Wed, Thur) from $46 (Fri); discounts for sr/under 36/under 19. Also December 17, 18, 20.

8:00: DB Works & The Ward Productions/Small World Music Society/Harbourfront Centre. The Ward Cabinaret. See December 12. Also December 20, 21(2pm & 8pm), 22.

8:00: DDA. Glenn Miller Orchestra: In the Christmas Mood. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. $75-$96.

Saturday December 21

2:00: DB Works & The Ward Productions/Small World Music Society/Harbourfront Centre. The Ward Cabinaret. See December 12. Also December 21(8pm), 22(2pm).

2:00: Tafelmusik. Sing-Along Messiah. Margot Rood, soprano; Lucile Richardot, mezzo; Thomas Hobbs, tenor; Peter Harvey, baritone; Tafelmusich Choir; Ivars Taurins, conductor (in character as Mr. Handel). Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. $20-$49.50.

2:00: Polina Chernik and Julia Tcherik. Music and Miracles Youth Charity Concert. Polina Chernik; Karim Khakimov; Elizabeth Gilerovitch; Alexander Donahue; Grace Zemijy; Arroyo Space, 155 Walnut Ave. 416-638-8226. $10 or PWYC. In support of Music Therapy Program at Sick Kids Hospital.

3:30: York Symphony Orchestra. YSO Holiday Spectacular. Seasonal favourites and audience sing-a-long. Trinity Anglican Church (Aurora). 790 Victoria St., Aurora, ON. 416-638-8403. $30 ($25); $15 (student). Also December 13(8pm), Richmond Hill.

7:30: Madamusae. Choir. Concert Series 2: Mystic Light - Solace in the Darkest Days. Works by women composers to mark the Winter Solstice and ring in the holiday season. Works by Donkin, Trites, Luengen, Valmier. Works by women composers to mark the Winter Solstice and ring in the holiday season. Works by Donkin, Trites, Luengen, Valmier; Hagen and others. EGLinton St. George's United Church, 35 Lytton Blvd. Eglinton St. George's United Church, 35 Lytton Blvd. $50 (adv). Also December 21(2pm & 8pm), 22.

8:00: DB Works & The Ward Productions/Small World Music Society/Harbourfront Centre. The Ward Cabinaret. See December 12. Also December 21(2pm & 8pm), 22.

8:00: Georgetown Bach Chorale. Winter Dreams. Seasonal music. Ron Greidanus, director. The Piano Hall, 157 Main St., Georgetown. 905-973-5903. $50 (adv). Also December 21(2pm & 8pm), 22.

8:00: Tafelmusik. Handel: Messiah. Margot Rood, soprano; Lucile Richardot, mezzo; Thomas Hobbs, tenor; Peter Harvey, baritone; Tafelmusich Choir; Ivars Taurins, conductor. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. From $39 (Tue, Wed, Thur) from $46 (Fri); discounts for sr/under 36/under 19. Also December 17, 18, 20.

8:00: DB Works & The Ward Productions/Small World Music Society/Harbourfront Centre. The Ward Cabinaret. See December 12. Also December 20, 21(2pm & 8pm), 22.

8:00: Canadien Men's Chorus. Not Another Christmas Concert. Church of the Redeemer, 162 Bloor St. W. canadienmenschorus.ca/concerts. $20-$45.

8:00: Burlington Performing Arts Centre. The Andy Kim Christmas. Ron Sexsmith, Tom Cochrane, Bif Naked, Sarah Slean, performers; Andy Kim & Sean Cullen hosts. 440 Locust St., Burlington. 905-681-6000. $49.50; $54.50 (members). Proceeds to Burlington Performing Arts Centre’s Golden Ticket Program providing access to underserved schools and students.


8:00: Georgetown Bach Chorale. Winter Dreams. Seasonal music. Ron Greidanus, director. The Piano Hall, 157 Main St., Georgetown. 905-973-5903. $50 (adv). Also December 20, 22.

8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Messiah. See December 17. Also December 22 (8pm).

Sunday December 22


5:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Messiah. See December 17.


4:00: Yorkminster Park Baptist Church.
Nine Lessons and Carols. Choirs of Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, 1585 Yonge St. 416-922-1167. Free will offering.

7:00: Music at Metropolitan. Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols. Metropolitan Choirs; Patricia Wright, conductor. Metropolitan United Church (Toronto), 56 Queen St. E. metunited.ca/music. Free.

Monday December 23

7:30: Victoria Scholars Men’s Choral Ensemble. Twas the Night Before Christmas. Blessed Sacrament Church, 24 Cheritan Ave. victoriascholars.ca. $30, $25(sr/st). Also Dec 22(Our Lady of Sorrows Church).

Tuesday December 24

6:00: Music at Metropolitan. A Community Christmas. Metropolitan United Church (Toronto), 56 Queen St. E. metunited.ca/music. Free.

7:00: St. Andrew’s Church. Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols. Aldyward Garden Brass Quintet; Dan Bickle, organ. St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church (Toronto), 73 Simcoe St. 416-595-5600 x220. Freewill offering.

9:00: Metropolitan Community Church. Christmas Eve Service. Roy Thomson Hall, 80 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. $75-$96.


11:00: Music at Metropolitan. Candlelight Christmas Eve. Metropolitan Church. Metropolitan United Church (Toronto), 56 Queen St. E. metunited.ca/music. Free.

11:00: St. Andrew’s Church. Traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. St. Andrew’s Gallery Choir; Dan Bickle, organ. St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church (Toronto), 73 Simcoe St. 416-595-5600 x220. Freewill offering.

Wednesday December 25


Saturday December 28

7:30: St. Andrew’s Church. ‘Twas the Night Before Christmas. St. Andrew’s Gallery Choir; Dan Bickle, organ. St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church (Toronto), 73 Simcoe St. 416-595-5600 x220. Freewill offering.

7:00: Attila Glatz Concert Productions. Bravissimo! Opera’s Greatest Hits. Karine Babajanyan, soprano; Maria Kataeva, mezzo; Luc Robert, tenor; Michele Kalomý, baritone; Opera Canada Symphony and chorus; Michalangelu Maizza, conductor. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. $55-$145.

7:30: Free Times Cafe. 60’s Folk Revival - Where Have All The Folk Songs Gone? Sue & Dwight; Henry Lees; Tony Lawlita, bass. 320 College St. 416-567-1038. $110 (advance tickets required). Deluxe buffet, favours, champagne at midnight.

8:00: Toronto Operaetta Theatre. The Gypsy Baron. See Dec 28. Also Jan 3, 5.

Sunday December 29

8:00: Toronto Operaetta Theatre. The Gypsy Baron. See Dec 28. Also Dec 31, Jan 3, 5.

Tuesday December 31

8:00: Toronto Operaetta Theatre. The Gypsy Baron. See Dec 28. Also Dec 31, Jan 3, 5.

Friday January 3

8:00: Toronto Operaetta Theatre. The Gypsy Baron. See Dec 28. Also Jan 3, 5.

Sunday January 5


Sunday January 5
St. Andrew-by-the-Lake Anglican Church, Cibola Ave., Toronto Island, bemusednetwork.com/groups/member/100. $30; $50(concert + 12:30pm brunch). Also Jan 6(7:30pm, St. George the Martyr; Toronto - concert only).

3:00: Toronto Operetta Theatre. The Gypsy Baron. See Dec 29.

January 9 at 8 pm
MIRO QUARTET


New Year’s Concert 2020 Celebrating Beethoven’s 250th Birthday

Sun., Jan. 11, 8pm
The Royal Conservatory of Music

Friday January 10

Saturday January 11
8:00: The Royal Conservatory of Music. 21C Festival Series: Against the Grain Theatre’s Aye and other works by Osvaldo Golijov. Miriam Mahli, soprano; Joel Ivey, stage director; Jamey Haddad, Barry Shiffman, Gabriel Radford and others. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. $21-$80.


10:30: The Royal Conservatory of Music. 21C Festival Series: 21C Afterhours: Against the Grain Theatre’s Aye and other works by Osvaldo Golijov. Miriam Mahli, soprano; Joel Ivey, stage director; Jamey Haddad, Barry Shiffman, Gabriel Radford and others. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. $21-$80.


Sunday January 12


Monday January 6
7:30: Canzona Chamber Players. Trio Ink. Beethoven; Trios. Yousef Kawasaki, viol-in; Wolfram Koesel; cello; Vadim Ser-bryany, piano. St. George the Martyr Church, 30 Stephanie St. bemusednetwork.com/groups/member/100. $30. Also Jan 5(2pm, St. Andrew-by-the-Lake, Toronto Island).

Tuesday January 7

Wednesday January 8


Thursday January 9
12:10: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Thursdays at Noon: (Half of) The...
A. Concerts in the GTA

John Williams: Schindler’s List; and works by Chinese composers. Haochen Zhang, piano; Ti Zhang, violin; Kemin Zhang, host; Toronto Festival Orchestra; Junping Qian, conductor. George Weston Recital Hall, Meridian Arts Centre (formerly Toronto Centre for the Arts), 5040 Yonge St. 416-490-7962 or 416-250-3708 or 1-855-985-2787. $35-$98. info@lidelun.org.


NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL
SUN JAN 12 to TUE JAN 21 with André Mehmari
All events are free
music.utoronto.ca


Monday January 13

Tuesday January 14
- 12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company. Chamber Music Series: Sensational Strings. Senior string students from The Phil and Eli Taylor Performance Academy for Young Artists; Academy Chamber Orchestra. Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. 416-983-6231. Free. First come, first served. No late seating.

60 | December 2019 – January 2020
Saturday January 18

- 12:00 noon: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. New Music Festival: Noon Jazz Series. André Mehmari, Edward Johnson Building, Walter Hall, 80 Queen’s Park, 416-978-3750. Free. Open to the public.


- 7:30: Academy Concert Series. Tooting Mozart’s Horn, Naturally Hoffmeister; Horn Quintet in E-flat; Mozart: String quartet No.17 in F-flat K458 “The Hunt”; Mozart: Horn quintet in E-flat K407. Scott Weters, horn; Michelle Ondoro, violin; Emily Eng, violin/viola; Shannon Knights, viola; Kerri McConigle, cello. Eastmain United Church, 310 Danforth Ave. 416-629-3716 or academyconcernts.ca. PWYC.

- 7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. New Music Festival: UofT Jazz Faculty and Guests Concert. University of Toronto DOG Ensemble; Members of the UofT Jazz Faculty; André Mehmari, piano. Edward Johnson Building, Walter Hall, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750. Free. Open to the public.


- 8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. 21C Music Festival Series: Laurie Anderson - The Art of Falling. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St W. 416-408-0208. 821-95, SOLD OUT.

- 8:00: Tafelmusik. Gone with the Winds. Mozart: Serenade in e K388; Beethoven: Sextet Op.71; Rossini: Barber of Seville (selections); Mozart: Così fan tutte (selections); Cecilia Livingston: World premiere. Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra. Trinity-St. Paul’s Centre, 427 Bloor St W. 416-964-6337. From $42, Also Jan 19 (6pm), 17(6pm), 19(3:30pm).

- 8:00: Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Mozart Requiem. Mozart: Symphony No.39 K543, Requiem K626, Janenevieve Moore, soprano; Jillian Bonner, mezzo; Charles Sy, tenor; Trevor Eliot Bowes, bass; Toronto Mendelssohn Choir and others. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. Starting at $35, Also Jan 15, 17, 17(7:30pm).

Sunday January 19


- 2:00: Canadian Opera Company. The Barber of Seville. Music by Gioachino Rossini, libretto by Cesare Sterbini. Emily D’Angelo, mezzo (Rosina); Vito Priante, baritone (Figaro); Santiago Ballerini, tenor (Almaviva); Renato Girolami, bass (Bartolo); Brandon Cedel, bass (Basilio); Speranza Scappucci, conductor; Joan Font, stage director. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St W. 416-363-8231, 363-8255. Runs Jan 19-27. 7:30pm. Set 2 begins at 8pm.

Monday January 20


- 8:00: Roy Thomson Hall. Jeng Yi. Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, University of Toronto Faculty of Arts, 145 Queen St W. 416-363-8231. Free. First come, first served. No late seating.


Tuesday January 21


Wednesday January 22


- 7:00: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Upper Jazz Concerts: UofT Jazz Ensembles. Upper Jazz Studio, 90 Wellesley St. 416-978-3750. Free. Open to the public. Set 2 begins at 8pm.

- 7:30: Canadian Opera Company. The Barber of Seville. See Jan 19. Also Jan 25, 30, Feb 1 2, 4, 7.


Thursday January 23


A. Concerts in the GTA
416-872-4255. Starting at $1. Also Jan 22, 26, $26 (pm, Meridian Arts Centre).

Friday January 24

- 8:00: Roy Thomson Hall. Yamato: The Drummers of Japan - Jhonesty. 60 Simcoe St. 416-872-4255. $49.50-$89.50.

Friday January 25

- 7:00: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Early Music Concerts: Music in the Castle of Heaven. Bach: Cantatas. Charles Daniels, tenor; Peter Harvey, baritone; Daniel Taylor, conductor. Trinity College Chapel, U of T, 6 Hoskain Ave. 416-408-0208. $30; $20(sr); $10(st). U of T students admitted free with a valid TCard, space permitting.
- 8:00: Alliance Francaise de Toronto. Oktopus & Beyond the Pale. In Concert. Spadina Theatre. 24 Spadina Rd. 416-408-0208. $30; $20(sr); $10(st). U of T students admitted free with a valid TCard, space permitting.

Saturday January 25

- 2:00: Home Music Club of Toronto. An Afternoon of Chamber Music. Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto (1st mvt); arr. for violin/piano; and other works. Northern District Public Library, Room 224, 40 Orchard View Blvd. 416-393-7010. Free.
- 2:00: St. Anne’s Music and Drama Society. Patience. See Jan 24. Also Jan 26, 30, 31, Feb 1, 2.
- 4:30: Canadian Opera Company. The Barber of Seville. See Jan 19. Also Jan 30, Feb 1, 2, 4, 7.
- 7:30: SoundCrowd. Winter Getaway! Songs by Adams, Crow, Madonna and others. Scott Pietrangolo, conductor. Bloor Street United Church, 300 Bloor St. W. soundcrowd.ca or info@soundcrowd.ca. $25.

2IC MUSIC FESTIVAL
ZAKIR HUSSAIN and JOHN PATITucci with DANIO PEREZ, BRIAN BLADE, and THE ROYAL CONSERVATORY ORCHESTRA
FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 8 PM / ARTIST TALK 7 PM
KOERNER HALL

TICKETS ON SALE NOW! 416-408-0208 RCMUSIC.COM/PERFORMANCE

- 8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. 2IC Music Festival Series: Zakir Hussain & John Patitucci with the Royal Conservatory Orchestra. Hussain: Reshka; Patitucci: Hypocrisy; and other works. Zane Dalal, conductor. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. $21-$50. PWYC.
- 8:00: guitar Society of Toronto. In Concert. Xuefei Yang, guitar. St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church (Toronto), 73 Simcoe St. 416-964-8286 or guitarsocto.org. $40; $35 (sr); $30 (st); $35 (adv); $30 (sr adv); $25 (st adv).
- 8:00: Mississauga Symphony Orchestra. La Traviata. A fully staged opera. Music by Giuseppe Verdi. Cristina Pisan, soprano (Violetta); Keith Klassen, tenor (Alfredo); Denis Mastromonaco, music director; David Ambrose, stage director. Living Arts Centre, Hammermill Hall, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga. 905-306-6000 or mississaugasymphony.ca. $50-$90. Also Jan 28.

Sunday January 26

- 10:00: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. UofT Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition Finals. Edward Johnson Building, Walter Hall, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750. Free. Open to the public.
- 2:00: Mississauga Big Band Jazz Ensemble. Jazz at the Legion. Port Credit Legion, 35 Front St. N., Port Credit. 905-270-4757. PWYC.
- 2:00: St. Anne’s Music and Drama Society. Patience. See Jan 24. Also Jan 30, Feb 1, 2.

Going Places with soloist, Louis Papachristos
Sat. Jan 25, 7:30pm
Heliconian Hall
35 Hazleton Ave

confleucenceconcerts.ca

- 8:00: confleucence Concerts. Hugo and Willie: Songs of the Soul. Lieder by Hugo Wolf and songs by Willie P. Bennett. Giles Tomkins, baritone; Andrew Downing, double-bass; Patricia O’Callaghan, soprano; Kate Tremills, piano. St. Thomas’s Anglican Church (Toronto), 383 Huron St. 416-678-4293. $30; $25 (sr); $20 (30 and under). Pre-concert talk at 7:15pm.


Jan 25, 2020
Jeanne Lamon Hall
tafelmusik.org

* * *

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Monday January 27

7:30: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Chamber Music Concert Series; (Half of) The Complete Sonatas for Piano and Violin by Beethoven. Works of remembrance from Handel to Shostakovich, between Mark Fewer, violin; James Parker, piano. Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building, University of Toronto, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-408-0208. $40; $25(sr); $10(st). U of T students admitted free with a valid TCard, space permitting. Also see Jan 9.

Tuesday January 28

6:00: Mississauga Symphony Orchestra. La Traviata. A fully staged opera, music by Giuseppe Verdi. Cristina Pisani, soprano (Violetta); Keith Klassen, tenor (Alfredo); Denis Mastronamoco, music director; David Ambrose, stage director. Living Arts Centre, Hammersoon Hall, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga. 905-306-6000 or mississaugasymphony.ca. $50-$90. Also Jan 25.

Wednesday January 29


Friday January 31

7:30: The Toronto Consort. La Traviata. A fully staged opera, music by Giuseppe Verdi. Cristina Pisani, soprano (Violetta); Keith Klassen, tenor (Alfredo); Denis Mastronamoco, music director; David Ambrose, stage director. Living Arts Centre, Hammersoon Hall, 4141 Living Arts Dr., Mississauga. 905-306-6000 or mississaugasymphony.ca. $50-$90. Also Jan 25.

Saturday January 30


7:30: Canadian Opera Company. The Barber of Seville. See Jan 19. Also Feb 1, 2, 4, 7.


8:00: Royal Conservatory of Music. Quiet Please, There’s a Lady Onstage Series: Lisa Fischer & Grand Baton. Koerner Hall, TELUS Centre, 273 Bloor St. W. 416-408-0208. $50-$100.

8:00: The Mozart Effect: Live! A Symphony for the Senses. Works by Mozart. Meridian Hall (formerly Sony Centre), 1 Front St. E. 416-368-6161 or 1-800-708-6754. $33-$127.

Monday February 3


8:00: Alliance Francaise de Toronto. Elgar Dervish. 24 Spadina Rd. 416-922-2014 x37. $28; $14(members).
A. Concerts in the GTA

**Tuesday February 4**
- 12:00 noon: Canadian Opera Company, New Music Series: Clear Things May Not Be Seen. Bob Becker: Never in Word; To Immortal Bloom; Crying Time; Clear Things May Not Be Seen. Lindsay Kesselman, soprano; Andrea Ludwig, soprano; with string quartet, clarinets, piano and percussion. Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, 145 Queen St. W. 416-363-8231. Free. First come, first served.
- No late seating.
- 7:00: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Student Composer Concert. Edward Johnson Building, Walter Hall, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-7950. Free. Open to the public.
- 7:30: Canadian Opera Company. The Barber of Seville. See Jan 19. Also Feb 7.

**Wednesday February 5**
- No late seating.

**Thursday February 6**
- No late seating.
- 7:30: Canadian Opera Company. Harriet Tubman: The Opera. Fri Feb. 7, 2020 7:30pm

**Friday February 7**

B. Concerts Beyond the GTA

**Sunday December 1**
- 2:30: Kingston Symphony. Beethoven and Rachmaninoff. Rzewski: Coming Together; Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No.1; Beethoven Symphony No.4. Evan YU, piano; Evan Mitchell, conductor. Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, 390 King St. W., Kingston. 613-546-9792 or 613-530-2050. $10-$50.
- 3:00: Guelph Chamber Choir. Guelph Chamber Choir’s Christmas Lessons and Carols with Brass Quintet. Charlene Pauls, conductor. St. George’s Anglican Church (Guelph), 399West End St., Guelph. 519-763-3000. $25/4 for $80; $10(st and under); $5(youth 14 and under).
- 3:00: Guelph Concert Band. Holiday Traditions. Hallelujah Chorus; Russian Christmas Music; Twas the Night Before Christmas at the Beach. Lighthouse Community Church, 1200 Sunnidale Rd., Wasaga Beach. 705-635-0720. Donation to the local food bank. Proceeds to the Wasaga Beach Ministerial Food Bank. Sponsored by Waterside Retirement Home.
Lodge and Lighthouse Community Church.

