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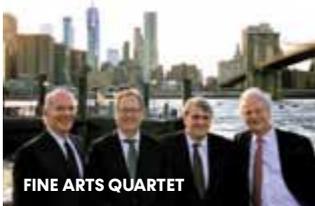
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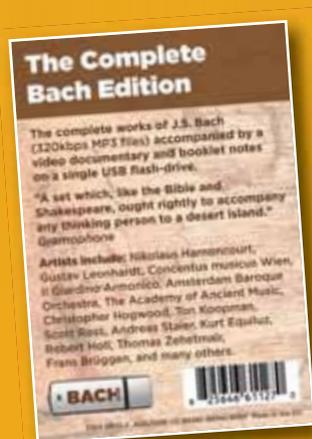
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20

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24

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- 10 Editorial
- 12 Industry News
- 14 Emily D'Angelo
- 17 Rihab Chaieb : A Down-to-Earth Mezzo
- 18 Wallis Giunta : Singing Outside the Box
- 23 Pauline Vaillancourt
- 26 Noël Spinelli, Philanthropist
- 28 Gino Quilico : Lessons from Great Singers
- 29 Grégoire Legendre
- 30 Tapestry Opera
- 32 Théâtre Lyricorégra 20
- 33 La fille du tambour-major by Opéra bouffe
- 34 Independant Opera Companies
- 37 Opera in the park
- 37 Tempête et Passions
- 38 Against the Grain Theatre
- 39 Mississauga MSO
- 40 Iwan Edwards : A Life in Music
- 44 Toronto Mendelssohn Choir
- 45 St. Lambert Choral Society
- 46 Nathaniel Dett Choral
- 47 Choeur de chambre du Québec
- 48 La Chapelle de Québec
- 48 Ottawa Bach Choir
- 50 Potential for absolute pitch
- 51 NYO Canada
- 51 Virtuosos
- 52 Higher Education News
- 53 HEC Montréal
- 56 Conservatoire du Québec
- 60 CD Reviews
- 62 Jazz
- 64 Regional Calendar
- 74 Nathalie Bondil
- 76 Harry Rosen
- 78 Luc Courchesne
- 79 Stéphane Marceau

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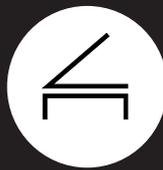
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Editorial

FROM THE EDITOR

OPERA SPECIAL

Back in November 2013, our survey of new Indie opera companies found eight fledgling organizations. Most have survived and are still thriving, but their example has inspired more young singers to band together. This year's survey lists 36.

Forty is the number of years Toronto's Tapestry Opera has championed contemporary opera, and they are fledgling and Indie no more, as Arthur Kaptainis found out. Perhaps the only new organization shedding the fledgling adjective is 10-year-old Against the Grain (AtG), which has made recent news with a national tour of their *La Bohème* sung in today's English that was live-streamed by CBC Gem. In September 2018, in our special on Art Song, I proposed to revitalize the art form; art songs should be sung in the language of the audience. I'll now say the same, that opera should be sung in the local language as well, as was done in the early 1900s. AtG co-founder Joel Ivany tells us about his process in translating six operas.

The crisis in opera attendance is a recurring concern. Opéra de Montréal's answer this season is to promote international talent and to switch the second Saturday evening for a Sunday matinee. I'm not sure the latter move makes much of a difference judging by the first Sunday matinee (*Onegin*), but great voices and singing definitely got the crowd buzzing. It seems the buzz at the COC is the renaming of Ping, Pang and Pong to Jim, Bob and Bill at the suggestion of the COC's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Committee. Indeed, Ping, Pang and Pong is racist; I heard "Ding, Dang, Dong" growing up in Canada. But my reaction is a shrug; we Chinese are used to smiling through adversity. Globally, opinions are mixed on bad tenor behaviour from Plácido Domingo and Vitorio Grigolo, whereas there was unanimous sorrow over the passing of American soprano Jessye Norman. We asked Canadian mezzo-soprano Susan Platts for a tribute.