December 2019 – January 2020

Monday December 2

7:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Contemporary Music Studio. Van Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. Free.

Tuesday December 3

12:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Western University Wind Ensemble. Works by Stetson, Khachaturian, Stamp and Ticheli. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. Free.

12:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Electroacoustic Music Compositions. Van Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. Free.

Wednesday December 4

12:30: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Western University Symphonic Band. Works by Barnes, Ticheli, Can der Roost, Holst and George. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. Free.


Thursday December 5

12:15: St. George’s Cathedral (Kingston). Advent Concert. Douglas Handforth, violin; Jennifer Tindale, cello; Fran Harkness, piano. 270 King St. E., Kingston. 613-548-4671 or stegeorgescathedral.ca. Freewill offering.

5:00: Performance Hall Concert. Sultans of String Christmas Caravan. Caribbean Sleigh Ride; Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring; Little Drummer Boy; Greensleeves; Django Christmas. Guests: Rebecca Campbell and Shannon Thunderbird. 231 Dundas St., London. 519-661-5100 or wolfperformancehall.ca. $25. In support of the United Nations Agency for Refugees.

Friday December 6


7:30: Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts. To Gini with Love. Works by Beethoven, Brahms and Dvořák. Gryphon Trio. 390 King St. W., Kingston. 613-533-2424 or queensu.ca/theisabel/tickets. $42-$53; $35-$45(faculty/staff); $19-$25(st).

10:00: Melos Choir and Period Instruments. In Dulce Jubilo. German Advent & Christmas music, 12th-18th centuries. Medieval chants, familiar carols, and music of Schutz, Praetorius and Bach. St. George’s Cathedral (Kings ton), 270 King St. E., Kingston. 613-707-7245.

Monday December 9


7:00: Edison Singers. In the Bleak Midwinter. Esenvald: In the Bleak Midwinter; Darke: In the Bleak Midwinter; Gjeilo: In the Bleak Midwinter; Britten: Ceremony of Carols. Noel Edison, conductor. Court House Theatre, 26 Queen St., Niagara-On-The-Lake. 226-384-3100. $35. Also Dec 17 (Toronto), 15:40(Edm).
B. Concerts Beyond the GTA


**Wednesday December 11**

- 7:30: Empire Theatre: Sultans of String Christmas Caravan. Caribbean Sleigh Ride; Jesus, Joy of Man’s Desiring; Little Drummer Boy; Greensleeves; Django Christmas. Guests: Rebecca Campbell, don; Ian Church (Barrie), 47 Owen St., Barrie. 705-721-4752. $10-$35. Also Dec 16 & 17.

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**Thursday December 12**

- 2:00: Canadian Celtic Choir. Celtic Christmas Spirit: Women’s Canadian Club of Loan. Centennial Hall, 550 Wellington St., London. celtichoir.ca. $20.
- 7:30: Empire Theatre: Sultans of String Christmas Caravan. Caribbean Sleigh Ride; Jesus, Joy of Man’s Desiring; Little Drummer Boy; Greensleeves; Django Christmas. Guests: Rebecca Campbell and Shannon Thunderbird. 321 Front St., St. Catharines. 905-688-0722; $24 (12+); $30 (under 12); $15 (under 12); $5 (under 5). Also Dec 13 & 14.
- 8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Yuletide Spectacular. Waterloo Region Mass Choir; Grand Philharmonic Choir; Grand Philharmonic Children’s Choir; Contemporary School of Dance; Tania Miller, conductor; Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-746-4711 or 1-888-746-4717 or kowsymphony.ca. $35-$95. Also Dec 14 (2:30 pm & 8 pm), 15.

**Saturday December 14**

- 2:30: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Yuletide Spectacular. Waterloo Region Mass Choir; Grand Philharmonic Choir; Grand Philharmonic Children’s Choir; Contemporary School of Dance; Tania Miller, conductor; Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-746-4711 or 1-888-746-4717 or kowsymphony.ca. $35-$95. Also Dec 18 (1 pm & 8 pm) and 19.

**Sunday December 15**

- 10:00: St. George’s Cathedral (Kingston). Advent Concert. Songs of Christmas Past designed for young families. 250 St. Paul St., Kingston. 613-549-0099 or orahbraun.com. $25(st-univ/college); $5(st-high school).

- 10:00: Empire Theatre: Sultans of String Christmas Caravan. Caribbean Sleigh Ride; Jesus, Joy of Man’s Desiring; Little Drummer Boy; Greensleeves; Django Christmas. Guests: Rebecca Campbell, don; Ian Church (Barrie), 47 Owen St., Barrie. 705-721-4752. $10-$35. Also Dec 16 & 17.

**Monday December 16**

- 8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Yuletide Spectacular. Waterloo Region Mass Choir; Grand Philharmonic Choir; Grand Philharmonic Children’s Choir; Contemporary School of Dance; Tania Miller, conductor; Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-746-4711 or 1-888-746-4717 or kowsymphony.ca. $35-$95. Also Dec 18 (1 pm & 8 pm) and 19.

**Saturday December 14**

- 7:30: Empire Theatre: Sultans of String Christmas Caravan. Caribbean Sleigh Ride; Jesus, Joy of Man’s Desiring; Little Drummer Boy; Greensleeves; Django Christmas. Guests: Rebecca Campbell and Shannon Thunderbird. 321 Front St., St. Catharines. 905-688-0722; $24 (12+); $30 (under 12); $15 (under 12); $5 (under 5). Also Dec 13 & 14.
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Orchestra; Hamilton Children’s Choir; Gamma New, conductor. FirstOntario Concert Hall, 1 Summers Ln., Hamilton. 905-526-7756 or hpo.org. $10-$71.

- **8:00:** FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre/TO Niagara Jazz Festival. The Music of a Charlie Brown Christmas. Music of Guaraldi. Peter Shea Trio; Terry Clarke. FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 905-888-0722 or 1-855-515-0722 or FirstOntarioPAC.ca. $35; $180 (table of six). Also 2 pm.

**Sunday December 22**


**Friday December 27**

- **2:00:** FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. Sing-a-long Sound of Music. 250 St. Paul St., St. Catharines. 905-888-0722 or 1-855-515-0722 or FirstOntarioPAC.ca. $20. On-screen lyrics, costume contest.

**Sunday December 29**


**Wednesday January 1**

- **3:00:** Stratford Symphony Orchestra. New Year in Vienna. Music of Strauss; Viennese waltzes; Brahms: Hungarian Dances. Catherine and Mark Gardner, singers. Avondale United Church, 194 Avondale Ave., Stratford. 519-271-0990. $40; $10(st); free(under 12).

**Saturday January 4**

- **3:00:** 5 at the First Chamber Players. String Extravaganza IX. Konody. Duo for violin and cello. Bridge. Duo for two violas: Flores. Release: Mendelssohn; Duet: Yehonatan Berick, Csaba Koczó, violins; Caitlin Boyle, Theresa Rudolph, violas; Rachel Desser, Rachel Mercer, cellos. First Unitarian Church (Hamilton), 170 Dundurn St. S., Hamilton. 509-399-5125. $20; $15(sr); $5(st).

**Sunday January 5**

- **12:00 noon:** Midday Music with Sliperu. Chamber Music Concert. Works by Bach, Beethoven, Vitali. Michael Adamson, violin; Philip Adamson, piano. Hi-Way Pentecostal Church, 50 Anne St. N., Barrie. 705-726-1181. $10; free(st).

- **Friday January 10**

- **12:30:** Don Wright Faculty of Music. Fridays at 12:30 Concert Series. Caitlin Boyle, Theresa Rudolph, violas; Brett Kingsbury, piano. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. Free.

- **Saturday January 11**

- **12:00 noon:** Don Wright Faculty of Music. Marita Brooks Concerto Competition. Von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. Free.

**Sunday January 12**

- **2:30:** Kingston Symphony. Beethoven & Tchaikovsky. Tchaikovsky: Pezzo Capriccioso; Trew: Symphony No.1; Beethoven: Symphony No.5; Wolf Tormann, cello; Evan Mitchell, conductor. Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, 390 King St. W., Kingston. 613-546-9729 or 613-530-2050. $10-$50.

**Wednesday January 15**

- **2:30:** Seniors Serenade. Jazz Pianist Mike Lewis performs his “G” list. Bethel Community Church, 128 St. Vincent Street, Barrie. 705-726-1181. Free.

**Thursday January 16**

- **7:00:** Magisterra Soloists. Holocaust: Music in Exile. Hindemith: Piano Trio for Barrie.

**December Concert Series**

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piano, tenor sax & viola; Rüttgen: Piano Quintet; Zeist: String Quartet No.2; Kutí: Serenade for String Trio. Guests: Bobbi Thompson, saxophonist; Brian Cho, piano. Museum London Theatre, 421 Ridout St. N., London. 519-661-0333. $30, $25(sr); $15(st); $10(child under 10).

Friday January 17

- 8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Mozart: Drama and Beauty. Mozart: Overture from Idomeneo, Piano Concerto No.24 in c, Symphony No.39 in f# flat. Pascale Giguère, violin/leader; Serhiy Salo, piano. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717 or kwsymphony.ca. ca.$35-$92. Also Jan 17, 18(2:30 pm).

- 7:30: Saturday January 18

- 8:00: Mosaïque Project. Music from Lon-

- 519-661-3767 . Free.

- 7:30: Saturday January 19

- 2:30: Niagara Symphony Orchestra. Trium-

- 5:19-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717 or kwsymphony.ca. ca.$35-$92. Also Jan 17(2 pm & 8 pm).

- 7:30: Saturday January 25

- 8:00: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Opera at Western: The Mikado. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. Free.

- 7:30: February 1

- 2:00: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Opera at Western: The Mikado. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. Free.

- 7:30: Saturday February 1

- 2:00: Don Wright Faculty of Music. Opera at Western: The Mikado. Paul Davenport Theatre, Talbot College, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. $30(40 adv). Also Jan 31(7:30 pm), 7/7(30 pm), 8, 9.

- 2:30: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Youth Orchestra. Land and Water. Jane Manes, tuba. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717 or kwsymphony.ca. $15; $11(child). Free pre- concert activities from 1:15 pm.

- 8:00: Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. Growing up Ella. Capathia Jenkins, vocal-ist; Edwin Outwater, conductor. Centre in the Square, 101 Queen St. N., Kitchener. 519-745-4711 or 1-888-745-4717 or kwsymphony.ca. $20-$80. Also Feb 1. $20//Sun Fest World Music & Jazz Ser- ries. Aurora. Aosolan Hall, 795 Dundas St. E., London. sunfest.on.ca. $33/$18(adj).

- 7:30: Thursday February 6

- 7:30 Don Wright Faculty of Music. Early Music Studio. von Kuster Hall, Music Building, Western University, 1151 Richmond St. N., London. 519-661-3767. Free.
The Christmas Story

Church of the Holy Trinity. The Christmas Story. Church of the Holy Trinity, 18 Trinity Sq. 416-598-4521. Suggested donation $25; $15 (ch). Opens Dec 6, 7:30pm. Runs to Dec 22. Fri/Sat (7:30pm), Sat/Sun (4:30pm). Note: Dec 22 shows at 7pm and 2pm. Note: no show Dec 23-25.

Church of the Holy Trinity. The Christmas Story. 18 Trinity Sq. 416-598-4521. Suggested donation $25; $15 (ch). Opens Dec 6, 7:30pm. Runs to Dec 22. Fri/Sat (7:30pm), Sat/Sun (4:30pm). Note: Dec 22 shows at 7pm and 2pm. Note: no show Dec 23-25.


Music and lyrics by Irving Berlin, book by Gordon Greenberg and Chad Hodge, based on the film. Festival Theatre, 10 Queen’s Parade, Niagara-on-the-Lake. 1-800-511-7429. $30 and up. Opens Nov 6, 1pm. Runs to Dec 22. Days and times vary; Visit shawfest.com for details. 

St. Anne’s Music and Drama Society presents Patience. Patience by Arthur Sullivan, libretto by W.S. Gilbert. St. Anne’s Parish Hall, 651 St. George St. 416-951-2523. $30. Opens Jan 24, 7:30pm. Runs to Feb 2. Thu/Fri/Sat (7:30pm), Sat (2pm). 


University of Toronto Faculty of Music. U of T Symphony Orchestra: Operatic Showpieces. MacMillian Theatre, Edward Johnson Building, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-408-0208. $30; $20(sr); $10(ch). U of T students admitted free with a valid TCard, space permitting. Dec 5, 7:30pm. 


Christmas starts on November 1;” so goes the knowing refrain, spoken in tones of world-weary authority to those affronted by the instant shift from Halloween to Christmas in retail displays, both digital and physical. Those who repeat this defeatist bromide are not necessarily less affected by the sudden onslaught of candy canes and evergreens, of reindeer and elves, of living in a dystopian paternalistic surveillance state ruled by the corporate overlords. No, they are simply stating the obvious: that the secular adventorial spectacle of Christmas constitutes an irresistible opportunity for sharing, for generosity, for giving gifts. It is, for better or worse, a holiday centered on consumption. That so much Christmas iconography – Christmas trees in living rooms, holly wreaths decorating doors, mistletoe hung slyly in conspicuous locations – tends to consist of bits of nature snipped and transplanted indoors is no mistake. Christmas, as a celebration of plenty, of the results of the harvest, tends to work better in urban environments, in which people are cut off from the labour that produces the goods to be consumed. It is no mistake that Charles Dickens’ A Christmas Carol, one of the foundational texts of our current conception of Christmas, takes place in London, in the mid-19th century, at a time when the material resources of half the world flowed to the Empire’s hegemonic centre.

And yet, to return to the lyrics quoted at the beginning of this article, it is precisely the late-capitalist commodification of every facet of our waking lives, of which the commercialization of Christmas is but a symptom, that produces one of the holiday’s most enduringly appealing charms: the realization of a period of mutually agreed-upon respite from the work week, from emails, from the burden of emails, from the burden of the work week, from emails, from the burden of the work week...
of productivity. Not for all, and not for very long, but the prospect remains one of Christmas' central myths: to “dream by the fire” with a loved one is to return, however briefly, to the carefree days of youth, to enjoy a holiday from the outside world, to finally, at the end of the calendar year, have some time—a few days, a week, maybe, between December 24 and January 4—to focus on ourselves, to be present, to enjoy the company of an intimate few. This is the promise of so much secular holiday music: chestnuts roast on an open fire as we enjoy the play of being exposed to the elements from the comfort of a comfortable middle-class home. We have ourselves a merry little Christmas and imagine that our troubles are miles away, out of sight; we come home for Christmas, if only in our dreams. The core component of any secular Christmas celebration, we are told, is a collective, wishful imagination of Christmas.

Christmas music plays a key part in the yearning for contentment that fuels our holiday daydreams, but its ubiquity, from November 1 onwards, can corrupt its intended effect. In the hands of retailers eager to drive the holiday sales that have become essential to their survival, Christmas music becomes one of the tools with which nostalgia is weaponized as a sales tactic. Come mid-December, at the time when the holidays are actually in sight, we’ve spent six weeks of mental energy fending it all off: Mariah Carey at the grocery store, Michael Bublé in the mall, the insipid, twee, ukulele- and sleigh-bell chime of every YouTube advertisement for poorly made clothing. To be consistently bombarded by Christmas music in so many areas of our lives is to be forced to inoculate ourselves to these songs’ nostalgic effects, and to the genuine joy that they are capable of producing in the right hands, to appropriate doses (if a listener is inclined to find joy in such music).

Participation in the very capitalist structures that make the secular experience of a collective Christmas break so necessary also ruins one of the holiday’s chief joys: the experience of nostalgia through music, and the precious comfort that nostalgia is capable of providing.

There is, however, something to be done, if you find yourself yearning to yearn again, to recapture the joy of music that seems to have been rubbed clean of the lustre it once possessed; go listen to some musicians play Christmas music, and listen to how the songs you know are transformed, revivified, re-presented in ways that break the cynical purgatorial cycle of streaming-platform playlists, emerging, finally, alive again. Some holiday gigs are good, some bad. But in the fortuitous times when they are very good, they deliver on the basic promise of secular Christmas music: to daydream, to create the sensation of presence, to provide the listener with an opportunity to indulge in the imagination of their own history. Ultimately, the nostalgic core of this music is more true to itself than simply thinking fondly on the past: it is about taking a moment to reflect on our previous experiences, so that we might more happily celebrate the present moment, and move confidently forward, facing, unafraid, the plans that we’ve made for the future. This may not be true, of course. But it’s nice to think that it could be.

**MAINLY CLUBS, MOSTLY JAZZ QUICK PICKS**

- **DEC 11, 8:30PM:** Jazzcast n’ Joy, Hugh’s Room. Drew Jurecka, Alex Pangman, Jeremy Ledbetter, and more, play at Hugh’s Room for Jazzcast’s December extravaganza.
- **DEC 15, 4PM:** The Woodhouse featuring Barbra Lica. The Jazz Room. The Woodhouse, an instrumental collective that has been playing holiday shows for over ten years, brings Juno-nominated singer, Barbra Lica, to Waterloo for an afternoon show of Christmas classics.
- **DEC 21, 8PM:** Dave Barrett, Hirut Cafe. Dave Barrett plays solo guitar arrangements of holiday favourites in the intimate setting of Hirut Cafe.
- **DEC 21, 9PM:** Robi Botos and Hilario Duran. Jazz Bistro. Now an annual event, two of Toronto’s leading jazz pianists play Christmas music, jazz standards, and music that reflects each player’s unique roots.

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

_Dave Barrett_

### D. In the Clubs (Mostly Jazz)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec 10</td>
<td>8PM</td>
<td>Hugh’s Room Live</td>
<td>All shows at 8:30PM unless otherwise noted. See website for individual show prices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 11</td>
<td>8PM</td>
<td>The Jazz Bistro</td>
<td>251 Victoria St. 416-383-5299 jazzbistro.ca (full schedule) Attendees must be 19+, Cover charges vary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 12</td>
<td>9PM</td>
<td>The Quartet</td>
<td>Two of Toronto’s leading jazz pianists play Christmas standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 12</td>
<td>9PM</td>
<td>Blackbird Jazz Club</td>
<td>71 Blue Jays Dr. 416-325-6777 blackbirdjazzclub.ca</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 13</td>
<td>9PM</td>
<td>The Jazz Room</td>
<td>Located in the Hyatt Hotel, 59 King St. N., Waterlo 226-476-1565 kjwazzroom.ca (full schedule) Attendees must be 19+, Cover charges vary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 13</td>
<td>9PM</td>
<td>The Whistle</td>
<td>106 Collective - 251 Dundas St. W. 416-598-0307 thewhistle.org</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 14</td>
<td>9PM</td>
<td>The Double Cuts</td>
<td>Every Sat 8:30PM - 10:30PM thedoublecuts.ca</td>
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<td>Dec 15</td>
<td>9PM</td>
<td>The Funky Biscuit</td>
<td>951 Gordon St., Guelph 519-767-2440 thefuncybiscuit.com</td>
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<td>Dec 16</td>
<td>9PM</td>
<td>The Bluebird Restaurant</td>
<td>1585 Dundas St. W. 416-588-0307 lula.ca (full schedule)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 17</td>
<td>9PM</td>
<td>The Jazz Room</td>
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<td>Dec 20</td>
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<td>Dec 26</td>
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<td>The Whistle</td>
<td>106 Collective - 251 Dundas St. W. 416-598-0307 thedoublecuts.ca</td>
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<td>Dec 27</td>
<td>9PM</td>
<td>The Funky Biscuit</td>
<td>951 Gordon St., Guelph 519-767-2440 thefuncybiscuit.com</td>
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<td>Dec 28</td>
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<td>The Whistle</td>
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<td>Dec 30</td>
<td>9PM</td>
<td>The Whistle</td>
<td>106 Collective - 251 Dundas St. W. 416-598-0307 thedoublecuts.ca</td>
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<td>Dec 31</td>
<td>9PM</td>
<td>The Funky Biscuit</td>
<td>951 Gordon St., Guelph 519-767-2440 thefuncybiscuit.com</td>
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**Nagy Christmas. Dec 21 8:30PM Jason White Trio. Dec 27 8:30PM Carlos Morgan Quartet. Dec 28 8:30PM Adrain Farrugia’s Playdate. Dec 31 7pm New Year’s Eve at The Jazz Room w/ Jason White and The Jitterbugs.**
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Films
- Jan 19 6:30pm; Royal Conservatory. Music on Film: Heart of a Dog. Director: Laurie Anderson, 75 min, 2015, USA. Laurie Anderson takes us on a magical journey through the nature of love, loss, and absence. Centered on her beloved dog Lolabelle, who died in 2011, and dedicated to her late husband, Lou Reed, the film seamlessly weaves together childhood memories, video diaries, and philosophical musings on the meaning of life. Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W. Post-film talk with Laurie Anderson, hosted by Mervyn Mehta. Tickets & information: hotdoscinema.ca
- Jan 21 7:00; Toronto Consort. The Search for Salamone Rossi. A documentary film screening and Q&A. Innis Town Hall, U of T, 2 Sussex Ave. 416-964-6337 or torontoconsort.org. $20.

Galas, Tributes and Fundraisers
- Dec 21 2:30: Polina Chernik and Julia Tchernik. Music and Miracles Youth Charity Concert. In support of the Music Therapy Program at SickKids Hospital. Polina Chernik, piano, Alexander Dondish, violin/guitar, Elizabeth Gilerovitch, voice, Karim Khakimov; flute, Grace Zemlyak, voice, Array Music, 155 Walnut Ave. 416-638-8226. $10 or PWYC.
- Jan 23 7:00: Echo Women’s Choir. An Evening with Singer/Songwriter Andrea Ramolo and Special Guests. A benefit concert for Echo Women’s Choir. Tranzac Club, 292 Brunswick Ave. Free snacks, cash bar and silent auction. Tickets: $20 available at

The WHolenote.com
Lectures, Salons and Symposia

- Dec 02: 1:30: Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre. Mozart at the Opera. Presented by opera educator Iain Scott. By December 1791, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart had written the defining compositions in every available musical genre of his time: symphony, chamber music, masses, and – above all – three types of operas: Opera Seria, Opera Buffa and Singspiel. Iain will discuss a spectrum of directorial experiences. Miles Nadal JCC, 750 Spadina Ave. To register, call 416-924-6211 x0 or visit mnjcc.org, $22.

- Dec 05 1:00: Miles Nadal JCC. Are You Hep to the Jew?: The Music of Cab Calloway. Led by musician Jonno Lightstone. Cab Calloway (the legendary “Hi De Ho” man) was a larger-than-life showman known for scat singing, dancing, and flashy elegance. He catapulted to fame with performances at The Cotton Club, created signature songs like “Minnie the Moocher”, and led one of the greatest bands of the Swing Era. Enjoy this historical lecture complete with live music. Miles Nadal JCC, 750 Spadina Ave. Admission: $5. Spaces limited. To register, call 416-924-6211 x0 or visit www.mnjcc.org.

- Dec 09 2:00: Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, Classical 101 Talk. Presented by composer Abigail Richardson-Schulte. Caroline Place, 118 Market St., Hamilton. 905-526-7756 or hpo.org. Free.


- Jan 07 12:10: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Voice Performance Class: In Conversation with Emily D’Angelo, mezzo.


Master Classes

- Jan 14 10:00am: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. New Music Festival: Composition Master Class I with André Mehari. Edward Johnson Building, Walter Hall, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750. Free. Open to the public. Also Jan 15.


- Feb 06 5:00: University of Toronto Faculty of Music. Trumpet Master Class with Gábor Tarkóvi. Edward Johnson Building, Walter Hall, 80 Queen’s Park. 416-978-3750. Free. Open to the public.

Jazz United Jam. A spot where dancers, singers and musicians are all equal. Everybody contributes to make the songs come alive. The Jam is practice at a more democratic approach to music and dance. Tanzac Club, 292 Brunswick Ave. 416-923-8170; Free/PWYC. Also Dec 8, 15, 22, 29, Jan 5, 12, 19.

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- Jan 25 10:30am: Toronto Mendelssohn Choir. Singation Saturday Choral Workshop. Conductor Jordan Travis will explore two types of close-harmony singing. Now’s the time to give some Barbershop a try. Cameron Hall, Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, 1585 Yonge St. $10 fee includes refreshments. More info: tmchoir.org/ singation-saturdays.

- Jan 26 2:30: Fit for the Stage. Elevated Performance for Singers: A Comprehensive Mind and Body Workshop. Overcome physical and mental blocks to performing at your highest level in this day of hands-on learning. Led by Leigh Graham, fitness and mindset coach and vocalist. 918 Bathurst Centre for Culture, Arts, Media and Education, 918 Bathurst St. For information and registration: fitforthestage.com.


- Jan 11 1:00: Durham Girls’ Choir. Winter Workshop. Girls aged 7 through 18 from across the Durham Region are invited to join us for an afternoon of singing and musical fun. Bring a friend, make new friends, and be amazed by the beautiful sounds you create in just one afternoon. A great way to experience what a performing choir is all about, without the commitment of a full year. Choir membership is NOT required. Parents are welcome to observe the workshop and are invited to our special performance at the end of the day. Durham Girls’ Choir is not church-affiliated. Location: TBD. 905-434-7269. Free workshop (reservation required).


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This band sure needs a little drummer girl!

Lachine (Montréal) Québec, 1983

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CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WINNERS!

December’s Child is? Brian Current

Brian’s full interview appears on page 78. New Music Concerts’ third concert of the season is “Serious Smile” directed by Brian Current, on Thursday, February 13, 8pm (with an introductory chat at 7:15pm) at Harbourfront Centre Theatre. “We showcase the future of NMC by celebrating talented young composers and the latest in mind-blowing technology. We top it off with the stellar Chamber Concerto (1970) by Gyorgy Ligeti. If you have not heard this piece live, this is your chance!” MARY LOUIS and CHRISTIAN MUELLER each win a pair of tickets.

But meanwhile, you can hear the RCM Glenn Gould School’s New Music Ensemble concert “For Michael Colgrass” on Sunday, January 19, at 1pm in Mazzoleni Concert Hall, curated and conducted by Brian Current. In honour of Colgrass they will play a world premiere of Bestiary I & II by Bekah Simms for soprano, ensemble and electronics; Gabriel Dharmoo’s the fog in our poise; and the North American premiere of Aguas Marinhas by Miguel Azguime. The tickets to this concert are FREE, but will go quickly. Get yours starting Monday January 13!

If you can read this, thank a music teacher.

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Composer and conductor Brian Current is co-artistic director, along with Robert Aitken, of New Music Concerts and has been composer adviser for the RCM’s 21C Music Festival. He’s the director of the New Music Ensemble at the RCM Glenn Gould School, and the main conductor for Continuum Contemporary Music.

As a conductor he leads a wide range of 20th/21st century repertoire, and is the champion of close to a hundred works by Canadian composers including commissioned premieres by Linda Catlin Smith, Brian Harman, Christopher Mayo, Bekah Simms, So Jeong Ahn, Andrew Staniland, Alice Ho and many others.

Current’s compositions are programmed frequently by major professional orchestras, opera companies and ensembles across Canada and internationally. The Naxos recording of his opera *Icarus* won the 2015 JUNO Award, Classical Composition of the Year. He was the inaugural winner of the Azrieli Commissioning Competition in 2016. Current’s 2017 opera, Missing, with Métis playwright Marie Clements, is about Canada’s missing and murdered Indigenous women. Missing has just completed a tour of Victoria, Regina, and Prince George and was featured on our November 2019 cover.

Current was born in London Ontario, and grew up in Ottawa with his older brother Grant and younger sister Catherine. “Both my parents and siblings are very musical. My parents still sing in the Ottawa Choral Society. They may be its longest-serving members. My Dad played Gershwin and Chopin at our living-room piano, and my Mom still plays piano in retirement homes around Ottawa.”

If a friendly child asks what your job is? I draw the music so people know what to play. I also wave my arms so people know when and how to play it.

Where did hearing music fit into your life, growing up? In the car with my parents. Listening to my 80s cassette Walkman while delivering The Globe and Mail (before Yam! Ottawa winter!) as a teenager. Your very first recollection of making up music yourself? Trying to fake out my mom by pretending to practise Mozart and Beethoven, but rather attempting (poorly) to improvise in that style. She knew. First instruments other than your own voice? Piano, guitar and euphonium.

A first music teacher? I’d go to the home of Karen Sutherland who was a fantastic local teacher with a half-dozen children of her own. Early collaborative experiences? My first ensemble experience was as a choirboy at Christchurch Cathedral where the starting salary was $2.10 per week.

After high school? I didn’t know that formal composition as an art form was a thing, but I nevertheless somehow convinced my parents that I should study piano and composition, rather than commerce, at McGill.

When did composing music arise? I knew before high school that I wanted to compose but didn’t know about any existing practices until John Rea inspiringly introduced the composition world to us in a third year undergrad introduction class at McGill.

When did you first conduct? I wrote a piece for tenor, bassoon, overtone singing, bowed banjo and piano and needed to put it together for a concert, and just did it. The first time conducting professional musicians was the National Arts Centre Orchestra in my 20s and it was terrifying but a huge learning experience.

Experiences that formed your adult musical appetites? When I was in the Ottawa Youth Choir, we performed Michael Colgrass’ *The Earth’s A Baked Apple* which was like music from another planet at the time, and in retrospect was a fantastic introduction to contemporary music.

When did you began to think of yourself as a career musician? I still don’t know about this. It remains a struggle. We should all ask ourselves every five years if this life is for us.

Ever think you would do something else? My secret other fantasy job is to be a political journalist in foreign countries for *Harper’s, The Atlantic, NPR.*

Music-making in your own family today? My three kids take piano and violin, but I don’t push them to be professional musicians. More, I would just like them to get a glimpse of the world that I work in daily and love. When the kids were little – one still is – we would listen to Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier, or the Goldberg Variations every night as they went to sleep. We would listen to the same pieces for years and not get tired of them.

What should we say to parents/grandparents hoping their young children will grow up to love and make music? They won’t regret it if they take music lessons, or if they are introduced to great works.

UPCOMING

For January 19 (21C Festival at Mazzolini Hall), and February 13 (New Music Concerts at Harbourfront), please see “Congratulations to our Winners!” on page 77.

On May 7 we bring the Glenn Gould School ensemble to the movies, performing with an orchestra alongside projected film and moving images, in collaboration with the Toronto Images Festival. It’s free!

Look out for a new opera about Glenn Gould climbing along the inner wall of The Royal Conservatory, way up in the air, as part of the 21C Festival in January 2021.

There has been some OAC funding and other interest in producing a recording of my oratorio *The River of Light,* a full evening work for choir, orchestra and soloists that premiered in Vancouver last May. It looks at Dante’s vision of “light in the form of a river” from the point of view of writers across Canada from different backgrounds: Jewish, Chinese, Indigenous, secular, Christian, Islamic and Hindu. We’re planning to record it with the Amadeus Choir and a local orchestra.

December’s Child is Brian Current

I’m so grateful that my parents made me practise – I still use the piano in my work every day.

Brian Current is a proud Toronto resident who bikes around to rehearsals. He has three kids, a ridiculously accomplished wife and a small white dog. Outside of music he enjoys time with his kids, reading, travel and playing (but not watching) hockey.
Having retired from my day job at New Music Concerts and recently undergone knee replacement surgery which involves an extended recovery, I have found myself lately with a luxury of leisure time. This has given me the opportunity to listen in more depth to the discs I select for my own column. It has also enabled me to select a bumper crop to write about, without however, providing any extra space in which to do so. With apologies to the artists, I will try to keep my assessments brief.

In my formative years, while immersing myself in the music of the 20th century, I set out to collect recordings of all the works of Arnold Schoenberg and Béla Bartók. Schoenberg proved to be the greater challenge because in those days there was not yet a definitive collection of his oeuvre, so I had to gather the recordings wherever I could. The quest for Bartók was simplified by a comprehensive Complete Edition Bartók Béla issued in 33 volumes by the Hungaroton label. It was there that I first encountered the quintet for string quartet and piano dating from 1904, an unpublished student work that although well received at its first performance, was later withdrawn by the composer. I was pleased to receive a new recording of the youthful work on Veress – String Trio; Bartók – Piano Quintet featuring violinists Vilde Frang and Barnabás Kelemen, violists Lawrence Power and Katalin Kokas, cellist Nicolas Altstaedt and pianist Alexander Lonquich. It shows a masterful control of late-Romantic-period nuances and exuberant bombast, especially in the Bartók's. It makes me wish we were opened up to embrace atonality, aleatoric music and microtonality, and go on to say that after Stalin's death in 1953, Babajanian's style point out that it was written under the constraints of the Stalin regime.

Tchaikovsky & Babajanian features violinist Vadim Gluzman, pianist Yevgeny Sudbin and Canadian-born cellist Johannes Moser (BIS-2372 SACD bis.se). The bread and butter of this disc is the Tchaikovsky Piano Trio in A Minor, Op.50 which receives a stellar performance, amply illustrating the points addressed in the comprehensive liner notes by Horst A. Scholz. But of more interest is the Piano Trio from 1952 by Armenian composer Arno Babajanian (1921-1983) who was previously unknown to me. The work is both rooted in the Romantic world of Rachmaninoff and imbued with folkloristic flourishes from Babajanian’s native land. The notes point out that it was written under the constraints of the Stalin regime and go on to say that after Stalin’s death in 1953, Babajanian’s style opened up to embrace atonality, aleatoric music and microtonality, among other modern techniques. It makes me wish we were presented with a later example of his work, but my preferences notwithstanding, this is a solid composition that holds its own in a crowded field of late-Romantic chamber music, and once again the performance is committed and convincing. The “encore” piece on this CD is Sudbin’s trio arrangement of the Tango from Alfred Schnittke’s Concerto Grosso No.1 for two violins, harpsichord and strings from 1976, which draws this eclectic disc to a somewhat tongue-in-cheek conclusion.

This year saw the passing of numerous cultural icons, but two in particular are brought together on Kira Braun’s new disc Mosaic (Centaur Records CRC 3779 centaurrecords.com). Glenn Gould Prize-winner Andre Previn and Nobel Prize Laureate Toni Morrison. Previn first set the poetry of Morrison in the cycle Honey and Rue in 1992 for soprano Kathleen Battle, jazz trio and symphony orchestra. Two years later he went to the well once more, to set Four Songs for the more modest forces of soprano, cello and piano. On this disc Braun is joined by cellist Kirk Starkey and pianist Linda Ippolito in performances recorded February 23, 2019 just three days before Previn's death at the age of 89. Morrison died just six months later making this an apt memorial tribute, although that was not the intention of the recording. Braun’s voice is well suited to the dark opening poem Mercy, the wistful Shelter and the concluding poem The Lacemaker, but I wish there was a little

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more edge to the brash and boastful Stones. Starkey’s cello is warm and lyrical throughout and Ippolito’s accompaniment balanced and tasteful. Although Braun’s dictum is clear, I wish the texts had been included, along with some information about the composer and poet, their fame notwithstanding. The disc concludes with Previn’s Vocalise written for, and first recorded by, Sylvia McNair and Yo-Yo Ma with the composer at the piano in 1995. It makes a beautiful conclusion to this all-too-brief, 22-minute tribute.

Concert note: Kira Braun is featured in the Salvation Army’s Christmas Gala at Roy Thomson Hall on December 14.

One disc I’ll certainly not be able to do justice in this limited space is guitarist Daniel Lippel’s double CD Mirrored Spaces (FCR239 NewFocusRecordings.com). I would normally be daunted by the prospect of two and a half hours of solo guitar music, but to my delight Lippel has produced such a diverse program that I didn’t notice the time passing. First and foremost, let me state that although he is a truly accomplished classical guitarist, from the dozen composers represented here, there are very few offerings that would be at home on a traditional Spanish guitar recital. Even in pieces such as Lippel’s own Reflecting with its quasi-Renaissance feel, our equilibrium is thrown off-kilter by rapid microtonal passages. A number of the pieces involve electronics, live or otherwise. One that particularly struck me was Christopher Bailey’s Arc of Infinity in which I found myself wondering “What if?” the subtle electronic part was transcribed for live cimbalom – how different would that piece be? At any rate, it is extremely effective. While most of the recital is played on a traditional nylon string acoustic guitar, a number of tracks employ an electric instrument, from the gentle harmonics of Sidney Corbett’s Detroit Rain Song Graffiti, to the distortion, feedback and note bending of Lippel’s concluding Scaffold (live). Interspersed throughout the two discs are the nine movements of Kyle Bartlett’s Aphorisms, all using a traditional Spanish guitar, but utilizing a number of extended techniques. If you think you already know what a guitar sounds like, or think that a double CD would be a bit “much of a muchness,” I urge you to check out this remarkable disc.

Last month I wrote about Rebecca Clarke’s Viola Sonata, and the controversy it caused at the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge-sponsored competition where the judges considered that such a beautiful piece “could not have been written” by a woman. This month Clarke has reappeared on my desk with another work that was also a runner-up in that Berkshire Festival of Chamber Music Competition, the Trio from 1921. Her Voice features the Neave Trio playing works by Clarke, Amy Marcy Cheney Beach (1867-1944) and Louise Farrere (1867-1875) (Chandos CHAN 20139 naxosdirect.com). Although Clarke (1886-1979) was a generation younger than Beach, her trio was written 17 years before that of her older colleague. Beach’s Trio, Op.150 was a mature work, written in late-romantic style while showing the influence of French Impressionism. French composer Farrere on the other hand, whose Trio No.1 Op.33 dates from 1843, writes in a much more Germanic fashion, honouring the genre’s origins with Haydn, and more specifically the music of Beethoven. As a matter of fact, as an amateur who has enjoying playing Beethoven trios, I feel that Farrere’s is a welcome contribution to the repertoire and I’m glad that it has come to light. Kudos to the Neave Trio for continuing to bring lesser-known works to life in sparkling fashion.

Two more composers previously unknown to me appear on the next disc, Piano Concertos by Dora Bright and Ruth Gipps (Somm Recordings SOMMCD 273 somm-recordings.com). Both English, Bright lived from 1862-1951 and Gipps from 1921-1999. Bright was an accomplished and celebrated pianist of whom Liszt said “Mademoiselle, vous jouez a merveille!” and who was described by George Bernard Shaw as “a thorough musician.” In 1888 she became that first woman awarded the Lucas Medal for Composition, and, after leaving the Academy of Music in London, established herself as a double threat, performing her own Concerto in A Minor at the Crystal Palace in 1891. That impressive work is featured in its first recording on this disc with Samantha Ward as soloist.

Gipps was also a stellar pianist, celebrated as a child prodigy both as performer and composer. A hand injury thwarted her performing career, but she then focused on composition and added conducting to her portfolio, becoming the first notable British woman in the field and founding several orchestras. She went on to produce five symphonies and several significant concerted works. Her Piano Concerto in G Minor dates from immediately after the Second World War and Ambarvalia, Op.70 is from 1988. Both are performed with conviction by Murray McLachlan. The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra’s nuanced performances on this important disc are directed by Charles Peebles.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957) was another child prodigy. Born in Vienna, his ballet Der Schneemann (The Snowman) caused a sensation when he was just 11, and his Second Piano Sonata, written at 13, was played throughout Europe by Artur Schnabel. At 21 his opera Der Tote Stadt (The Dead City) was produced in Hamburg and Cologne. Korngold composed a wealth of concert music and six operas, but is best known for the Hollywood film scores he wrote following an invitation to America from director Max Reinhardt in 1934. He stayed in Hollywood for the duration of WWII, and never returned to his homeland. Although his film scores were a huge success, revolutionizing the field along with Max Steiner and Alfred Newman, his later concert music was dismissed by the critics and cognoscenti of the time who were by then focused on the post-war avant-garde doctrines of Boulez and Stockhausen. The Symphony Op.40, was begun in 1947 while on vacation in Canada and completed in 1952. With its lush orchestration, rich melodic content and cinematic scope, the symphony was rejected by the cultural powers that were, and was not revived until the 1970s when Korngold’s star began to rise again. Korngold: Symphony in F Sharp: Theme and Variations; Straussiana is a new recording on the Chandos label featuring Sinfonia of London under John Wilson (CHSA 5220 naxosdirect.com). It is a stunning realization of the symphony, but unfortunately I find the companion pieces – one written for school orchestra and the other a pastiche – to be just too much fluff. But the symphony is well worth the price of admission.