Our French cover features Montreal's Frédéric Antoun, who is one of a few Canadian tenors making an international career; Adrian Rodriguez sat down with him to discuss a new trajectory to his voice and career. Ten years ago, the list of international-calibre Canadian mezzo-sopranos included Marie-Nicole Lemieux, Michèle Losier and Julie Boulianne, who are still shining abroad. However, Canada is enjoying a new renaissance for the mezzo. Toronto's Emily D'Angelo, featured on the English cover, is part of a trio making waves, including Ottawa native Wallis Giunta and Montrealer Rihab Chaieb, whom we also meet in an interview. The topic of #MeToo was not overlooked.

We visit with Opéra de Québec's Grégoire Legendre, who recently announced his retirement next year; Alain Nonat, whose Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques provide opportunity for young singers, and revisit Pauline Vaillancourt, who recently won a Prix du Québec. Finally, I visit with Gino Quilico, who shares his six rules of singing.

CHORAL MUSIC

The end of November is also the time for choral music, as many choirs celebrate the holidays with their fall concerts. Our guest writer Iwan Edwards shares his career trajectory from Wales to a vibrant career in choral music in Canada, including a sidebar on preparing choirs for the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. We also celebrate the 125th anniversary of Canada's oldest choir, the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, and the 100th anniversary of Quebec's oldest, the St. Lambert Choral Society. Choral singing was a lifelong passion of La Scena's late board member Holly Higgins Jonas and, as a tribute, we publish an excerpt from her book *In Their Own Words: Canadian Choral Conductors*, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Nathaniel Dett Chorale.

VISUAL ARTS

La SCENA arts magazine continues in the November issue with a mini-special on visual arts. We meet the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts's leader Nathalie Bondil, who has revitalized the museum. Other features include the sculpture of the late Dr. Harry Rosen, Luc Courchesne who won a Prix du Québec and Stéphane Marceau.

November is also *La Scena Musicale*'s month for Higher Education and our 20th annual Higher Education Guide. Finally, check out our regular features – music coverage, CD reviews, jazz column, regional calendar, and concerts picks.

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It's no secret that the Internet is reshaping the media landscape. Advertising budgets are shifting. This impacts negatively our advertising receipts, which have traditionally accounted for 80% of *La Scena*'s revenues but have now decreased to 70%. Furthermore, a change in Quebec's Mécénat Placements-Culture program mean that our three-year grant under Volet 2 will not be renewed, leading to a shortfall in this year's budget.

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Furthermore, we are launching the NEW *La Scena* Discovery Box, which will allow customers to discover concerts/events and recordings three times a year; it comes in a \$99 package or a premium version at \$299. See the article on p. 35 for more details. Any form of contribution is greatly appreciated and will go far in promoting artists here and abroad.

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- **MUSICAMERATA 50TH SEASON**, Three Trios, (piano, violin & cello) Chapelle Historique du Bon-Pasteur, Nov. 16, Seniors/Students \$10, \$20 regular
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- **LUCIA DI LAMERMOOR**, Donizetti, Opéra de Montréal, Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier Nov, 17, \$85.00
- **13 MOTS UN LEXIQUE DE MOS AUTOCHTONES QUI DONNENT UN SENS** (Émilie Monnet), Centre du Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui Dec. 11, \$18.49
- **MESSIAH**, Handel, Violons du Roy, Dec. 13, 2019, \$88.00
- **THE MAGIC FLUTE**, Mozart, Opéra de Montréal, May 2020.