The final disc is a little strange in that it no longer exists as such. Daisy DeBolt – Ride Into the Sunset was a limited edition archival collection produced by George Koller for a memorial tribute to DeBolt at Hugh’s Room back in 2011. Although perhaps best known as half of the iconic Canadian acid-folk duet Fraser & DeBolt, active in the late 1960s and early 1970s, DeBolt’s career continued as a solo artist active on the concert stage, composing for the National Film Board and participating in various theatrical productions throughout her lifetime. The recordings included in this compilation date from as early as 1971 – a track with Allan Fraser, presumably an outtake from their first album – right up to four tracks from 2008 co-written with Koller. There’s a 1975 DeBolt composition which she later choreographed for Ballet Vs, and eight tracks from the 1989 cassette-only release Dreams Cost Money. This latter features a number of familiar names including Robert...
Space restrictions make it difficult to fully describe Time & Eternity, the remarkable new CD from the brilliant and visionary violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja with Camerata Bern (Alpha Classics ALPHA 545 naxosdirect.com). This is the fifth in a series of “staged concerts,” a concept that Kopatchinskaja has been developing since 2016, and her second with this ensemble, of which she has been artistic director since autumn 2018.

Described as “music made out of the blood and tears of tortured souls,” the core works are the Concerto funèbre by Karl Amadeus Hartmann, written in 1939 in response to the Nazi outrages, and Frank Martin’s violin concerto Polyptyque, inspired by six 14th-century altar panels of the Passion of Christ.

That barely scratches the surface of a continuous performance that often feels like a religious service: there’s John Zorn’s solemn and moving Kol Nidre; contributions by cantors and Polish and Russian Orthodox priests; song; and, around and between the six Polyptyque movements, the Kyrie from Machaut’s Messe de Noëtre Dame, transcriptions of five Bach chorales and – in place of the Crucifixion panel that Martin omitted – Rubos Fiser’s pain-laden Crucifixion for violin, timpani and bells.

It’s an enthralling and emotional journey from the opening spoken Kol Nidre to the fading tolling bell of the final track, with faultless performances from all involved.

The Canadian violinist Olivier Brault is Professor of Baroque Violin at McGill University and has been active in the Baroque music world for over 30 years. In 2007 he completed a doctorate on French music for violin and figured bass, so it’s no surprise to find that his new CD, Boismortier Sonates pour Violon Op.20, beautifully performed here by Sonate 1704, the ensemble Brault formed in 2003 with Dorothea Ventura on harpsichord and Mélisande Corriveau on bass viol, is an absolute gem (Analekta AN 2 8769 analekta.com/en).

The six sonatas by the French composer Joseph Bodin de Boismortier were published in Paris in 1727, and while they show the increasing influence of Italian violin playing, the French style is still much in evidence, especially in the use of dance movements, with Gigues, Corrente, Gavotte, Allemande and Sarabande accounting for more than half of the movements.

Warm, sparkling playing of richly inventive works makes for an immensely satisfying CD.

You can always count on violinist Christian Tetzlaff for something insightful and challenging, and so it proves to be again in Beethoven and Sibelius Violin Concertos, his new CD with Robin Ticciati and the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin (Ondine ODE 1334-2 naxos.com).

Tetzlaff has recorded both concertos before, but clearly feels he has more to say – or add, perhaps – this time around. Quite striking, given our being accustomed to the Auer, Joachim and Kreisler cadenzas, is the use of the first movement cadenza with added timpani that Beethoven wrote for his transcription for piano and orchestra, as well as cadenzas and ornamentation by Beethoven in the other two movements (again presumably back-sourced from the piano version, as there were none in the original violin score), although Tetzlaff says in the booklet conversation that he has never done it differently.

Insightful comments on both the Beethoven and Sibelius help to illuminate his approach to their performance and both the physical and intellectual demands. The performers are clearly of one mind in engrossing, intelligent and deeply satisfying performances.

Annabelle Berthome-Reynolds is the soloist on Bacewicz Complete Violin Sonatas, with pianist Ivan Donchev joining her in a 2-CD recital of works by the Polish composer Grażyna Bacewicz (muso mu-032 muso.mu).

Bacewicz was an outstanding violinist as well as a more than capable pianist, and numbered seven violin concertos, seven string quartets and concertos for piano, viola and cello in her output. The five numbered sonatas for violin and piano span the period 1945-1951, with the Partita for Violin and Piano following in 1955. All display a high level of both structural assurance and familiarity with the technical and expressive potential of the instruments.

There are also two powerful Sonatas for Solo Violin – the clearly Bach-inspired No.1 from 1941, written in Nazi-occupied Warsaw, and the quite progressive No.2 from 1958, with its haunting Adagio and...
brief but dazzlingly virtuosic final Prelude, described in the excellent booklet notes as a “breathtaking frenzy of double-note glissandi spiccato.”

Engrossing performances make for an exceptional set.

Another exceptional 2-CD set of complete works is Mieczyslaw Weinberg Complete Sonatas for Solo Viola in quite superb performances by Viacheslav Dineichtein (Solo Musica SM 310 naxosdirect.com).

The four numbered sonatas were composed between 1971 and 1983, and are issued here in a centenary edition in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the composer’s birth.

Weinberg’s music continues to be reassessed and promoted, and outstanding releases like this one will clearly help to cement his standing in 20th-century music.

The American violinist Tessa Lark makes a stunning solo CD debut with Fantasy, a selection of fantasies and rhapsodies from four centuries (First hand Records FHR86 firsthandrecords.com).

Three of Telemann’s 12 Fantasias for Solo Violin – No.1 in B-flat, No.4 in D and No.5 in A – are spread throughout the disc, with Lark’s own Appalachian Fantasy providing a breathtaking display of virtuosic fiddling in her native Kentucky tradition, reworking the Schubert song that opens his Fantasie in C Major and melding it with tunes from Appalachia. Pianist Amy Yang joins Lark for an outstanding performance of the Schubert Fantasy, as well as for Fritz Kreisler’s Viennese Rhapsodic Fantasieta – Lark producing ravishing tone and perfect style – and a simply dazzling and passionate performance of Ravel’s Tarantelle – Rhapsodie de concert. It’s a recital of the highest calibre.

Cellist Yorick-Alexander Abel is outstanding in Hommage a Pablo Casals, a programme honouring the legendary Catalan cellist (Naxos 8.551418 naxos.com).

Two of Abel’s own improvisations – Prélude “Lames de Sagesse” (Lamps of Wisdom) from 2000 and Prélude “Sagesse Amérindienne” (Nurice American Wisdom) from 2010 – frame a fine performance of Bach’s Suite in G Major BWV1007. The Suite Per Violoncel Sol ‘A Pau Casals’ is a striking work in remembrance of his older brother written by Casals’ violinist/composer younger brother in 1973, the year of Pablo’s death. Arthur Honegger’s brief Paduana from 1945 and Pablo Casals’ own Cant dels Ocells (Song of the Birds), based on a Catalan Christmas song, round out a memorable CD.

There are two excellent string quartet CDs from Alpha Classics this month, both featuring Mozart’s String Quartet No.15 in D Minor K421 and with little to choose between them.

Quatuor Voce is the ensemble on Mozart Schubert Quartets Nos.15, the Mozart paired with Schubert’s String Quartet No.15 in G Major D887 in recordings made with a mix of live concert and studio sessions – not that you can tell (ALPHA 559 outhere-music.com). There’s a warm, measured opening to the Mozart, a work often played with a stress on the inner turmoil of this significant key for Mozart – the key of Don Giovanni, the Piano Concerto No.20 K466 and the Requiem. There’s passion here though, albeit implied rather than explicit, with the hint of despair always restrained.

The same sensitivity and depth is equally evident in the monumental Schubert quartet.

On the Quatuor Van Kuijk’s MOZART the K421 quartet is paired with the String Quartet No.14 in G Major K387 and the Divertimento in F Major K38, the latter in its original form for four solo strings (ALPHA 551 outhere-music.com). The D-minor quartet leans more towards the dramatic here than in the Quatuor Voce performance, with less vibrato, more articulation and dynamic contrast and more overt anguish – the final chords, for instance. There’s never a shortage of warmth, however, and the same qualities are evident in a vibrant performance of the K387 G-major work.

Violinist Ilya Gringolts and cellist Dmitry Kouzov are the performers on Eisler Ravel Widman Duos, a CD that features two 20th-century works and one from the 21st (Delos DE 3556 delosmusic.com).

Hans Eisler studied with Arnold Schoenberg, and the latter’s influence can be heard in the brief two-movement Duo for Violin and Cello Op.7 from 1924, albeit with the 12-tone approach given a softer and more audience-friendly treatment.

The central work on the disc is the two-volume 24 Duos for Violin and Cello from 2008 by the German composer Jörg Widmann. Nine of the pieces are under one minute in length and the longest only just over three minutes, but the double stopping and special effects present technical difficulties that bring brilliant playing from Gringolts and Kouzov in music that is challenging but always interesting. With Widmann himself saying “Sensational!!! You understand every fibre of my music” about the performances, these world-premiere recordings can be considered definitive.

A fine reading of Ravel’s Sonata for Violin and Cello from 1922 completes a fine CD.

The Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and their concertmaster Margaret Batjer perform concertante works for violin from across three centuries on Jaubert Bach Violin Concertos, with Jeffrey Kahane conducting (BIS-2309 bis.se).

The 2017 two-movement Violin Concerto by the American composer Pierre Jaubert was co-commissioned by the LACO and is heard here in a world-premiere recording. The violin’s lyrical qualities are fully exploited from the quiet and ethereal opening through the rhythmic contrasts of the energy-filled second movement.

Bach’s Violin Concerto In A Minor BWV1041 follows in a solid performance, and the disc closes with two 20th-century works by Baltic composers: Arvo Pärt’s Fratres, written in 1977 and heard here in the composer’s own 1992 arrangement for violin, string orchestra and percussion; and Peteris Vasks’ quite beautiful Lonely Angel, a 2006 re-working of the final movement from his 1999 Fourth String Quartet. Batjer shows gorgeous tone and control in a solo line written mostly in the highest register.

The excellent cellist Martin Rummel is back with Volume 2 of Ferdinand Ries Complete Works for Cello with pianist Stefan Stroissnig (Naxos 8.573851 naxos.com). Volume 2 is available on Naxos 8.57726.

Ries left a sizeable œuvre of over 200 compositions on his death in 1838, few of which are remembered. Included here are: the Cello Sonata in C Minor WoO2 from 1799, one of the earliest of its genre and written when Ries was only 15; the Trois Aires Russes Varies Op.72 from 1812; the Introduction and a Russian Dance Op.113 No.1 and the Cello Sonata in F Major from 1828; the three Cello Sonata in C Major Op.20 from 1829; and the Cello Sonata in A Major Op.40 from 1837.
Violinist Emmanuele Baldini and pianist Karin Fernandes perform sonatas by two leading figures in Brazilian classical music at the turn of the last century on Miguez and Velásquez Sonatas in the Naxos Music of Brazil series (8.574118 naxos.com/).

The Sonata No.1 for Violin and Piano, “Delirio” from 1909 and the Sonata No.2 for Violin and Piano from 1911 by Glauco Velásquez, who was only 30 when he died in 1914, are really attractive works with a warm Latin feel. The Sonata for Violin and Piano Op.14 by Leopoldo Miguez (1850-1902) is from 1885, and while it feels structurally stronger than the Velásquez works and more in the standard 19th-century sonata mode, it also has less of a Latin feel. Baldini’s playing is radiant and idiomatic, with Fernandes particularly brilliant in the demanding piano writing in the Miguez sonata.

Scarlatti, a virtuoso harpsichordist, wrote these sonatas to play on his own instrument. So Debargue, ever mindful of the perils of playing them on a piano, makes minimal use of one of the piano’s most valued assets, the sustaining pedal. As a result, he is able to weave textures of delectable lightness and harpsichord-like clarity. But right from the first – and longest – work here, K269, Debargue makes full use of other resources offered by the piano to create an orchestra-scale range of colours and a variety of textures not possible on the earlier instrument. In K115 he highlights Scarlatti’s alluring harmonic shifts by shaping the broken chords and chromatic scales with dramatic crescendos and diminuendos. He does rush the tempo at times, though there are definite payoffs. K25, which is marked allegro, becomes more dramatic at his presto tempo, with the exquisite melodic lines emerging magically. I especially enjoy his bold use of rubato throughout. His ornaments are gorgeous, especially in episodic works like K268, though they can disrupt the pulse and prevent the Iberian rhythms from dancing.

The way Debargue combines the clarity of the harpsichord with the expressive power of the piano is fresh, imaginative and invariably enjoyable – a thoroughly modern approach to these exquisite works.

Concert Note: Show One presents Lucas Debargue at Koerner Hall on January 16 in a recital which will include sonatas by Scarlatti.
useful treatise on the forms and style of Baroque times.

The Well-Tempered Clavier is structurally complex and creatively abundant, yet orderly and conceived with a teaching purpose in mind. And that is precisely what Heidrun Holtmann connects to in her interpretation — the magnificent architecture that varies from one key to another comes alive vibrantly on this album. She clearly outlines the relationships between preludes and fugues and subtly indicates the different characters of each key (not an easy task in a well-tempered tuning). Although the term clavier applied to a number of keyboard instruments in Bach’s time (hammerklavier, clavichord, spinet, harpsichord and organ) and it is clear that some of the pieces are better suited to a specific kind of keyboard, Holtmann succeeds easily in displaying how the richness and diversity of the piano supports and enriches the colours in the preludes and the virtuosity in the fugues.

Compositional masterpiece, insightful performance — perfect for solitary late autumn musings.

Ivana Popovich

Haydn – Early and Late Sonatas
Denis Levaillant
DLM Editions DLM 3018 (denislevaillant.net)

The keyboard sonatas of Franz Joseph Haydn represent a great feat of an opus, broad in range, dating from the composer’s youthful period to his final decades. The early 1790s — about 15 years before his death — saw Haydn in London, where he encountered new-fangled Broadwood pianos, outfitted with damper pedal and an extended range. Three irresistibly inventive London Sonatas were spawned.

Today, so often are these late Beethovenian sonatas performed and celebrated that a listener rarely hears Haydn’s early essays for the keyboard, even in our contemporary age of dissecting and summarizing the catalogues of infamous composers for their un-famous works.

French composer, writer and pianist, Denis Levaillant, celebrates Haydn’s early works — as foil to later ones — in his new disc featuring Sonatas No.13 in E, No.14 in D, No.41 in B-flat, No.48 in C, No.49 in E-flat and No.51 in D, all recorded on a modern (Yamaha) grand. As is stipulated in the artist’s eloquent afterword to the liner notes, Levaillant has chosen to access the interpretive world of Haydn’s early sonatas through the stylistic lens of the later ones. He imagines (and supplements) “missing” indications from the composer and offers touches of pedal, pauses and anachronistic colours.

The results are satisfying, for the most part. A correlative access point for Levaillant’s readings is the functionality of early keyboard instruments: the harpsichord and clavichord. Sonatas Nos.13 and 14 most surely would have been realized on such instruments and Levaillant approaches the music with a certitude of form and forte of style that permeate the disc’s 15 tracks. The slightly rough and tumble edges — the rustic origins — of Franz Joseph Haydn’s art are brought into relief through Levaillant’s rendering.

Adam Sherkin

Mozart Piano Sonatas
David Fung
Steinway & Sons 30107 (steinway.com/music-and-artists/label)

Steinway artist David Fung offers four lesser-known piano sonatas on his new album: the Piano Sonatas No.2 in F Major, K280, No.4 in E-flat, K282, No.5 in G Major, K283 and No.17 in B-flat, K570. Upon first hearing, Fung’s vision of Mozart’s keyboard music is immediately apparent. The (scant) liner notes make much of Fung’s musical upbringings and exposure to the opera — the Mozartian operatic stage in particular — but these references seem status quo and rather obvious in analogy; the comparisons do not quite do justice to Fung’s interpretive approach.

His is a unique and bold reading. Often, contemporaneous interpreters attempt to subdue their own (romantic) leanings, fearing to obscure the ideals of neoclassicism as manifested in the music of W.A. Mozart. Fung, however, has no such qualms. He portrays a pianistic tableau of striking contrasts, unusual voicings and wanton manipulation of the dimension of time.

Employing a declamatory style, Fung directs the musical action from his keyboard with a strong command of phrasing and rhythmic impetus. He goes far beyond the customary approach to pulsation and accompaniment figures, in search of an inner energy of syncopated beats and subtle ostinati.

Upon repetition of A and B sections, Fung offers fresh takes on voicings that surprise the listener, challenging established conceptions of such material. By far his boldest strokes come in the form of time-scaling bendings: the stretching out of rests, fermatai and cadences, as he pushes values to the limit of neoclassical good taste. The resultant effect is generally pleasurable but does, on occasion, turn to parody. Notwithstanding, variety is the spice of life and let’s applaud Fung’s triumph in delivering his singular vision.

Adam Sherkin

Mozart Piano Concertos Vol.1
Anne-Marie McDermott; Odense Symfoniorkester; Scott Yoo
Bridge Records 9518 (bridgerecords.com)

Mozart – Piano Concertos Nos.17 & 24
Orli Shaham; St. Louis Symphony Orchestra; David Robertson
Canary Classics CC18 (canaryclassics.com)

Charm, grace and cordiality are fading qualities in today’s hard-hitting, ego-driven age. Attributes from an older world and its refined modes of human interaction continue to recede from us, seemingly destined for near extinction. Every now and then, however, a specialized, sensitive artist will draw us back, time-capsule-like, to a continental European past where art and music existed to elevate, illuminate and beguile.

Ushering the listener toward this very world of period sensibility, Anne-Marie McDermott’s most recent Mozart disc features two lesser-known piano concerti, the Concerto in C, K415/387a and an earlier work of the same genre, in B-flat, K295. McDermott’s exceedingly good taste and technical prowess make for an ideal blend of musical pleasantries, delighting the listener with her innate ability to shape Mozartian lines, equal in parts lyrical, harmonic and rhythmic. This is an 18th-century pianism of poise and courtliness, neoclassical elegance and Viennese affability.

Another such record of Mozart keyboard concerti hails from a collaboration between pianist Orli Shaham and the St. Louis Symphony, under the direction of David Robertson. Here, two later concertos are presented: the airy No.17 in G Major, K453 and the brooding No.24 in C Minor, K99. Soundworlds apart, these pieces juxtapose handsomely on disc, showcasing the dazzling musicianship of pianist, conductor and orchestra with the personal relationship between Shaham and Robertson clearly audible.

This fruitful partnership gleams splendid and lucidity from every note; the conversational exchange between soloist and orchestra is delectable — hefty at times — but largely cajoling in nature. Robertson encourages his players to take their rightful place in crafting the beauty of line and sculpting of colour that behooves the performance
of any Mozart concerto. Like McDermott, Shaham enlivens each phrase with a graciousness and purpose, nearly anachronistic with its old-fashioned aplomb.

Shaham’s readings of Mozartian slow movements are of particular note. Her keen ear for colouristic novelty and lucid intonation rewards the listener again and again. Both Shaham and Robertson divine such a spirit of warmth – such love – from the heart of Mozart’s art that even the most probing pundit or cantankerous curmudgeon couldn’t help but be disarmed. What a thrill to hear Mozart’s music expressed with such timeless insight and overarching reverence for those inventive masterstrokes, born of another time and place.

McDermott and Shaham, in league with conductors Scott Yoo and David Robertson, are integral, generous artists who have conceived these four concerti in a manner both simple and satisfying. In today’s discographic landscape awash with record upon record of Mozart’s piano music, here we meet an old school oasis of felicity and joy, on par with the sublime Mozart interpretations that celebrated pianist Emanuel Ax is so well known for. Such recordings highlight, for the contemporary listener, the true nature and benefit of classical masterpieces, penned by the hand of that perennial favourite of involuntary listeners, the true master of the art of the lied. Shaham’s readings of Mozartian slow movements are of particular note. Her keen ear for colouristic novelty and lucid intonation represent a late stage of her pianistic appreciation. Onwards to the last of Schumann’s early and (very) late piano music by Robert Schumann, plus two novel cycles: the Geistervariationen, (“Ghost Variations”) WoO 24 of 1854 were eerily written during the time leading up to the composer’s admission into a mental asylum, ostensibly the darkest period of his life. Kim’s own program notes identify the “angels and demons” that pervaded Schumann’s mind and pen during those haunted late years.

Yerin Kim’s new solo disc features early and (very) late piano music by Robert Schumann, plus two novel cycles: the Geistervariationen, (“Ghost Variations”) WoO 24 of 1854 were eerily written during the time leading up to the composer’s admission into a mental asylum, ostensibly the darkest period of his life. Kim’s own program notes identify the “angels and demons” that pervaded Schumann’s mind and pen during those haunted late years.

True standouts come next: the Five Preludes and a Fugue (1953-54) and Aphorisms (1990) by Alfred Schnittke. Kim evidently has a knack for this unusual repertoire in which her virtuosity – of both the technical and intellectual variety – can be aptly demonstrated. This is highly focused music with a taut contrapuntal sense and localized formal design – an appropriate complement to Schumann’s first and last piano works. The final cycle on this disc, Five Aphorisms, represents a late stage in Schnittke’s output, less accessible in its abstracted lyricism and esoteric brevity. Suddenly, the listener is thrust into a contemporary soundscape of jarring gesture: the sonic by-products of an age where man has made, met and managed machines. Here are the very real angels and demons of our own brave new world. And Kim governs them all, with just as much assurance as she does the last, ghostly “words” of Robert Schumann.

Adam Sherkin

Schubert – The First Romantic
Mathieu Gaudet
Analekta AN 2 9181 (analekta.com/en/)

In view of his broad-based career Mathieu Gaudet should not be typecast, but this CD certainly adds to his credentials as a Schubert pianist. Consistency and long-range projection of moods, whether meditative, passionate or joyful, are required of the artist. Consider what Gaudet writes of the G Major Sonata (D894; 1826) finale: “The coda strives for transcendence, giving the impression of rising all the way to heaven.” I didn’t quite get that far — but his recording I find very moving. In the opening movement, with its sustained chords paced and balanced perfectly, this listener became meditative. The contrasting dotted-rhythm episodes and huge, anguished development section climax unfolded naturally; the long (19-minute) movement that I dread hearing in superficial readings achieved unforeseen inevitability here. Skipping the middle movements, I’ll just mention the rustic Austrian charm in Gaudet’s playing of the finale, with its festive character and bagpipe drones.

The early Schubert Sonata in F-sharp Minor (1817; its tanged history is too complex for this review) begins like a lied with the melody in plain octaves and the accompaniment figure’s rhythm repeated — excessively. Some interesting harmonic twists hint at what was to come from the prodigious composer. Gaudet convinces in the attractive middle movements: a sweet Romance and folk-like Scherzo and Trio. This disc is especially significant in view of plans for Gaudet’s 12-disc box set comprising Schubert’s complete sonatas plus other major works, on the highly regarded Analekta label.

Roger Knox

First and Last Words
Yerin Kim
Sheva SH 217 (yerinkim.com)

Yerin Kim’s new solo disc features early and (very) late piano music by Robert Schumann, plus two novel cycles by Alfred Schnittke. Schumann’s “Abeegg” Variations, Op.1, opens the album: an earnest curatorial choice and one that sets a high standard of interpretive credibility to impress the listener thereafter. Kim’s playing is supple and clear with a sincere directness of expression. Following Schumann’s first opus, we greet the sturdy Allegro, Op.8 with similar pianistic appreciation. Onwards to the last of Schumann’s pieces: the Geistervariationen, (“Ghost Variations”) WoO 24 of 1854 were eerily written during the time leading up to the composer’s admission into a mental asylum, ostensibly the darkest period of his life. Kim’s own program notes identify the “angels and demons” that pervaded Schumann’s mind and pen during those haunted late years.

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Adam Sherkin

What we’re listening to this month: thewholenote.com/listening

Seasons of Life and Landscape
Canadian Chamber Choir
A stunning exhibit of 18 Canadian choral works that evoke the forces of nature across our four seasons and throughout the human journey.

New York Rising
New Hudson Saxophone Quartet
A diverse collection of original works and arrangements for saxophone quartet by New York composers, portraying different aspects of the New York region.

Mike Holober and The Gotham Jazz Orchestra: Hiding Out
Mike Holober
“With the release of this long-anticipated, epic work, Holober has confirmed his standing as one of the finest modern composer/arrangers of our time” Ed Enright, Downbeat

Patria
Mazacote
WCMA nominated world/latin band
Mazacote is a hard-hitting six-piece. Inspired by Afro-Caribbean percussion and tropical party sounds, they play heavy latin dance beats with a socially conscious message.
Dowland – Whose Heavenly Touch
Mariana Flores; Hopkinson Smith
Naive E 8941 (naxosdirect.com)

Perhaps the most renowned composer of music for lute and voice in the history of the genre, John Dowland’s songs continue to captivate modern performers and audiences with their esoteric melancholy and expressivity. Far from being a downer, Dowland’s seemingly depressing themes were as much a practical choice as an artistic one, reflecting the melancholia that was so fashionable in music at that time. In fact, Dowland wrote a consort piece with the punning title *Semper Dowland, semper dolens* (always Dowland, always doleful), reflecting his tongue-in-cheek self-awareness.

Whose Heavenly Touch presents selections from Dowland’s First and Second Book of Songs, published in 1597 and 1600 respectively, and begins with the striking and endearingly popular *Flow, my tears*. This recording features Argentinian soprano Mariana Flores and American lutenist Hopkinson Smith, who has received numerous accolades for his work in a wide range of early music, from Dowland to lute arrangements of Bach’s sonatas and partitas. From the beginning of this first song through to the disc’s end, Smith’s mastery of the lute is apparent in his clarity and control, arpeggiation and scalar interpolations providing rhythmic movement through tasteful and virtuosic interpretation.

Perhaps the most conspicuously atypical aspect of this recording is Flores’ distinct Spanish accent, a rather disorienting imposition on this Tudor music which can occasionally mask textual subtleties through excessively rolled “R’s and unexpectedly modified vowels and diphthongs. While her tone and interpretations are delightful, it occasionally takes attentive listening to discern the words that Flores considers worthy of such thoughtful expression.

Matthew Whitfield

Gluck – Orfeo ed Euridice
Iestyn Davies; Sophie Bevan; Rebecca Bottone; La Nuova Musica; David Bates
Pentatone PCT 5186 805 (pentatone.com)

Gluck – *Orphée et Éurydice*
Marianne Crebassa; Hélène Guilmette; Lea Desandre; Ensemble Pygmalion; Raphaël Pichon
Naxos 2.110638 (naxos.com)

Although very similar to the Berlioz edition, considerably leaner in its orchestral timbre and more fluid with its Italian text, further emphasized through an interpretation that is deliberately direct and essentially Baroque, rather than bold and Romantic. In both instances the singers, choruses and orchestras are magnificent, presenting Gluck’s music in equally superb and successful ways.

Matthew Whitfield

Wagner – Der Fliegende Holländer
Samuel Yoon; Lars Woldt; Ingela Brimberg;
Bernard Richter; Les Musiciens du Louvre;
Marc Minkowski
Naxos 2.110637 (naxos.com)

Richard Wagner’s *Der Fliegende Holländer* was completed in 1840, and then revised three times during the next 20 years. Arguably the opera in which Wagner found his voice, it was inspired by the story of a Dutchman whose blasphemy led to his being condemned to sail the seas for eternity unless he could be redeemed by a faithful woman.

The action begins in a Norwegian fjord where a sailor named Daland is sheltering his vessel from a storm. A ghostly ship pulls alongside and its captain – the Dutchman – offers Daland vast wealth in exchange for a female alto using the key scheme of the 1762 Vienna score, and incorporating much of the additional music of the 1774 Paris edition. Although Berlioz’s version is one of many which combine the Italian and French scores, it is the most influential and well regarded and has since been revised and reissued in numerous editions.

It is Berlioz’s 1859 version of Gluck’s opera which the Opéra Comique presents in their DVD *Orphée et Éurydice*, a wonderful representation of Gluck’s artistry and reflection of Berlioz’s craft as adapter. The style and performance practice are decidedly classical, rooted in the 18th-century tradition, and Berlioz’s personal influence is appropriately indiscernible. There are, however, some notable modifications to Gluck’s original score: the overture has been replaced with another of Gluck’s orchestral overtures; and the harpsichord is nowhere to be found, a decision that is open to interpreters, as the instrument was removed from the Parisian orchestral pit around the time of *Orphée’s* premiere. This is an overall weightier approach to Gluck, with a larger orchestra playing with full sound and prominently voiced soloists, suggesting a 19th-century approach commensurate with the sound Berlioz likely had in mind.

In contrast with the Opéra Comique’s presentation, Pentatone has issued a new recording of the 1762 *Orfeo* which includes both harpsichord and the original overture, as well as a countertenor Orfeo. This version is, although very similar to the Berlioz edition, considerably leaner in its orchestral timbre and more fluid with its Italian text, further emphasized through an interpretation that is deliberately direct and essentially Baroque, rather than bold and Romantic. In both instances the singers, choruses and orchestras are magnificent, presenting Gluck’s music in equally superb and successful ways.

Raul da Gama

*Holländer* is set in three acts but is often performed as a continuous two-and-a-half-hour whole. Highlights are *Die Frist ist um* and *Johohoe! Johohoe!* Marc Minkowski’s conducting is triumphant. Olivier Py’s direction – amid a bleak set – brilliantly captures Wagner’s opera with cohesion and fluency. Samuel Youn’s full-voiced, bass-baritone Dutchman has anguish and desperation. Ingela Brimberg’s Senta is sweet and effortless and Lars Woldt’s Daland is resonant and noble. Orchestra and chorus are in glowing form too.
Mussorgsky – Boris Godunov
Tsymbalyuk; Paster; Kares; Skorokhodov; Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra; Kent Nagano
BIS BIS-2320 SACD (bis.se)

Mussorgsky’s Boris Godunov with its grandeur, epic sweep and forward-looking music is possibly the greatest Russian opera, but it had a difficult time. The original “dark and raw” 1869 score had to be revised drastically to be acceptable for the Imperial Theatre in St. Petersburg; later Rimsky-Korsakov (and Shostakovich) changed the orchestration to suit Western ears. It was Rimsky-Korsakov’s version that became successful outside of Russia. Now there is a trend towards authenticity so Kent Nagano, music director of the Bavarian State Opera, chose the original score for the opera’s visionary avant-garde and very successful revival in 2013, in Munich. He later performed it in Stockholm in concert form which is the basis of this recording.

The original version is brutal, concise and dark-hued and concentrates mainly on the Tsar Boris – who came to the throne by murdering the legitimate heir – his ascent, his struggle with a guilty conscience and a final decline into madness.

Nagano’s selection of Alexander Tsymbalyuk, relatively young and a voice more lyrical than that of the legendary Chaliapin (who owned the role for decades), was ideal for the vulnerable and tormented Boris. Of the other bass voices, young Finnish basso Mika Kares (Pimen) and Alexey Tikhomirov (Varlaam) with his iconic song Once upon a time in the city of Kazan, stand out. The tenor Grigory, the false pretender who causes Boris’ downfall but curiously disappears from the plot after a short appearance, is Sergei Skorokhodov. Another protagonist, the Chorus, “the voice of Russia”, has tremendous power, but the real star is Nagano who is by now one the greatest conductors of our time. His superb control and total immersion into the score remind me of Abbado a generation before him.

Janos Gardonyi

Bartók – Bluebeard’s Castle
John Relyea; Michelle DeYoung; Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra; Edward Gardner
Chandos CHSA 5237 (naxosdirect.com)

There are many fine recordings of Bartók’s gothic, two-character psychodrama; this one is special because both singers have made this opera their own, performing it around the world. As a tandem, American mezzo Michelle DeYoung and Toronto native, bass John Relyea, have sung these signature roles on many stages from Carnegie Hall to the Sydney Opera House.

It’s essential that Judith and Bluebeard be, as here, evenly matched vocally and dramatically, in their life-or-death battle of wills. (I’ve attended performances featuring very unequal pairings.) DeYoung’s impassioned singing convinces us of Judith’s love for Bluebeard and her determination to bring light into his gloomy abode, demanding to see what lies behind his castle’s seven locked doors. Relyea’s firm, resonant bass, plumbing the emotional depths of Bluebeard’s ghostly secrets, makes him today’s definitive Bluebeard.

Conductor Edward Gardner relishes the phantasmagorical colours and textures of the largest orchestra Bartók ever used, creating vivid sonic imagery of the grim, blood-soaked scenes behind the opened doors. The fortissimo tutti when the fifth door opens to reveal the magnificence of Bluebeard’s realm and Judith’s ecstatic, sustained high-C reaction, is truly one of the most thrilling moments in all opera.

The Hungarian-sung text is included along with an English translation. Librettist Béla Balázs’ two-minute spoken Prologue, not always performed, is also heard here, asking (in Hungarian) “Where did this happen? Outside or within?” Ancient fable, what does it mean…? Observe carefully.”

Listen to this CD carefully, too.

Michael Schulman

Mahler – Orchestral Songs: The Organ Transcriptions
David John Pike; David Briggs
Analekta AN 29180 (analekta.com/en)

The English organist David Briggs, a student of the renowned Jean Langlais, is no stranger to these parts, having served as artist-in-residence at the Cathedral Church of St. James in Toronto from 2012 to 2017 before moving on to his current post at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York City. Briggs is also a composer, a stalwart transcriber of the improvisations of the legendary Pierre Cochereau, and an arranger with a particular interest in the symphonies of Mahler, five of which he has refashioned for the organ. He is joined on this recording by the excellent young Canadian baritone David John Pike (now based in Luxembourg) in commanding performances of Mahler’s Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen, Kindertotenlieder and Rückert-Lieder orchestral song cycles.

One might think it a bit of a stretch to re-imagine these works in this unusual context, but in truth Mahler rarely ventures beyond three-part writing even at his most gargantuan moments and these works are routinely performed in the composer’s own piano versions. Briggs’ thoughtful choice of timbres reflect Mahler’s own instrumentations quite convincingly. The recording venue is quite an interesting one: The Basilica of Constantine (Konstantin-Basilika) at Trier, Germany dates from the beginning of the fourth century. Burned in an air raid in 1944, subsequent repairs exposed the original inner brick walls; at the back of this spartan edifice hangs a newly built organ from 2014 designed by the firm of Hermann Eule. Though Eule normally specializes in neo-Baroque Silbermann-era designs, this particular installation is symphonically arranged with 87 stops (over 6000 pipes) on four manual works and pedal, making it the largest organ in Trier and offering a vast palette of exceptionally beautiful tones to choose from.

Daniel Foley

Soirée Magdalena Kozenà & Friends
Pentatone PTC 5186 671 (pentatone.com)

How nice it is that a singer would take some time out of her crazy, busy life, sit down with friends and a few drinks and sing her favourite songs. And that’s exactly what by-now-world-famous-Czech mezzo, award-winning recitalist, recording artist and opera star, Magdalena Kozenà, does here. This is her debut issue on the Pentatone label. The “friends” include a string quartet, a clarinet, a flute and a piano, the latter played by her husband, Sir Simon Rattle. Each combination of these instruments creates different tonal effects and colouring for an idiomatic and unique accompaniment.

Her choice of program gives a cross section of lieder literature from the late Romantics (Chausson, Dvořák, Brahms and R. Strauss) through French Impressionism (Ravel) and some Moderns (Stravinsky and Janáček). In fact we can follow the development of the art song with a fascinating variety and style where the golden thread of Kozena’s imagination, wonderfully expressive voice, beautiful intonation and some lovely inflections are evident throughout. Just listen to her inflection on “Vögelein” in Gestillte Sehnsucht, by Brahms!

Naturally she is strongest in her native Czech and Moravian idiom. She sings with youthful freshness and confidence. Especially impressive and unique are the Nursery Rhymes by Janáček; some are outrageously funny. And I am happy she included one of my all-time favourite songs by Dvořák, When my mother taught me.
A lovely, relaxed musical evening you will cherish.

Janos Gardonyi

Rencouer – Debussy; Delage; Poulenc; Ravel
Raquel Camarinha; Yoan Héreau
Naïve V 5454 (naxosdirect.com)

▶ Despite competition in this repertoire from other discs, I think that readers partial to the mélodie (art song) will find much to appreciate in this first recording by the young French duo of Raquel Camarinha, soprano, and Yoan Héreau, piano. Already these artists have busy European careers as recitalists, chamber musicians and opera professionals.

On this disc Camarinha’s tone stays rich and consistent through the top register, while Héreau rises to the works’ colouristic challenges, whether playing rapid figuration or subtle sonorities. In Ravel’s three-song Schéhérazade, Asia’s imagined voyage receives evocative treatment. The Enchanted Flute, a favourite of mine, is concise and flowing. Turning to well-known Debussy settings of two groups of symbolist Paul Verlaine’s poems, the combination of languor and sadness in Ariettes oubliées is conveyed effectively; the wonderful Faïnground Horses breaks those moods with brio and virtuosity.

Claire de lune at the close of Incidence, a favourite of mine, is concise and flowing. Turning to well-known Debussy settings of two groups of symbolist Paul Verlaine’s poems, the combination of languor and sadness in Ariettes oubliées is conveyed effectively; the wonderful Faïnground Horses breaks those moods with brio and virtuosity, Camarinha at the close of Clair de lune (incidentally, this music is completely different from Debussy’s identically titled piano piece).

Quatre poèmes hindous by Maurice Delage (1879–1961) adds the influence of Eastern syllabic text settings by Poulenc demonstrates a generous selection of songs with exquisite Ravel.

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This serene disc is an exploration of the under-represented lute composer Jean Paul Paladin (1500-1565), who was known as Giovanni Paolo Paladino before his move to France around 1516. Among the monarchs he entertained was Mary Queen of Scots, of interest to the performer Alex McCartney who lives in Scotland.

The disc comes with a single fold insert that includes excellent notes on this interesting source by Dr. Kateryna Schöning -- though I believe she may be mistaken when she states that “besides two lost sources... the manuscript is the only lute tablature from the Polish-Lithuanian region.” Canada’s own Magdalena Tomsinska of Waterloo edited the Gdansk Lute Tablature MS 4022 and recorded selections in 2014.

Beyond just music, the source’s 124 folios also contain Latin aphorisms, graphic patterns and other visual ornaments, as well as some Polish poetry. The manuscript’s music comes from a variety of different nations, composers, and time periods. On the disc you’ll find pieces from the early 16th century, such as Joan Ambrosio Dalza’s Pavana alla Ferrarese, yet also two fantaisias by John Dowland which were composed towards the end of the century. This makes for a nice variety.

Bernhard Hofstötter’s lute playing is superb, as is the sound of his Renatus Lechner seven-course lute in the acoustic of the Landesmusikakademie Sachsen in Colditz Castle. The dance rhythms have articulation and buoyancy, the counterpoint clarity and grace. Chanson intabulations by Sermisy, Sandrin, and Iannegin are high points. However, purists should be prepared for what I assume is an off-book strum-fest in the anonymous Tarzeto which opens and closes the disc.

Lucas Harris

This serene disc is an exploration of the under-represented lute composer Jean Paul Paladin (1500-1565), who was known as Giovanni Paolo Paladino before his move to France around 1516. Among the monarchs he entertained was Mary Queen of Scots, of interest to the performer Alex McCartney who lives in Scotland.