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MUTTER HALTS BEETHOVEN PERFORMANCE

Anne-Sophie Mutter was just reaching what *Cincinnati Business Courier* critic Janelle Gelfand called the “most sublime moment of the



Larghetto in the Beethoven Violin Concerto” when she stopped playing and pointed at a front-row patron who was using her cellphone to record the performance. Bizarrely, the young woman did not stop but instead tried to reason with Mutter. “Either I will leave, or

you will put away your phone and recording device,” the German violinist is reported to have said. Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra president Jonathan Martin at this point stepped forward and escorted the malefactor out. Mutter and conductor Eun Son Kim took it from the top. “Despite the interruption, the spiritual quality of the slow movement was undeniable,” Gelfand wrote in her review of the Sept. 28 performance. “Somehow Mutter reclaimed the focus needed to ascend new heights.”

ORQUESTA SINFÓNICA DE MONTREAL: EXCELENTE

Kent Nagano and the OSM earned the acclaim of *Clarín* critic Federico Monjeau for an Oct. 7 concert at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. The conductor effectively managed the “double challenge” in Bartók’s *Concerto for Orchestra* of highlighting “the effervescent texture of the piece” and establishing “continuity between variable musical events” in “one of the most perfect presentations of this masterpiece in memory.” The Argentinian critic was positive also about Ravel’s *La Valse*, “a great specialty of this unique Franco-American orchestra,” and Brahms’s Violin Concerto as played by the “intense and passionate” Simone Lamsma.

The 10-concert tour concluded on Oct. 15 with its only North American stop, in Chicago. “In the opening pages [of Bartók], one had to be impressed by the sheer quality of sound the orchestra produced,” Howard Reich wrote in the *Chicago Tribune*. “...Tonally deep and sonorous but never overstated or harsh.” Prokofiev’s Symphony No. 1 (“Classical”) was “full-bodied” but “fortissimos were too brash” in Ravel’s *La Valse*, which was given as an encore. Lawrence B. Johnson in *Chicago on the Aisle* had no problem with the “sumptuous” Ravel and judged the Bartók to be “a performance that delivered on both the work’s great technical demands and its exacting transparency.” If the Prokofiev was imperfect in the first movement, this was probably due to the difficulty outsiders have in adapting to Symphony Hall.

TSO BAGS \$10 MILLION

The Toronto Symphony Orchestra is \$10 million richer thanks to a gift from the estate of H. Thomas and Mary Beck. The Becks were long-time supporters of the orchestra. Cathy Beck, their daughter, serves as chairman of the orchestra. Total Beck giving to the TSO amounts to more than \$20 million. The latest donation – the largest ever to the orchestra – is “directed toward the support of key artistic initiatives over the coming years, as well as important financial objectives including the reduction of the accumulated deficit and growing the Toronto Symphony Foundation endowment.” The largest gift acknowledged in the September/October OSM printed program is from the Rossy Family Foundation, which is listed in the “\$1 million and over” category. Rossy money is earmarked for the artist-in-residence program.

ZUBIN MEHTA RETIRES FROM THE ISRAEL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Zubin Mehta has stepped down as music director of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra after 50 years of service. The 83-year-old Indian conductor made his final appearance on Oct. 20 in the Charles Bronfman Auditorium in Tel Aviv. The farewell program opened with Liszt’s Piano Concerto No. 2 (Yefim Bronfman, soloist) and concluded with Mahler’s Symphony No. 2 (“Resurrection”). Soloists in the latter were soprano Chen Reiss and mezzo-soprano Okka von der Damerau. Mehta, who had a run-in with cancer last year, walked to the podium with a cane but did not seem frail. “I cannot even begin to describe what I have learned with these musicians,” he told the audience during the intermission, according to the *Times of Israel*. Mehta, who will be succeeded by 30-year-old Lahav Shani, is now the IPO music director emeritus. He also holds emeritus positions with the OSM and Los Angeles Philharmonic. A video of conductor Shani leading *Hatikva*, the Israeli national anthem, is available on the IPO website at www.ipo.co.il. The entire concert is archived for subscribers to medici.tv. Go to www.medici.com.