The disc comes with a single fold insert that gives McCartney space to give us detail about the composer’s life and style. His notes finish with a philosophical discussion about his choice of cover art, a gorgeous French-Gothic illumination from a late-medieval book of hours: Paladin’s fantasies for him contain a sense of the “multi-layered ritual and meditation” that the book of hours would have contained.

However, purists should be prepared for what I assume is an off-book strum-fest in the anonymous Tarzeto which opens and closes the disc.

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French composer and viola da gamba player Jacques Morel (c.1690 – c.1740)’s biography is so obscure that even the dates and places of his birth and death are unknown. Sadly, he doesn’t even have a wiki page. We do know he was a pupil of Marín Marais, the composer and foremost viola da gambaist of his day, to whom Morel dedicated this Premiere Livre de Pièces de Violle (c.1709), his major legacy and the subject of this CD.

There hasn’t been a complete recording of these suites, prompting virtuoso gambaist Alejandro Marías to spearhead this project to record several of them for the first time. At the core of the album are Marías’ stylish and musically secure performances of four suites from the Premiere Livre for the seven-string bass viola da gamba in differing keys. The continuo parts are provided by members of the award-winning Spanish period music group La Spagna.

Morel’s music is attractively varied in the best high-French Baroque tradition. Seven or eight characteristic period dance movements typically follow the emotive rondeau opening prelude in each suite. Judging from this album, Morel’s attractive oeuvre is imbued with his idiosyncratic voice, even though the influence of his teacher Marais’ style is also present. My album picks: Suite in A minor’s Sarabande l’Agréable, the Gigue à l’anglaise and the Échos de Fontainebleau in the Suite in D.

Even though long neglected, this music is full of delightful discoveries and should be better known.

Andrew Timar

Johann Sebastian Bernhard Ludwig Bach – Ouvertures for Orchestra

Concerto Italiano; Rinaldo Alessandrini

Naive OP 30578 (naxosdirect.com)

▶ How pleasant to explore music by relatives of Johann Sebastian Bach other than his sons. Johann Ludwig was a third cousin of Bach, Johann Bernhard a second cousin. On this CD, they each contribute an Ouverture to accompany the four by the Bach. So is Concerto Italiano’s choice justified? The works by the two cousins are substantially shorter than the great man’s. Yet listening to them shows how highly enjoyable they are: listen to the Rigaudons and Gavotte en Rondeaux in Johann Bernhard’s Ouverture-Suite in E Minor. Then there is Johann Ludwig’s contribution to the CD, namely, his Ouverture in G Major. This is even shorter than Johann Bernhard’s work but much more spritely. The movements all ask to be danced to, whether or not they actually were at the time. Indeed the Ouverture by Johann Ludwig could even be played as background music at any event, no matter how formal.

And so to the four Orchestral Suites by Johann Sebastian. From the movement which is also present. My album picks: Suite in A minor’s Sarabande l’Agréable, the Gigue à l’anglaise and the Échos de Fontainebleau in the Suite in D.

Even though long neglected, this music is full of delightful discoveries and should be better known.

Michael Schwartz

Tommaso Giordani – Sonatas Op.30; Antonin Kammell – Sonata in D Major

Luchkow-Stadlen-Jarvis Trio

Marquis Classics MAR 81495 (marquisclassics.com)

▶ The viola da gamba’s persistence in late-18th-century England owed something to the aristocracy. It appears that Lady Lavinia Spencer (1762-1831) was the gamba-playing dedicatee of this CD’s Giordani sonatas, and yes, she is a direct ancestor of the late Princess Diana Spencer and sons William and Harry! From a musical standpoint gamba players could by then hold an equal role in sonatas for violin, viola da gamba and forte-piano, such as the Three Sonatas, Op. 30 (published c.1782) by Naples-born, later Ireland-based, Tommaso Giordani (c.1738-1806). The textures Giordani achieves through familiarity with the gamba’s high register liberate the instrument from bass-playing, allowing imitation and echoing between instruments and octave doubling of melody in the violin and gamba, for example in the opening movement of Sonata No.2 in D Major. I find this to be the best of the sonatas, with a particularly fine slow movement; Giordani was a natural melolist whose use of contrasting minor keys and quiet forte-piano solos is notable. His active gamba part in the finale illustrates the instrument’s development towards virtuosity.

The Canadian Luchkow-Stadlen-Jarvis Trio is convincing, with clean solo and ensemble playing free of affectation, with attractive tone and balance, and expressive inflections in the slow movements. And although the Sonata in C Major, Op.1, No.1 by Czech composer Antonín Kammell (1730-1875) that ends this disc has other requirements – ornamentation, accentuation and hairpin crescendos – they meet those demands equally well.

Roger Knox

The Enlightened Trumpet

Paul Merkelo (principal trumpet OSM); Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra; Marios Papadopoulos

Sony Classical S80463C (paulmerkelotrumpet.com)

▶ With repertoire spanning the Baroque through the classical eras; Telemann through Haydn, Leopold Mozart and Hummel, The Enlightened Trumpet showcases the bona fide genius of Paul Merkelo, principal trumpet of the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal. After his epic confrontations with Baroque Transcriptions and French Trumpet Concertos, Merkelo deftly combines trumpet and strings in the incisiveness of Haydn’s Concerto in E-flat Major (Hob. Vlle.1) with its famously breathtaking Allegro finale, the not inconsiderable demands of which he takes in his stride.

Merkelo then nimbly navigates his way between the rhetoric and energy of Teleman’s Concerto in D Major (TWV 51:D7) and Leopold Mozart’s Concerto in D Major for trumpet, two horns and strings with appealing melodiousness and – in the second instance – robust interplay with the other horns. The performance of the Hummel Concerto in E Major (S.49) sees its melodic ingenuity projected with due vitality, as well as a stunning degree of spontaneity and expressive poise redolent of Maurice André. Merkelo’s legendary predecessor to whom he has been likened. Not without good reason, as this disc attests.

The crowning moments come during the Rondo finale of the Hummel, the cadenza of which has been credited to Timoféy Dokshizer. By then, of course, Merkelo has already made his mark, through a bracing workout across three other famous trumpet concertos, with heartfelt eloquence worthy of the reputation he has gained among his trumpet-playing orchestral peers across the globe.

Raul da Gama

thewholenote.com

December 2019 – January 2020 | 89
Foghorn Classics FCL 2020
Alexander String Quartet; Joyce Yang
Pentatone PTC 5186 815 (naxosdirect.com)

The “American” quartet is probably one of the most beloved pieces in the chamber music repertoire and it shares a number of similar elements with the Piano Quintet Op.81, thus making it a perfect pairing for this album. Although they were written some years apart and on different continents, both pieces are wonderful creations of a showcase of rhythms, dramatic gestures and, above all, memorable melodies, all of which are tastefully presented by the artists on this album.

What I find most pleasurable is the intricate tapestry of textures created by the Alexander Quartet. Their playing brings forth the elegance and lavishness of 19th-century Europe yet it does have a slight contemporary edge in terms of expression. Joyce Yang is on fire here – she displays a perfect interpretational balance between virtuosic agility and grandiose statements so typical for piano music of the Romantic period. Together they make this recording unapologetically exciting.

Ivana Popovich

Storgårds sublime interpretation. This ranks as one of the most exciting and accomplished performances I have heard in my lifetime of terminal Mahleria.

Daniel Foley

Inspirations
Buzz Brass
Analekta AN 2 8776 (analekta.com/en)

When Gustav Mahler died in 1911 at the age of 50 he left behind sketches for his tenth and final symphony. Of the five movements, we have Mahler’s creative re-arrangements; wholly satisfying transcriptions of Ravel’s String Quartet in F Major (Op.35) and Dvořák’s String Quartet No.12 in F Major “American” (B.179). All are highly creative re-arrangements; wholly satisfying both structurally and expressively.

Buzz Brass deliver this with the familiarity of old friends, yet their playing always retains the sense of gracious etiquette associated with noble academies for which this music was no doubt originally intended. Nothing is forced, exaggerated or overly mannered; tempi, ensemble and balance all seem effortlessly and intuitively right. The brass sound is lucid. These are, in sum, sincere and poised interpretations, quite brilliantly executed by the Maltese conductor and musicologist Michelle Castelletti, is an exceptional accomplishment, quite brilliantly executed by the phenomenal John Storgårds and his Lapland Chamber Orchestra. I was initially quite skeptical that an orchestra of a mere 24 players (single woodwinds, a lone trumpet and horn, 14 strings, piano, harp and percussion) would prove adequate to convey the impact of the 100 musicians Mahler normally employed. I was mistaken; even in these reduced circumstances the pathos of Mahler’s message still shines through in

Raul da Gama

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY

New Jewish Music Vol.2
Lara St. John; Sharon Azrieli; Couloir; Orchestre classique de Montreal; Boris Brott
Analekta AN 2 9262 (analekta.com)

This Analekta release of new orchestral works features the powerful musical abilities of the Orchestre Classique de Montreal under

The wholeNote.com
James O’Callaghan – Alone and Unalone
Ensemble Paramirabo
Ravello Records rr8020
(ravellorecords.com)

> While listening to music one might consider, “I like these sounds” or “I like how this music moves forward.” While neither of these thoughts can provide an adequate basis for the judgement of artistic value, the latter says more than the former and also comes closer to being such a basis. One might say that “I like how it goes” captures a feature fundamental to music’s being good at a level less abstract than that of the experience of it being intrinsically rewarding.

When listening to the highly personal, compelling and frankly compulsory environments created by Canadian composer James O’Callaghan, one invariably approves of how it sounds and how it goes. In this release of works written especially for the Montreal-based Ensemble Paramirabo, the “I like how it goes” nature of the music connects the listener with the absolutely crucial notion of following music with anticipation – but also with harmonious and welcomed disassociation. With titles such as subject/object and Alone and unalone, there is a certain amount of obfuscation – delivered on an abstract level – but also literally, as admitted by the composer himself in an effort to provide a conceptual motivation of the “transference of concrete sound into abstraction, returned to the conditions from which they were derived.” While the musico-philosophical liminality of this music would make for interesting discussion, one can’t help but simply appreciate the raw and unfettered imagination produced by O’Callaghan’s manner of putting pen to page, and with the electronic aspects of the works, world to speaker. The ensemble brings a high amount of musical excellence and an intimate bravura to this recording – a testament to their ongoing commitment to O’Callaghan’s music. Bravo to all.

**Adam Scime**

**Origins**
Duo Kalysta
Leaf Music LM226 (duokalysta.com)

> Flutist Lara Deutsch and harpist Emily Belvedere first met when collaborating in 2012 at McGill University. Since then Duo Kalysta has been playing chamber music to artistic acclaim, as demonstrated by this clear-sounding release recorded in Montreal.

TSO harpist Judy Loman’s colourful flute and harp arrangement of Claude Debussy’s Prelude à l’après-midi d’un faune opens the CD. The flute beginning catches the listener’s attention, with sparkling arpeggiated harp, dreamy flute and astounding tight ensemble playing in the more rubato sections.

Two Canadian compositions follow. R. Murray Schafer’s three-movement Trio for Flute, Viola and Harp (2011) has violinist Marina Thibeault joining them. Freely, flowing has melodic lines with changing volumes, tempi and note lengths creating the soundscape. The sonic space of Slowly, coilingly is highlighted by long atmospheric viola notes doubled by the flute underneath. Dance-like Rhythmic is like listening to a musical story with viola plucks, high-pitched flute, harp flourishes and abrupt stops in a race to the end.

Composer Jocelyn Morlock notes that her two-movement Vespertine (2005) refers to night-blossoming plants and nocturnal animals. Twilight presents musically darker colours with longer phrases and more independent parts. Verdigris is performed with sweetly delicate harp staccato lines and contemplative flute notes, bird-like trills and higher notes.

Violinist Alexander Read, violinist Thibeault and cellist Carmen Bruno add an orchestral feel to André Jolivet’s Chant de Linos (1944), an intense, dramatic composition highlighted by impressive flute playing.

Here’s to a promising musical future!

**Tiina Kilk**

Finding Your Own Voice
Gidon Kremer
Accentus Music ACC20414 (naxosdirect.com)

> In the September WholeNote, Terry Robbins reviewed the CD of Gidon Kremer’s recording of the late Polish composer Mieczyslaw Weinberg’s 24 Preludes to a Lost Time, Op. 100. Written for solo cello, Kremer plays his own transcription for solo violin. Robbins concluded that “His superb performance befits such a towering achievement, one which is a monumental addition to the solo violin repertoire.”

Accentus Music has since issued a DVD of that unique performance and we now see Kremer spotlit alone on the dark stage in the Gogol Centre in Moscow. Behind him in the darkness is a theatre-size, rear-projection screen on which, at appropriate times, are seen original images from the 1960s taken by photographer Antanas Sutkus. Each selected photograph illuminates the mood of the particular prelude being played, often stark, sometimes sad, sometimes amusing but so appropriate. Genius.

The documentary, Finding Your own Voice, is a film by Paul Smaczny that is a totally engrossing biography of Kremer and his world of music. It revolves about music that embraces Kremer’s life and we hear and see him with musicians including conductors and composers whose music touches him. Listen in as he discusses passages in rehearsals with the likes of Arvo Pärt and others. There are so many thought-provoking observations and philosophical reflections that one may be immediately prompted to watch it again in case you missed something. Whether or not you are a Kremer fan, you will get a lot out of this unusual and illuminating film.

**Bruce Surtees**
This album presents six previously unreleased songs and instrumental works by Kurtág, with lyrics from literary works in Hungarian, Russian and German. Scenes from a Novel, Op.19 (1984) for example, consisting of 15 extremely varied short movements, is a prime example of Kurtág’s oeuvre. With melismatic, introspective texts by the Russian writer Rimma Dalos, the songs feature virtuoso soprano Viktoria Vitenko, who nails the shifting emotional-tonal terrain. She is impressively supported by violinist David Grimal, bassist Niek de Groot and cimbalomist Luigi Gaggero. Given its masterful composition, imbeded gravitas, dramatic and emotional range and the near-20-minute length of this series of epigrams, the work takes on an operatic magnitude. And I found the rest of the songs here just as compelling.

The Hungarian cimbalom is a stylistic and national marker on much of the album, a sonic through-line in addition to the voice, its compressed, emotion-filled and dramatically stylized evokes a kind of sonic haiku, demanding the utmost from instrumentalists and singers alike.

This album presents five works by four experienced musicians. The nonagenarian Hungarian composer György Kurtág ranks among the leading living modernist music masters. His precisely crafted, intense, emotion-filled and dramatically stylized evokes a kind of sonic haiku, demanding the utmost from instrumentalists and singers alike.

His latest album presents five works by four American composers featuring one or more non-percussion soloist backed by the forces of the MPG, the size of a modest orchestra.

Both works show López Bellido has clearly mastered the knack of building suspense and effectively ending it with climaxes of exceptional sonic power and brilliance.

Michael Schulman
year-long recording process with producer Simon Reynell that emphasizes the music’s sound from the performer’s perspective and suggests the albeit quiet music be played loud enough for all its detail to emerge.

Landmarks and masterworks will draw attention first. Disc One creates an immediate interest. For Bunita Marcus, the album’s centrepiece, the five-movement Diners (Robert Sirota, 2009), was inspired by the 2016 U.S. presidential election. (The one and only good thing I can say about Trump is he’s inadvertently inspired some great art.) House on Fire with its carnival vibe, delves into the impact corporate greed says about Trump is he’s inadvertently inspired roller-coaster ride that is part of a well-lived human experience. Roblin’s gifted collaborators here include CD producer and acoustic/electric bassist, George Koller; trumpet/EVI player Bruce Cassidy (who also contributes the exceptional horn arrangements); Kevin Turcotte on trumpet and flugelhorn, Jeff LaRochelle on tenor sax and bass clarinet and Ben Riley on drums.

Back on Track is the sassy opener, with Roblin laying it down on Fender Rhodes, deftly establishing the spine of the funk. Cassidy’s EVI solo, followed by Turcotte’s trumpet solo, propel things to a higher vibrational level, while Koller’s gymnastic, supportive bass work and Riley’s drums are the soulful glue that gently hold the expansive structure of the tune together. Another standout is Snowy Day (which appears at the end of the CD). LaRochelle’s bass clarinet is simply stunning and perfectly complements the introspective mood of the tune, as well as Roblin’s skilled and intuitive acoustic piano work. All the while, Cassidy’s horn arrangement weaves a silken web of harmonically complex ideas.

Another fine track is Suspend Yourself, where Roblin reminds us of her skill, not only as a pianist, but as a new music composer. The ensemble breaks into the piano intro with considerable pumipitude, morphing into a straight-ahead hip motif, spurred on by Cassidy’s EVI. Of special note is the tender Ballad in 3-4, which displays the gentle, contemplative aspects of Roblin’s musicality, gorgeously framed by Koller’s bass solo and the Kenny Wheeler-ish horn parts.

Dream a Little… Champian Fulton; Cory Weeds Cellar Live CLO22519 (cellarlive.com)

> Following her successful 2014 comeback, noted composer and multi-keyboardist Diane Roblin has once again created an eclectic, deeply personal and musically meaningful project that unabashedly celebrates life, and the inevitable, invigorating roller-coaster ride that is part of a well-lived human experience. Roblin’s gifted collaborators here include CD producer and acoustic/electric bassist, George Koller; trumpet/EVI player Bruce Cassidy (who also contributes the exceptional horn arrangements); Kevin Turcotte on trumpet and flugelhorn, Jeff LaRochelle on tenor sax and bass clarinet and Ben Riley on drums.

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Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

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> Following her successful 2014 comeback, noted composer and multi-keyboardist Diane Roblin has once again created an eclectic, deeply personal and musically meaningful project that unabashedly celebrates life, and the inevitable, invigorating roller-coaster ride that is part of a well-lived human experience. Roblin’s gifted collaborators here include CD producer and acoustic/electric bassist, George Koller; trumpet/EVI player Bruce Cassidy (who also contributes the exceptional horn arrangements); Kevin Turcotte on trumpet and flugelhorn, Jeff LaRochelle on tenor sax and bass clarinet and Ben Riley on drums.

Back on Track is the sassy opener, with Roblin laying it down on Fender Rhodes, deftly establishing the spine of the funk. Cassidy’s EVI solo, followed by Turcotte’s trumpet solo, propel things to a higher vibrational level, while Koller’s gymnastic, supportive bass work and Riley’s drums are the soulful glue that gently hold the expandable structure of the tune together. Another standout is Snowy Day (which appears at the end of the CD). LaRochelle’s bass clarinet is simply stunning and perfectly complements the introspective mood of the tune, as well as Roblin’s skilled and intuitive acoustic piano work. All the while, Cassidy’s horn arrangement weaves a silken web of harmonically complex ideas.

Another fine track is Suspend Yourself, where Roblin reminds us of her skill, not only as a pianist, but as a new music composer. The ensemble breaks into the piano intro with considerable pumipitude, morphing into a straight-ahead hip motif, spurred on by Cassidy’s EVI. Of special note is the tender Ballad in 3-4, which displays the gentle, contemplative aspects of Roblin’s musicality, gorgeously framed by Koller’s bass solo and the Kenny Wheeler-ish horn parts.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

Dream a Little… Champian Fulton; Cory Weeds Cellar Live CLO22519 (cellarlive.com)
an intimate encounter as between pianist and vocalist, Champian Fulton, and saxophonist and impresario, Cory Weeds. What is no accident, however, is the fact that these two musicians seem to automatically fall in with each other, melodically, harmonically and rhythmically, so that astatic sparks begin to fly.

Weeds plays with quiet brilliance throughout Dream a Little... His uniquely sophisticated and sonorous style weaves in and out of the vibrant and affectate expressivity of Fulton’s pianism, her voice often becoming the crowning glory of the songs here. Both musicians seem to connect in a rarefied realm, but they then descend to earth where they each inhabit a palette of sumptuous color. Then, like a couple in love, playfully oblivious of the attention they have attracted, they hold each other’s music in a tight embrace.

There is too much proverbial gold on this album, but I am going to risk suggesting that the biggest ear-opener is Darn that Dream. This performance burns in the quietude of the bluest part of a musical flame; its languid, seemingly terminable narrative made to simmer forever in a rhythmic and sonic intensity where Weeds contributes lyrical prowess, while Fulton offers her brilliant vocetics, which sustain the music’s emotional mood while bringing the text’s poetic imagery to life.

Raul da Gama

High and Low
Sam Kirmayer; Ben Paterson; Dave Laing
Cellar Live CLO 20118 (cellarlive.com)

A traditionalist who tends to eschew effects in favour of the unmediated connection between instrument and amplifier, Kirmayer has found a voice for himself in the bluesy, hard bop style of guitarists like Grant Green, Wes Montgomery and Peter Bernstein. His newest album, High and Low, is his first to be released on Vancouver’s Cellar Live Records; an apposite fit, for a label that has become Canada’s leading outlet for hard bop. High and Low is an organ trio album, a rarity in and of itself in Canada. Drummer Dave Laing – who also played on Kirmayer’s debut album – is a faculty member in McGill’s jazz program, and is a stalwart of the Montreal scene. New York organist Ben Paterson, whose résumé includes work with Bobby Broom, Johnny O’Neal, and Peter Bernstein, rounds out the trio.

High and Low delivers amply on the premise that it sets out for itself: It is a swinging hard-hitting album, with crisp, tasteful playing from all involved. It is also, from the opening notes of the title track, a sonically beautiful experience, with all of the richness and depth that one hopes for in an organ trio recording. Kirmayer is in his element throughout High and Low; and Laing and Paterson make for a strong rhythmic team.

Raul da Gama

Trane of Thought (Live at The Rex)
Pat LaBarbera/Kirk MacDonald Quintet
Cellar Live CLO71819 (cellarlive.com)

When two extraordinary jazz saxophonists team up for a John Coltrane tribute, you know it’s going to be explosive. And that’s exactly what this live recording, featuring both Pat LaBarbera and Kirk MacDonald along with their band, is. The record is a well-picked and thought-out selection of songs from the two Coltrane tribute shows that the duo performed at our city’s beloved jazz joint, The Rex, in 2018. Ranging from the legendary saxophonist’s earlier works to some of his most lasting and obscure ones, LaBarbera and MacDonald have achieved, in their own words, “a thoughtful balance.” The album stems from a love for Coltrane that the duo has, LaBarbera seeing him live when he was studying at the Berklee School of Music and MacDonald discovering Coltrane on record at an early age.

The songs on the record, although from separate live shows, have been picked in such a way that it tells a thorough story; starting off sultry and well-paced with On a Misty Night and Village Blues, building up to a wonderful and fevered climax with Impressions and coming to a scintillating end with Acknowledgment/Resolution. Coltrane’s works can be appreciated very well here, especially with the excellent backing musicians – Brian Dickinson on piano, Neil Swainson on bass and Joe LaBarbera on drums. Fan of Coltrane or not, this album should definitely be a part of any jazz aficionado’s collection.

Kati Killaspea

Chrysalis
Sonia Johnson
Independent PSJCD1911 (soniajohnson.com)

Creating an album of music where disparate musical styles come together can seem burdensome on paper. But when there is just too much in the essence of music to be left out, indulging everything becomes imperative. This is the raison d’être for Chrysalis the first English language album from the francophone artist Sonia Johnson. The title suggests a bringing to birth of something transformative. It certainly seems so after the last notes disappear into the air.

But more than anything else, you get the sense that Chrysalis is a labour of love. Featuring beautifully crafted arrangements of beguiling variety and sensuousness, in every lovingly caressed phrase, Chrysalis lays bare Johnson’s adoration of music in all its harmonic sumptuousness. Her chosen material consists of original songs – either written by her, or co-written with others whose work she delights in – so that listening to this music feels like opening an ornate box to reveal hidden gems.

For instance, listening to the way in which Johnson seductively bends the notes in Storm and Monsters, and how she sculpts the long, sustained invention of We Need to Know, it’s clear that there’s not a single semiquaver that hasn’t been fastidiously considered vocally and instrumentally by an ensemble attuned to Johnson’s artistic vision. Two other vocalists – Judith Little-Daudelin and Elie Haroun – deliver powerful performances. Meanwhile Johnson’s mellifluous timbre beguiles throughout as she digs deep into her nasal, throat and chest voice.

Raul da Gama

Fundamentally Flawed
Dan Pitt Trio
Independent (dan-pitt.com)

Over the past few years, guitarist Dan Pitt has been steadily establishing a presence for himself on the Toronto jazz scene. Fundamentally Flawed, the debut album for both Pitt and his eponymous trio, is a showcase for Pitt’s playing and his unique compositional style; in both, one can find complementary elements of modern jazz and creative/improvised music, with a tendency to employ the former in service of the latter. This being the case, Pitt has done well in choosing his bandmates: bassist Alex Fournier, whose recently released album Trio is a stylistic cousin to Fundamentally Flawed, and drummer Nick Fraser. A generation removed from Pitt and Fournier, Fraser’s artful drumming has been an increasingly common presence on the projects of younger Toronto musicians, and it is affecting to see him continue to contribute to a scene that he helped to establish in the late 90s and early 2000s.

Though Pitt plays electric guitar, Fundamentally Flawed is, at its core, an acoustic trio album, with an emphasis on the interactivity, excitement and close listening...
that seem uniquely possible in the trio format. From the raucous, heavily distorted moments of Overdeuitt and Mark III to lush, slow sections in Balmoral and January Blues, Pitt’s music has a transparent quality that allows the individual characteristics of each band member to be clearly heard at any given time, highlighting minute shifts in improvisational trajectory. A solid debut from a compelling band.

Colin Story

City Abstract
Dan McCarthy
Origin Records 82788 (originarts.com)

▶ Vibraphonist Dan McCarthy’s newest album, City Abstract, heralds the Toronto native’s return to his hometown, after 15 years living in New York and working with the likes of Steve Swallow, Ben Monder and George Garzone. City Abstract is a Canadian affair: recorded earlier this year at the Canterbury Music Company, it features the quartet of McCarthy, guitarist Ted Quinlan, bassist Pat Collins and drummer Ted Warren; of the nine tracks, six are McCarthy compositions.

McCarthy is an accomplished vibraphonist, with a strong technical command of his instrument and well-developed artistic intuition. This combination of taste and judgment serves him well throughout City Abstract, whether on up-tempo numbers like Bleyto and Go Berserk or on more reflective songs, such as Coral and Other Things of Less Consequence. Quinlan, Collins and Warren share this approach; though this is a band with chops to spare, they are always deployed in service to the music, rather than for personal glory.

City Abstract has many highlights to choose from. Bleyto, the album’s opener, is a tight, swinging song, with an athletic melody played ably in unison by Quinlan and McCarthy. The 7/4 Go Berserk is an unexpected treat, if only because the juxtaposition of the vibraphone with distorted, high-gain guitar still seems relatively novel. Overall, City Abstract is a well-crafted modern jazz album from a talented bandleader whom the Toronto jazz scene should be glad to have back.

Colin Story

Andy Ballantine: Play on Words
Andy Ballantine; Rob Pitcho; Adrean Farrugia; Neil Swainson; Terry Clarke
GB Records GBCD190307 (gbrecords.ca)

▶ Toronto-native, saxophonist Andy Ballantine has decided to pay tribute to some of his greatest influences on this new release. Ballantine describes the thought behind this record as being a showcase of how it’s possible to make something your own and add your personal touch and flare to it, even within the bounds of certain stylistic constraints you often have as a freelance musician. It’s very much about showing how a musician can add their own unique perspective within a piece of music.

Ballantine composed all of the pieces except Till the Clouds Roll By, written by Jerome Kern, a famed musical theatre and popular music composer from the early 1900s. All of the songs stand out in their own right and, if the listener knows about the great Ballantine is paying tribute to, it is easy to hear their influence. Some pieces that really come forth are Gordian Knot, a catchy and rhythmically pleasing opening track dedicated to Dexter Gordon, Round Shot, a song that is positively groovy and is a shout out to the great Cannonball Adderley and Mr. P.I.L., a quite cleverly named tune to honour one of our amazing local saxophonists (maybe the reader will be able to figure out who.) Featuring Adrean Farrugia on piano, Rob Pitcho on guitar, Neil Swainson on bass and Terry Clarke on drums, this record is nothing short of excellent.

Kati Killaspea

Offering
Rob Clutton with Tony Malaby
Snaibongbong SBB006
(robcutton.bandcamp.com)

▶ Bassist Rob Clutton has long been a mainstay of Toronto’s jazz community, as diligent supporting player in the mainstream and a creative catalyst in more adventurous settings. Clutton leads his own Cluttertones, combining songs, synthesizer and banjo, and he’s explored individualistic inspirations on solo bass. Here he’s playing a series of duets with New York saxophonist Tony Malaby, a fellow member of drummer Nick Fraser’s Quartet, and a standout soloist, whether for the animated gravel of his tenor or the piquant air of his soprano.

That pared-down instrumentation reveals its rationale on the hymn-like title track, one of Clutton’s seven compositions here, his bowed bass complementing Malaby’s warm, airy tenor sound. On Refuge, as well, the two reach toward the grace and intensity of John Coltrane. Often admirably concise, the two can also stretch out, extending their spontaneous interaction on Crimes of Tantalus.

Among the three improvisations, Swamp Cut has both musicians reaching deep into their sonorous resources, Malaby’s grainy soprano meeting its double in the high harmonics of Clutton’s bowed bass. The rapid-fire Twig has Clutton to the fore, plucking a kind of compound ostinato that fires Malaby’s lyricism. Suvire has as much focused energy and raw expressionism as bass and tenor might provide, while Nick Fraser’s Sketch #11 possesses a special melodic attraction.

Throughout, one hears the special camaraderie that two gifted improvisers can achieve in a stripped-down setting, while Clutton’s compositions could support a larger ensemble and further elaboration.

Stuart Broomer

Concert Note: The Clutton/Malaby duo play at The Rex on a double bill with Fraser/Malaby/Davis on December 2.

Liminal Spaces
Simon Legault Trio
Effendi Records (effendirecords.com)

▶ Simon Legault’s previous album was titled Hypnagogia Polis (2017) which referred to a transitional state from wakefulness to sleep and featured a quintet. Liminal Spaces (2019) is a trio album which includes Adrian Vedady on electric and acoustic bass and Michel Lambert on drums. Liminal means “relating to a transitional or initial stage of a process.” Therefore the theme of “transitions” can explain many of the melodic and compositional elements of his work. Legault’s guitar playing is both clean and precise and includes a spacey quality that hints at other worlds and explorations beyond the immediacy of the groove.

Many of the pieces seem to have evolved from improvisations and work organically through several organizing ideas or movements. The opening Liminal Spaces contains many rubato portions which draw on Legault’s melodic scamping; a pastiche of percussive nuances from Lambert provides a nuanced and shifting backdrop. Solus I, II, III and IV are shorter solo guitar works that explore a variety of melodic and harmonic ideas, all in relatively free time. On the other hand, Infexion has a solid groove and a harder bop feel which Vedady and Lambert accentuate with great ensemble backing. Interventions’s title could refer to
amplified clarinet & trumpet, guitars, nimb
Sound of the Mountain with Tetuzi Akiyama and Toshimaru Nakamura
Mystery & Wonder MW008 (mwrecs.com)

Sound of the Mountain is the duo of clarinetist Elizabeth Millar and trumpeter Craig Pedersen, significant younger figures in the Montreal musique actuelle community. Their work includes orchestral roles, free jazz and free improvisation. This CD, titled by its instrumentation, comes from a 2017 Tokyo encounter with guitarist Tetuzi Akiyama and Toshimaru Nakamura, who plays “nimb” or no-input mixing board, plugging its output into its input and creating an array of controlled feedback sounds.

There are two improvisations here, identified by the numbers 1 (clocking in at 18:39) and 2 (16:51) and that instrument list. The music proceeds with its own developing form, a collection of shifting sounds, sometimes spacious, like an isolated guitar passage, some gently picked reflective notes, some long slow atmospheric disturbances. These works contain many elements including minimalism, jazz, funk, pointillism and general avant-garde mayhem. The addition of Smith's electronics to the classic jazz trio instrumentation creates sounds that are repeated with delay, reverb and other treatments that blur distinctions between what is live and what is sampled and regenerated.

Both works have a strong rhythmical impulse for most of their span which drives the narrative forward. Grammar Architect maintains a sustained and funky forward momentum with many tasty riffs from Oelrichs, from shuffle to hypnotically off-centre snare, which plays off Johnston's juicy bass sound. Perfect Future has a great break around the seven-minute mark where a simple bass riff is sampled and looped but most of the bass timbre has been taken away. The other players drop away and allow this riff to create a space before the second major section of the work which involves much tapping and scratching of instruments. The final portion contains many piano interjections that mix some Romantic elements with angular modernist riffs; towards the end, the drums and bass find a jazzy marching groove.

Perdidox is being released on SoundCloud which is becoming common in this age of multiple streaming platforms.
masterful editor: here he’s emphasizing that side of his extraordinary craft.

Stuart Broomer

Hiding Out
Mike Holober’s Gotham Jazz Orchestra
Zoho Music ZM 201906 (zohomusic.com)

With the release of his new double-CD project, well-respected and in-demand New York City-based jazz pianist, composer and band leader, Mike Holober has done the near-impossible – assembled an A-list group (The Gotham City Orchestra) to perform 11 fresh, original, large ensemble jazz compositions in a way that displays each musician’s gifts within the framework of ego-less, challenging arrangements. Holober is at a point in his musical maturity and creativity that this contemporary take on the traditional big band jazz format is all about the music itself.

Esteemed members of the GCO include many of Holober’s longtime collaborators, all of whom have paid their metaphorical New York dues many times over... such as reed players Billy Drewes, Jon Gordon, Dave Pietro, Steve Kenyon and Adam Kolker; trumpeters Tony Kadleck and Marvin Stamm and guitarist Jay Azzolina. The two-CD collection (arranged in two Suites, entitled Flow and Hiding Out) is comprised of Holober’s original compositions as well as a compelling rendition of Jobim’s Caminhas Cruzados.

The first suite kicks off with Jumble, featuring some face-melting solo work from guitarist Jesse Lewis, and then segues into the ambitious four-movement work, Flow, which includes the evocative Tear of the Clouds, Opalescence, Interlude and the high-energy, bop-infused Harlem, featuring the always swinging Drewes on alto.

The second disc contains the five-movement, Hiding Out, beginning with Prelude, featuring a woodwind intro followed by the thrilling entrance of brass, followed by Compelled, Four Haiku and Interlude... ending with the skillfully crafted, dynamic, full-band opus It Was Just the Wind. This brilliant project closes with an inspired take on Jobim’s classic, which was made even more stunning by the work of iconic trumpeter/flugelhornist, Stamm.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

Plastový Hrad
Elliott Sharp
Infrquent Seams IS 20
(infrequentseams.com)

Aural essays in bass clarinet adaptation Plastový Hrad’s three tracks composed by American Elliott Sharp challenge the player(s) in varied fashions.

Commissioned by the Brno Contemporary Orchestra to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Czech Republic, the opaque moody title track has Lukasz Daniel chiselling a place for the horn’s distinctive harmonies among the polyphonic narrative propelled by the ensemble. Lyrical yet rhythmic, in contrast, Gareth Davis’ bass clarinet on Turning Test is the sole foil to the Neue Vocalisten Stuttgart, whose six singers harmonize and hocket as they move through this contemporary art song. Based on a graphic score, rather than through-composed like the others, Oumuamua features extended and unexpected sonic techniques expressed by Sharp’s own bass clarinet and programmed electronics.

Propelled full force, the episodic structure of Plastový Hrad allows for several dramatic moments as when bass clarinet trills flourish upwards to maintain the narrative among gathering motifs propelled by kettle-drum smashes and flaring horn-section harmonies. Eventually the caustic horizontal theme is maintained with speedy coloratura emphasis from Daniel. On Oumuamua, intonation that can sound like two separate clarinets is broken into shards or reconstructed, then amplified with signal-processed pumps before ending with straight-ahead twisting trills. As for Turing Test, lower case continuum from the clarinetist finally blends with the layered voices for a lyrical finale.

Overall both the country and reed exploration are properly honoured musically here.

Ken Waxman

Masked
Kathryn Ladano
Independent (kathrynladano.com)

I have it on good authority from the most celebrated virtuosos of the bass clarinet that it is a challenging instrument to play and certainly diabolically difficult to master. In ensemble, the ink-dark character of its sound is featured prominently in the wall of lower register instruments, used almost percussively by its virtuosos to often create the effect of deep, staccato repetitions, played beneath the melody to conjure a feeling of slowly fluctuating cycles. Those who approach the instrument are extremely brave. The great bass clarinetist Eric Dolphy certainly was. Together with Gunter Hampel, Don Byron, James Carter and Paul Austerlitz he led a tiny tribe of others that now includes Kathryn Ladano.

Masked is the second solo album for bass clarinet by Ladano. Its title comes from her PhD thesis, The Improvising Musician’s Mask: Using Musical Instruments to Build Self-Confidence and Social Skills in Collective Free Improvisation. Like Austerlitz, an academic and performer whose work probes the relationship between Vodou, improvised music and altered states of being, Ladano also pays close attention to extra-musical aspects of improvisation as she translates elements of her thesis in the music of Masked.

Things socio-psychological, philosophical and spiritual apart, Ladano’s music gives wing to emotion. The plaintive bleats, nasal drones and breath-like human smears combine in yammering snorts, phrases and long, loping lines whose long and winding improvisations don’t always have beginnings and ends but often make you gasp in abject wonderment.

Raul da Gama

POT POURRI

From a Dream
Orchid Ensemble
Independent OE 2018
(orchidensemble.com)

Lane Tunng (erhu, vocals), Yu-Chen Wang (zheng) and Jonathan Bernard (percussion) are the Vancouver-based trio Orchid Ensemble. Established in 1997, the trio incorporates Chinese musical instruments and traditions with global sounds, regularly commissioning scores from North American composers. One of its goals is to develop “an innovative musical genre based on the cultural exchange between Western and Asian musicians.” True to its mandate, this album is a collection of works by Canadian composers, along with two arrangements of Chinese originals. The title track From a Dream by American-Canadian composer Dorothy Chang was inspired by images of China’s Huangshan (Yellow Mountain). Chang reflects the poetic qualities of this spectacular landscape, by turns evoking in her deftly wrought impressionistic score the stillness, strength, delicacy and resilience of this iconic site.

No Rush, by Vancouver composer and conductor Jin Zhang, also explores contrasts – though here sourced from within – segueing from tenderness and strength, forcefulness
and tranquility. Each instrumentalist gets a solo turn. Veteran percussionist Bernard gets a workout on a wide spectrum of metal, wood and skin, struck and bowed instruments, erhu virtuosa Tung shines as the dramatic melodic voice, and zheng player Wang imbues her part with rhythmic incision and energy.

Fire (2007) also by Zhang, was inspired by stories of the 1960 fire that burned Nanaimo’s Chinatown to the ground. This near-cinematic work, with a chorus of four voices, evokes human struggle, hardship and the opportunity for regeneration, an uplifting theme with which to close to this enjoyable album.

Andrew Timar

Patria
Mazacote
Justin Time JTR 8620-2 (justintime.com)

Patria is simply one of the most exceptional Latin music projects that has been released in recent memory. The recording is a vibrant celebration of the brave, indefatigable Nicaraguan people and their culture; and the beautiful, sibilant Spanish, in symbiosis with the African and Indigenous musics that emanate from Central America, are the jewels that propel this potent and passionate music. Although not overtly a political album, Mazacote has said the following, “This album is dedicated to the people of Nicaragua and to those who fight injustice and intolerance around the world.”

The CD is produced by Adam Popowitz and trumpeter/flugelhornist Malcolm Aiken. All lyrics were written by lead vocalist and guitarist David Lopez and all music was written by the ensemble. This invigorating, dynamic group also includes Niho Takase on piano; Chris Couto on congas, timbales, bongos and percussion; Fito Garcia on bass; Rod Murray on trombone; Mario Sota on guitar and Frankie Hidalgo on vocals.