MET BARITONE FINISHES SECOND IN JEOPARDY!



Answer: This Metropolitan Opera regular came close to becoming a *Jeopardy!* champion. Question: Who is John Hancock? The roster baritone from Tenafly, NJ, who is approaching his 100th performance at the Met, finished the Double Jeopardy round on Oct. 16 with a respectable total of \$18,600, trailing Ed Condon, a retired business intelligence manager from Hastings-on-Hudson, NY, by \$4,000.

“World Leaders” was the Final Jeopardy category. Answer: “This man who ruled from 1949 to 1976 was sometimes called ‘the Red Sun.’” Ed guessed Mao Zedong, John tried Nikita Khrushchev. Ed was right. John, whose resonant baritone was apparent throughout the game, said during the interview sequence with Alex Trebek that his favourite role was Sharpless in Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*. The third contestant, Jackie Schulte, a teacher from Scranton, PA, finished well out of the money.

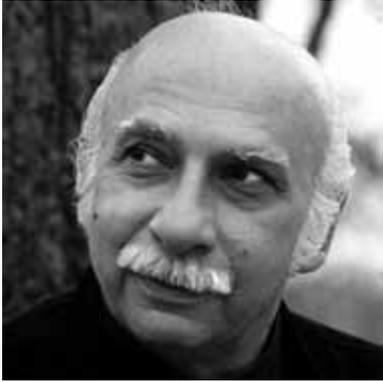
MARCELLO GIORDANI, 1963-2019



Marcello Giordani, one of the busiest tenors on the circuit, died in his home town of Augusta, Sicily, on Oct. 15 at age 56. The cause was a heart attack. Impressive in an array of Verdi and Puccini roles, Giordani made his professional debut as the Duke in Verdi’s *Rigoletto* at Spoleto, Italy, in 1986 and sang Rodolfo in Puccini’s *La Bohème* at La Scala in 1988. He was best known to North Americans

through his more than 240 performances at the Metropolitan Opera. Met general manager Peter Gelb called him the “iron man of tenors” after he gave two performances, in Berlioz’s *La Damnation de Faust* and Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*, on Nov. 22, 2008. Having recovered from vocal difficulties early in his career, Giordani established a foundation dedicated to the support of young opera singers. He is survived by his wife, Wilma, and two sons.

GIYA KANCHELI, 1934-2019



Belgium-based Georgian composer Giya Kancheli died of heart failure on Oct. 2 in his native city of Tbilisi. He was 84. Often grouped with the “holy minimalist” composers who emerged from Eastern Europe in the late 20th century, Kancheli produced seven symphonies as well as many other orchestral works; more than 40 film scores; and a large corpus of chamber and choral music. Much of his concert music lin-

gered on the edge of audibility, at least most of the time. A 1995 release on the Sony-affiliated St. Petersburg Classics label included the advisory “Warning: Extreme Dynamic Changes!” A former music director of the Rustaveli Theatre in Tbilisi, Kancheli composed an opera, *Music for the Living*. Later in his career he was associated with the ECM label, which announced his death. “Giya Kancheli’s thoroughly sincere music will always remind us that, despite the tragedies around us, we must all preserve our human nature, our feelings, our honesty,” violinist Gidon Kremer wrote on the website *Slipped Disc*.

PING, PANG AND PONG OUSTED FROM TORONTO TURANDOT

The Canadian Opera Company has opened its season in Toronto with the North American premiere of Robert Wilson’s production of *Turandot* – and the world premiere appearances of Jim, Bob and Bill in this Puccini opera. Opera fans who do not recognize these roles might be more familiar with Ping, Pang and Pong, the court bureaucrats who add comic relief to the tale of love and death in ancient Beijing. Their names were judged potentially hurtful by the COC’s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Committee, and particularly committee member Richard Lee, who is named in the credits as a production consultant.

“This act of renaming moves *Turandot* into a different space,” Lee writes in program note, “one that recognizes the urgency and creative potential of having a conversation that pushes us to greater cultural awareness and inclusivity on our stages.” His essay is also available online. The new names were apparent in the surtitles at the opening of the run in the Four Seasons Centre. The singers – Adrian Timpau, Jim/Ping; Julius Ahn, Bob/Pang; and Joseph Hu, Bill/Pong – addressed each other on stage with the original names.

Rather than traditional costumes, the trio wore tight-fitting black smoking jackets. They were also the only active figures in an otherwise abstract presentation. COC director of public relations Avril Sequeira said in response to questions that “the names of *Turandot*’s ministers were certainly included in feedback notes [Lee] provided the artistic team” but that “any choices born of this conversation would have been made by Mr. Wilson, the director.” Wilson makes clear in his own program note that he consented to the changes: “To our ears, these names are dated and offensive, and they now distract from the figures’ place in the work as sarcastic, slapstick commentators of the going-ons at court.”

2019 GRAMOPHONE AWARDS

An Erato recording of Saint-Saëns’s Piano Concertos No. 2 and No. 5 featuring 38-year-old French pianist Bertrand Chamayou with the Orchestre National de France under Emmanuel Krivine has won the *Gramophone* magazine 2019 Recording of the Year Award. Another pianist of limited fame in North America, Vikingur Ólafsson, 35, of Iceland, was named Artist of the Year. British soprano Dame Emma Kirkby won the Lifetime Achievement Award. The Opera Award went to a Bru Zane recording of Halévy’s *La reine de Chypre* that included Montreal-born Etienne Dupuis in the cast. For a complete list of winners go to www.gramophone.co.uk.

NAGANO NAMED HONORARY CONDUCTOR OF CONCERTO KÖLN

Concerto Köln has named Kent Nagano its honorary conductor. “Kent is a musician who never ceases to ask questions and whose thinking never stands still,” said Alexander Scherf, artistic director of the ensemble. “Backed by mutual sympathy and respect, each and every one of our encounters has been a true source of inspiration.” Best known as an early-music collective, Concerto Köln has been moving ahead chronologically. A Nagano-led concert in Cologne on Oct. 20 comprised Wagner’s Overture to *Tannhäuser*, Debussy’s *Nocturnes* and the “Antonia” act from Offenbach’s *Les contes d’Hoffmann*. Nagano and Concerto Köln plan an original-instrument performance of Wagner’s *Ring* in 2021.

CLAIRE GUIMOND OF ARION WINS BETTY WEBSTER AWARD



Claire Guimond, artistic director of the Arion Baroque Orchestra, is the 2019 winner of the Orchestras Canada Betty Webster Award. Founded in 1981 as a quartet, Arion quickly expanded to an ensemble of variable size performing a wide range of early music in Montreal and on tour. A flutist, Guimond has served Arion as both artistic director and executive director. She is busy also as a teacher. The Betty Webster Award,

named after the late founder of Orchestras Canada, is presented annually to an individual or organization that has “made a sustained and significant contribution over a number of years to the Canadian orchestral community.” The 2019-20 season will be Guimond’s 39th and last with Arion.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS LAPOINTE AT THE OPÉRA DE QUÉBEC IN 2020



Jean-François Lapointe, a baritone from Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean whose career has unfolded principally in Europe, will assume the directorship of the Opéra de Québec in September 2020. He succeeds Grégoire Legendre, who has been at the helm for 25 years. Legendre is acclaimed particularly for establishing the summertime Festival d’opéra de Québec, often a launching pad for new productions

slated for the Metropolitan Opera. In a statement Lapointe described his mandate as “a desire for continuity.” **LSM**

EMILY D'ANGELO

GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT COMIC OPERA

by CHARLES GEYER



ENSEMBLE STUDIO COMPETITION FIRST PRIZE AND AUDIENCE CHOICE AWARD WINNER MEZZO-SOPRANO EMILY D'ANGELO, CENTRE STAGE 2015, PHOTO: MICHAEL COOPER

“At the core, we have a young girl who is trapped in the home of some guy,” says Canadian mezzo-soprano Emily D’Angelo of the plight of Rosina, the closely guarded young “ward” of the rapacious Dr. Bartolo who intends to marry her for her dowry in Gioachino Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*. “That’s just totally not a funny thing right now. So that’s the trick for me – how can I justify being comedic when there’s something so serious going on?”