The opening salvo is Levanta La Copa (Raise the Cup) – a joyous celebration of life, expressed by dynamic vocals, a tight, relentless rhythm section, authentic horn arrangements and supernatural percussion. Garcia’s distinctive, stand-up, electric bass is essential for this genre of authentic Latin music. A true masterpiece is the sinuous ballad, Pueblo, filled with longing and nostalgia; these and other emotions are not only expressed musically, through the skill of the players, but also in the superb vocal by Lopez. Mi Patria (My Native Land) features Aiken on flugelhorn, whose sumptuous tone and perfect intonation contribute massively to the technical sophistication of the ensemble.

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke

Something in the Air
Double bassists Score from the Background

KEN WAXMAN

Probably the most misunderstood instrument in popular music, the double bass is hard to hear when any ensemble is playing full throttle. Yet the history of jazz, at least, would be markedly different if not for the rhythmic impetus propelled by sophisticated bassists. Not only that, but starting with iconoclasts like Charles Mingus and Oscar Pettiford in the 1950s, double bassists’ talents directing groups and as composers have kept pace with their burgeoning skill in playing both arco and pizzicato. This situation has only expanded over the years and these CDs offer some fine examples. Bassists may not be the designated leaders of all of them, but each highlights the bull fiddlers’ talents as accompanists, soloists, arrangers and composers.

Michael Formanek, who recently retired from teaching bass and jazz/improvised music at the conservatory level, combines those playing and composing attributes/ And Even Better (Intakt CD 335 intaktrec.ch) demonstrates this with the all-American Very Practical Trio, featuring longtime foil Tim Berne on alto saxophone and younger guitarist Mary Halvorson. Combining lilting and literality, Formanek’s nine compositions are melodic, but work in enough space for the tang Berne brings with triple tonguing and slides into high-pitched peeps, along with Halvorson’s precise chording, that includes string distortion and Hawaiian–guitar-like shakes. With the exception of brief insertions, the composer’s solo skills stay in the background. Instead he fluidly propels the tunes with rhythmic pumps and stops. Still Here, for instance, finds the saxophonist’s slinky trills and the guitarist’s flowing surf–music-like wriggles adhering to the sparkling narrative advanced by bass string finesses, so that by the end modulating echoes from all are harmonized. The brief Bomb the Cactus and the introductory Suckerpunch may have similar country–folk, finger styling from Halvorson, yet Berne’s response with slurred altissimo variations, plus Formanek’s rarely there thumps, convert both sequences into echoing essays in refined counterpoint. The Shifter demonstrates that the bassist can write a fast bebop theme with the instruments in triple counterpoint, as Berne’s stop–time snarls add emotion. Yet the trio’s music with her effortless style mastery. Great accordion clog violin transcription opens The Golden Eagle set. In Tribute to John Allan, MacMaster asked her cousin the late John Allan Cameron’s son Stuart to play his dad’s guitar in the opening Glasgow House March, a tune she learned from John, which is then followed by numerous faster reels and strathspeys played with spirited fiddle rhythmic bounce.

The Macmaster/Edey arrangement of James Scott Skinner’s Professor Blackie is a mellower violin–guitar ballad with precise phrasing, soaring lines and effortless pitch jumps. As composers, MacMaster and Edey’s Morning Galliano, named after the French accordionist, has a perfect French/Celtic feel with Edey’s accordion flourishes and chords playing in tight, happy duets with the violin. Of MacMaster’s own compositions, noteworthy is her closing same–named bluegrass/jazz–tinged tune from the Judy’s Dance track. Lots of fun!

Tiina Kilik

Lesley Mitchell-Clarke
The UK’s Barry Guy has done even more to redefine the role of double bassist/composer/bandleader over the years with his large and small ensembles. As part of a trio on Illuminated Silence (Fundacja Stuchaj FSR01/2019 stuchaj.org), with Japanese pianist Izumi Kimura and American drummer Gerry Hemingway, he contributes three compositions, adds his muscular accoutrements to the free-form improvisations and even recites a relevant verse at the beginning of one selection. Kimura, who sometimes purrs vocally as she plays, generates delicate, winnowing melodies, as her composition The Willow Tree Cannot Be Broken by the Snow demonstrates. But Guy’s spicato string rapping and Hemingway’s cymbal shatters add rhythmic heft to that piece. More emblematic of Guy’s skill are his tunes. Blue Horizon moves from an atmospheric introduction with lowing string patterns and keyboard runs to intersection among high-frequency key clinks, drum thumps and sluicing bass motion. Ancients is even better as crescendo build-up during the performance separates an exposition of keyboard sweeping lower-case moroseness with a fluid theme elaboration by Kimura that concludes at a slower pace. Finding It, the Guy composition which concludes this live concert, comes from his comic side, as the bassist’s resonating snacks and pumps are interrupted and amplified by Kimura’s Monkish asides that build up to a cascading climax, downshift to bass string-plucked pulses and finally let the pianist alternate between meandering theme variations and near frenetic key shading. In spite of their experience, both veteran players still give Kimura space to display her technique and voicing which is flawless at any pitch or tempo. That she keeps her cool in such fast company and Kimura is even more telling. Written by the Guy composer himself to relaxed, vibrating scene-setting, as on the title tune. Leaving the best for last, however, the first three minutes of the concluding Blue Cloud are given over to an unaccompanied display of unhurried, often sul tasto double-bass pacing before the piece opens up into a semi-march. Arthurs’ lyricism is then harmonized with rhythmic percussion and piano key clipping before gradually upping the tempo to end with solidly measured arco sweeps. A leisurely pace is maintained throughout but never at the expense of subtle swing. The title tune also serves as a showcase for Arthurs, whose bubbling flutters and smears move upwards to brassy shakes and slides. Before the conclusion is realized with additional capillary fillip, more spanked piano tones are added to the sequence. Additionally, when bass and drums lay back on Sea Drop, this ambulatory track is enlivened by a middle section of pointed trumpet smears and snarls, doubled by forceful and frequent bass string pops.

A similar situation exists on Areas (Leo Records CD LR 828 leorecords.com). Although the leader is Swiss pianist Gabriele Friedli, half the compositions are those of her countryman, bassist Daniel Studer; Dieter Ulrich is the drummer. The main contrast in creative architecture between the bassist and pianist is how her reactivity straightforward playing is nudged to more expressive freedom by Studer’s constant string pressure. A track like the Studer-composed Largo, which opens the disc, featuring dark contrapuntal bass-string scrabbling and lighter keyboard chording, seamlessly slides into Friedli’s Fil de Ramosa, whose dramatic impetus comes from plucks and stops on the piano’s inner strings in such a way that both bass and piano share the same pitch and emphasis as the tune evolves. With such compositional accord displayed throughout, elation comes in noting how the trio moulds turbulent dissonance into unexpected narrative sequences while maintaining flowing concordance. Studer’s mildew Lisa, for example, uses sul tasto string thumps to push the theme forward as the pianist’s high-energy percussive notes, strengthened by Ulrich’s cowbell peals and drum ruffs, climaxes with high-frequency comping that is simultaneously imaginative and straight ahead. More complex, Masse, another Studer theme, introduces spurts of atonality as the bassist’s arco thrusts are echoed by dynamic patterning and asides from the pianist. The theme becomes more splintered as the speed intensifies. Sudden cymbal clatter adds to a finale of gradual tension release. Although there’s only one brief drum solo, Ulrich’s strangled bugle (!) cries on Um Su animate the program in a distinctive manner, as inner string cascades from Friedli and buzzing bass string sweeps, almost shatter the exposition before adroit keyboard flexibility calms the finale. Perfectly capable of composing a prototypical contemporary jazz piece with a walking bass line, a swiffling drum beat and a bounding and sinewy exposition, as on Miedra, the pianist’s most exciting work, and that of the trio, confirms Friedli’s response to the challenge of Studer’s playing and writing.

A younger bassist moving front and centre with his playing and writing is Canadian-in-Berlin Miles Perkin, who, on The Point in Question (Clean Feed CF 229 CD cleanfeedrecords.com), has put together an international quartet to improvise on his compositions. Consisting of British trumpeter Tom Arthurs, French pianist Benoît Delbecq and American drummer Jim Black, inclusive symmetry is maintained by contrasting dappled fluidity from the trumpeter with the chiming bulk of keyboard and drum strategies. As well as slick background prods, Perkin mostly confines himself to relaxed, vibrating scene-setting, as on the title tune. The title tune also serves as a showcase for Arthurs, whose bubbling flutters and smears move upwards to brassy shakes and slides. Before the conclusion is realized with additional capillary fillip, more spanked piano tones are added to the sequence. Additionally, when bass and drums lay back on Sea Drop, this ambulatory track is enlivened by a middle section of pointed trumpet smears and snarls, doubled by forceful and frequent bass string pops.

Another EU affair, the band includes Portuguese trumpeter Susana Santos Silva and Italian baritone saxophonist/clarinetist/flutist Alberto Pinton plus Scandinavians, tenor saxophonist/flutist Jonas Kulhammar, trombonist Mats Äleklint and drummer Jon Fält. With an effervescent stylist like Äleklint in the band there are times when it’s best to get out of the way. This is proven on 1-1-1, The Oracle in Finnåker and the extended Song from the End of the World, which also demonstrate the bassist’s compositional versatility. A hard hop stomper driven by the composor’s slap bass runs, the first piece is quickly broken up with slurs and stutters from the other horns as Äleklint moves from plunger growls to gutbucket blats, whimnying cries and staccato smears until Fält’s measured bangs end the program. Midway between jolly oomph-pah-pah and parade-ground music, The Oracle in Finnåker features the trombonist working up and down the scale with tailgate slides plus disruptive assault-rifle-like blasts. Torquing the tension with an extended series of pats and smacks from the drummer, drooling clarinet squeezes and trumpet peeps keep the narrative moving until a final release. Although supple guitar-like fingering characterizes Zetterberg’s work elsewhere, in contrast on Song from the End of the World, his chiming pulse sets up a crepuscule-tinged muted trumpet solo and a series of puffs and whistles from one flutist which confirm the theme’s exotica. Reflecting the introduction, the bassist brings the tune to a close with double-and-triple stops and low-pitch string swabs.

Varied as they may be, each of these discs – and the bassists directing them – show how 21st-century bassists are moving music forward.
Old Wine, New Bottles
Fine Old Recordings Re-Released

BRUCE SURTEES

In the day... a rather long-gone day, if you listened to the ABC's classical radio station in Sydney, Australia you would immediately recognize the name William Murdoch. Next to Percy Grainger, who today is remembered almost solely as the composer, Murdoch was acknowledged to be the finest Australian pianist in the first half of the 20th century. Born in Victoria in 1888, he showed an early aptitude for music but wished for a career in law. He won a preliminary legal scholarship at the University of Melbourne, all the while continuing his musical studies at the Melbourne Conservatory of Music. At the age of 17 he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music in London. He travelled there in 1906 and studied four years under Frits [sic] Hartvigson, gaining two gold medals, a Bechstein grand piano and the praise of Sir Hubert Parry who described Murdoch as "gifted and charming." His London debut was in 1910. However, it was his reception on his tour of South Africa as accompanist for contralto Clara Butt (not yet a Dame) that finally decided him on music. He concertized and toured Scandinavia, also Canada and the United States, Australia and New Zealand. He began making acoustic recordings which he criticized openly because of the engineer's manipulation of the dynamics. From 1925 he was heard on electrical recordings, collected here as The Complete Columbia solo electrical recordings from 1925 to 1931 (Appian Recordings APR6029, 2CDs naxosdirect.com). The two Beethoven sonatas, Pathétique and Appassionata, sonically most impressive and interpretively unique, were recorded at Murdoch's insistence in an empty Wigmore Hall in London on October 12, 1926 and January 19-20, 1927. These recordings pre-date the Schnabel recordings by at least five years and it is obvious that Murdoch's interpretations are the product of his original thinking which holds our close attention to the very last note. I played a few tracks for my friend, a renowned critic, whose attention did not waver. Nevertheless, he received second prize in the International Chopin Competition that year and gained attention in Soviet cultural circles. A year later he won the Queen Elisabeth Music Competition in Brussels. That drew him into touring but after winning the International Tchaikovsky Competition in 1962 his life changed. He was free to spend six months in London with his family and then decided to live there permanently. He was lauded by the critics as the most exceptional pianist of his generation. The critics were right. He was not only an exceptional pianist but a complete musician who today is known also as a symphony orchestra conductor of the first order. His recording of the Rachmaninoff symphonies with the Concertgebouw Orchestra are, to my ears, way ahead of the competition in every aspect. Also, there are his complete Shostakovich and Sibelius symphonies.

Another fine set of interest has arrived from Appian Recordings. The label is devoted exclusively to restoring historic recordings by pianists both universally known and, in many cases, those known only to the cognoscenti. Here we have The Complete French Columbia Recordings 1928-1939 by Robert Casadesus (APR7104, 4 CDs naxosdirect.com). Included are all the commercial releases from 78rpm together with a first release of a performance of the Mozart Piano Concerto K537 "Coronation" recorded in March 1931 by Casadesus with the Walter Straram Orchestra. Casadesus was born in Catalonia. He lived in France and changed his name to Casadesus, meaning the house above the village. English-speaking people were at a loss to pronounce his name correctly. It is "Cazadsu." Robert was a child prodigy who played The Harmonious Blacksmith at the age of nine without using any pedals... he couldn't reach them. At the Paris Conservatoire he was friends with Fauré, who much admired his playing, particularly playing the composer's own works. He was also good friends with Ravel. When Ravel came to the studio to make piano rolls, he found two sections beyond him, La Gitet and the Toccata from Le Tombeau de Couperin and he persuaded Casadesus to record them instead. The Aeolian Company released the rolls as the playing of Ravel but sister Gaby Casadesus later admitted that her brother was very well paid.

Other concerted works in this collection include Fauré's Piano Quartet No.1 in C Minor, Op.15 with Joseph Calvet, violin, Léon Pascal, viola, and Paul Mas, cello, recorded in May 1935. Also, Georges Witkowski conducting his Mon Lac with the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris as recorded in June 1928. Mozart’s Piano Concerto No.24 in C Minor K491 was conducted by Eugène Bigot with the same orchestra in December 1927. Weber’s well known Konzertstück in F Minor finds Bigot conducting again on June 8, 1925.

The Harmonious Blacksmith

There are some interesting duos here, including the Debussy Cello Sonata and Caplet’s Dans le petits nègres both with Maurice Maréchal from June 3, 1930. Casadesus’ own Flute Sonata Op.13 finds him in the studio with René Le Roy on that same date five years later. Some of the major works included in this historic collection are 11 Scarlatti Sonatas recorded on June 15,1937, Schumann’s Etudes symphoniques, Op.13 together with Vogel als Prophet from Waldszenen from 1928. He plays lots of Schubert, Mozart, Schumann, Chopin, Fauré, Beethoven, Chabrier and a lone piece by Marie-Joseph-Alexandre Déodat de Séverac titled Le retour des Muletiers. That was on November 21, 1935. This set will be welcomed by those who would enjoy these pre-WWII performances collected nowhere else. The transfers are, as always with this label, state of the art. In this case by Mark Obert-Thorn.

Vladimir Ashkenazy was never regarded as a child prodigy at the Moscow Conservatory where he was studying in 1955, aged 18. Nevertheless, he received second prize in the International Chopin Competition where he was studying in 1955, aged 18. Finally, disc four

for discs from 1928. He plays lots of Schubert, Mozart, Schumann, Chopin, Fauré, Beethoven, Chabrier and a lone piece by Marie-Joseph-Alexandre Déodat de Séverac titled Le retour des Muletiers. That was on November 21, 1935. This set will be welcomed by those who would enjoy these pre-WWII performances collected nowhere else. The transfers are, as always with this label, state of the art. In this case by Mark Obert-Thorn.

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It's getting to be that time of the year again. When once more I have to bear witness to my follies. Here goes. I'm Jewish. And I love Christmas carols. There, now I've said it.

I've loved carols ever since I piled into the yellow school buses waiting for us kids outside Hillcrest Public School at Bathurst and St. Clair to ferry us down to Simpson's basement at Yonge and Queen in early December to sing our little hearts out for harried shoppers. (As you can see, I'm also old.) And, while there, little Robert would thrill to the music in ways I only later learned why. We Grade Fours loved to end the first stanza of Good King Wenceslas with an exaggerated "gath- ring winter few-o-ooo- ool." Only later did I realize we were singing a plagal cadence, which had basically disappeared from Western music 600 years previously. And there was something remarkably brilliant and beautiful in Angels We Have Heard on High, because, I now know, the Gloria in excelsis Deo which I was belting out in my innocence had been sung in the West since the 13th century, due to an injunction from Pope Leo IV, more or less exactly as I was singing it beside the men's sock department in Toronto in 1958.

The music of Christmas is one of the great cultural treasures of modern Western Civilization. It's like a musical archaeological dig. Without realizing it in the slightest, at this time of year, we happily and unselfconsciously (or we used to) sing music from medieval times, the Renaissance, the classical period, and on up to the present day, with contributions by Felix Mendelssohn (Hark the Herald Angels Sing is based on a tune from one of his cantatas), Handel (Joy to the World is a clever variation on two sections of Messiah) and many other less-famous but no-less-able composers. I've always loved the music of Christmas, much to the consternation and bewilderment of my Jewish friends, who cannot for the life of them understand why I'm glorifying the Christ child and the theological axioms of the religion based on his teachings, in my enthusiasm for Adeste Fidelis.

And I try to tell them that the traditional music of the season isn't about religion at all, really - that there are lots of carols that have no religious content in the least, from O Tannenbaum to Good King Wenceslas; that, in fact, carols were first sung outside of the church as an explicit populist repudiation of the morose theological seriousness around Christmas, that they're really a form of ancient pop music, (which is why the modern carols, from White Christmas to Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas, almost all written by Jews, fit so easily into the Christmas spirit). My Jewish friends are having none of it. Christmas, for them, is dim sum on December 25, I'm a traditionalist without a tradition.

So you might think that I would be somewhat sympathetic to what has become a recently newly minted holiday ritual, the beatings and screechings from certain quarters about "a War on Christmas," a war, it seems, waged by means of insidious demands that we say "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas" to people we meet on the street, and re-name, in an act of blazing and audacious political correctness, those excruciating musical gatherings in our local schools "Holiday Concerts" instead of their rightfully named "Christmas Concerts." The "Holiday Tree," shocking in its blasphemy, is part of the conspiracy as well.

Given my carol obsession, I guess I should be sympathetic to these arguments – but I'm not sympathetic to them at all. At their best, they are stupid and childish, at their worst, dare I say it, defiantly un-Christian in their intent and spirit. As I understand it, the person whose birthday we're celebrating on December 25 was the one named the Prince of Peace, the one who endorsed the sentiment to love thy neighbour as thyself. Can't imagine he would have minded that we adjusted the traditions and rituals around his birthday to make them more inclusive, more sensitive, more welcoming.

If I thought the argument about the "War on Christmas" was even remotely made in good faith, there's a lengthy discussion I could initiate about the history of changes to the celebration of Christmas over a millennium, which make our contemporary adjustments in effect, very traditional. The Christmas celebrations we revere now as ancient and unchangeable, in fact go back just over 150 years, to Victorian England. Christmas was banned by Cromwell's Puritan Revolution in the mid-1660s in England, (as it was in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, jail time the penalty for celebrating the season in early Boston); it wasn't really until Dickens' A Christmas Carol that the celebration of the season was recovered. And the so-called traditions of Christmas, which supposedly cement their Christian heritage, were all borrowed from other cultures – gift-giving from pagan Roman solstice rituals, the evergreen tree as a symbol of life in death from ancient Egypt, even Santa Claus from the Dutch name for Saint Nicholas, Sinter Klaas, although the
down to the Bay to sing carols, might have a different, far less innocent, relationship to the music that thrilled me when I was sitting in those classrooms? It might. And that’s a shame, I admit. Innocence is a charming and beautiful virtue. But nostalgia is not innocence; it can be and is clearly being used today as a weapon in a larger cultural battle. What we need to do is establish new traditions for our society, new ceremonies of celebration for our developing century. Until then, we’ll struggle with Christmas Concerts re-named Holiday Concerts, in all their ambiguity and confusion, and we’ll survive. As we have many times before when our values and traditions were challenged. So, in that spirit, I’ll wish you all both a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays. Me, I’ll be listening to Johnny Mathis and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir for the next little while.

As for the Holiday Tree? Call it what you like – and let others do the same.

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