D’Angelo fairly brims with such trenchant observations and ideas about the role. And rightly so, as she’s slated to play it in the Canadian Opera Company production of *Barber*, running from Jan. 19 through Feb. 7, 2020.

But the remark is also a perfect example of the kind of analytic seriousness about music, art and drama that crops up again and again in conversation with this thoughtful and accomplished young singer who has been experiencing a career of dizzying acceleration in the last three years.

A native of Toronto, D’Angelo studied at the University of Toronto and was a member of the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio. She was a two-time fellow at the Ravinia Festival’s Steans Music Institute and also racked up a raft of scholarship and competition wins in the course of her training.

But D’Angelo’s current full-steam trajectory might be said to have ignited with her having placed among the top five winners of the Metropolitan Opera’s National Council Auditions in 2016. Having made her professional opera debut the same year at the Spoleto Festival (as Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*), and subsequently making her debut in three roles at the Met, D’Angelo also won numerous other awards and prizes – including a first at the 2017 Gerda Lissner International Voice Competition, and a second in the aria division of the 2018 CMIM competition – all of this capped off by a virtually unprecedented bouquet of first-place wins at Plácido Domingo’s 2018 Operalia competition: top female singer, the Zarzuela Prize, and a shared win of the Birgit Nilsson Prize.

“It did a great thing for me,” D’Angelo says of the high-profile Operalia competition. “It’s the world stage. Lots of people are listening.” Then, demurring with a characteristic modesty that belies the ferocity she brings to bear in such winning performances as her “Dopo notte, atra e funesta” from Handel’s *Ariodante* (conducted by Domingo at the Operalia competition, and viewable online), D’Angelo deflects from comment on herself to focus on the virtues and value of competitions instead.

WIN-WIN

“Competitions make new audiences,” says D’Angelo, “and introduce audiences to new artists, by way of live-streaming. It’s a cool experience for an audience to watch on the computer or the TV. It’s like *American Idol* or *America’s Got Talent*. It has this really exciting thing about it that ropes them in, and makes them actually like opera, and want to go see a real opera.

“But as for my ‘professional trajectory,’” D’Angelo muses, “it’s hard to say. Nothing happens overnight.”

Fair enough. But whether construed as a continuous and gradual progression from musically precocious youth (D’Angelo began singing at age 3, and has been a serious student of the cello since high school) to emergent international stardom, or as a sudden and recent burst on the musical horizon, it’s intriguing to note that the role of Rosina has been woven throughout D’Angelo’s development in many ways, and almost from the start. For one thing, it’s a Rosina aria that got D’Angelo accepted into the prestigious and important career-enhancing Lindemann Young Artists Program at the Metropolitan Opera.

“And for the Canadian Opera Company before that,” D’Angelo is quick to mention, as “Una voce poco fa” was one of her audition arias for the COC’s Ensemble Studio. It’s something that makes D’Angelo’s upcoming COC stint in *Barber* all the more gratifying. “Full circle,” she comments.

“What’s been interesting is finding how I can justify being comedic when there’s something so serious going on. I think that to be truthful to all moments and to all aspects of the story can make for a lot of fun”.

But the role of Rosina had lived in and with D’Angelo for far longer than that, and the director of the COC’s production – noted Spanish auteur Joan Font (whom D’Angelo has yet to meet) – is likely poised to enjoy quite a trove of ideas and opinions from his starring mezzo-soprano.

BECOMING ROSINA

“I can’t remember *not* having known ‘Una voce...’ D’Angelo says. Indeed, as a child, she would listen to recordings of the aria by Cecilia Bartoli – understandably one of D’Angelo’s vocal idols. But, D’Angelo notes, the popularity of that aria derives principally from its remarkably impressive and tricky fioritura, rather than any clear *prima facie* psychological insight.

“It becomes a piece that has no context,” D’Angelo says of the effect of the aria’s being so often excerpted as a standalone, “highlight” piece.

“So developing context for me was a really big step.” Hence, when first deciding to begin digging into and developing a relationship with Rosina in her student days, D’Angelo instead homed in first on the more situationally complex “singing lesson” scene.

“I thought it would be a better way just to get right into the plot.”

The results? “I knew that she was funny,” D’Angelo recounts of her exploration. “I knew that she was very intelligent and able to put on a show. And I knew she was a singer.” And only after having probed these general discoveries was D’Angelo able to track back and gain deeper access



MEZZO-SOPRANO EMILY D'ANGELO PERFORMS IN THE CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY'S AN EVENING WITH THE ENSEMBLE STUDIO ON FEBRUARY 23, 2017, WITH THE COC ORCHESTRA CONDUCTED BY COC MUSIC DIRECTOR JOHANNES DEBUS.

PHOTO: BRONWEN SHARP



MEZZO-SOPRANO AND ENSEMBLE STUDIO GRADUATE EMILY D'ANGELO, CENTRE STAGE 2018.

PHOTO: MICHAEL COOPER

to the mind behind “Una voce poco fa.”

“What is she *really* saying?” D’Angelo ponders. “‘I just heard a voice.’ Is she in love? It sounds sort of loving and sensual, but then you can tell that she’s cooking up a plan – a scheme to get out of there. I filled in the blanks, learning the role, delving deeply into it, seeing how this plan develops, and what is so terrible about her scenario in the first place.”

D’Angelo’s long cohabitation with Rosina and her plight paid off in her first fully-staged assay of the role in 2018, in the Glimmerglass Festival’s buoyant, *commedia dell’arte*-inspired

production of *Barber*, directed by the festival’s artistic and managing director, Francesca Zambello.

“I adore Francesca,” says D’Angelo. “She is just one of the most extraordinary people I know. I was so happy to work with her, and it was a really clever production that we created.” Reviewed here, D’Angelo’s performance in that production was dubbed the work of “a saucy soubrette of lusciously creamy voice and unassailable comedic chops.”

But the rich comedic payoff, as becomes evident in speaking with D’Angelo, is in reality the frothy and delightful byproduct of that serious and concentrated application to the harsher realities of the character’s situation. “What’s been interesting in working on this piece,” D’Angelo says, “is finding how I can justify being comedic when there’s something so serious going on. I think that to be truthful to all moments and to all aspects of the story can make for a lot of fun as well.”

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Along with a devotion to dramatic truth and an obvious delight in the process of character-building, D’Angelo is an eloquent oracle on technical vocal issues. Asked, for instance, to explain in craftsman’s prose the flamboyant poetics of female fioritura, D’Angelo offers a mini-masterclass.

“It’s complicated,” D’Angelo begins diplomatically, broaching the mystery for a layman’s benefit. “A lot of it is technique, but on top of it is a very, very deep understanding of the music and what you want to do. For me, with coloratura, I barely sing it until I know the notes *exactly*. I learn it in my head so that my brain knows exactly what it wants to do, and then I teach my voice how to do it. If I’m wandering around not knowing the notes, that’s just building bad habits. I was a cellist as well, and just practising those fast passages gave me some experience in working that into your muscle memory. It’s certainly a process. You really have to work them – they’ll drive you crazy, but you just have to.”

To get down to specific cases, does D'Angelo have any particular insight as to the astonishing pyrotechnic effects thrown off by her beloved Cecilia Bartoli?

"Well, she's a genius," D'Angelo first stipulates. "A technique machine, and an amazing musician. I could tell you her cords are coming together so quickly and so efficiently that she's worked out how to have complete control over her voice. She's completely 'on her air,' and the cords, they're closing. She's not blowing air through them. How you make that happen is complicated, and how she does it ... she's a freak of nature!"

"Everything about singing is just having a toolbox." D'Angelo continues. "How to make it happen – how to make it in the practice room versus how to make it happen on a stage, where you might be nervous or out of breath or wearing a ridiculous costume that you can't

Rosenkavalier]. And I really enjoy contemporary music and working with composers, premiering things, having audiences hear things for the first time."

Apropos of which, D'Angelo voices what in the general ambit of operatic cognoscenti is probably a contrarian (but admirably the-



(L-R) KIRSTEN MACKINNON AS FIORDILIGI AND EMILY D'ANGELO AS DORABELLA IN THE CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY'S PRODUCTION OF *COŚI FAN TUTTE*, 2019. PHOTO: MICHAEL COOPER



EMILY D'ANGELO AS DORABELLA AND JOHANNES KAMMLER AS GUGLIELMO IN THE CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY'S PRODUCTION OF *COŚI FAN TUTTE*, 2019. PHOTO: MICHAEL COOPER

even stand up in. It's just all about having skills and tools, mentally and technically."

NEXT UP?

Asked what she foresees around the next bend of her yet young and profligately promising career – or even farther down the road, for that matter – D'Angelo is energized by a kind of refreshingly upbeat, Keatsian negative capability.

"It's a combination of knowing there are definitely things that I *want* to do – that I have to *make happen* – and leaving room for surprises, as well," she says. "There are certain roles I would love to sing, such as Sesto from *La Clemenza di Tito* [D'Angelo has already sung Annio in the same opera, at the Met], and Octavian [from Strauss' *Der*

atrical) maxim: "I love *not* reading the program notes beforehand," D'Angelo says. "Just like a movie – I wouldn't want to know the end of the movie beforehand!"

Which brings things back to the COC production. "There are probably plenty of people who will be hearing *The Barber of Seville* for the first time," she speculates. "You approach it in the same manner. You're telling a story, and it could be the first time hearing it for everyone in the room. You want to make the best impression you can. I'm really looking forward to having another crack at doing this role in its entirety. I'm really excited." **LSM**

For information about the COC production of *The Barber of Seville*, go to www.coc.ca. More information about Emily D'Angelo can be found at www.emilydangelo.com.



PHOTO: COURTESY

RIHAB CHAIEB

A DOWN-TO-EARTH MEZZO

by ADRIAN RODRIGUEZ

Performances by the Tunisian-Canadian Rihab Chaieb are characterized by their dramatic and visceral intensity. She is a graduate of McGill University, the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio and the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. She is also winner of the 2016 Gerda Lissner Foundation vocal competition and winner of the third prize at the 2018 Operalia Competition.

In October, the fiery mezzo-soprano was in rehearsals for her debut on Nov. 10 in the title role of *Carmen* at the Cologne Opera in Germany. It is surprising that she hasn't performed this role before, as she has all the required attributes: A lyrical and dark mezzo-soprano voice with ease in the chest register and access to high notes, a strong physical presence and a bewitching appearance.

"Carmen is a dream role for a mezzo-soprano," Chaieb says, "so for me it was very important to choose carefully when and where I would do it. Cologne is perfect because it's an important house in Germany and in the world, but still a smaller house in terms of seat numbers. It's manageable and something I'm comfortable with for my first Carmen. I also like the fact that it's a totally new production, which allows me to work with the director closely and take more time."

Chaieb said that singing the role is not too difficult, but that she has to pace herself because her character is always on stage — particularly in this production. What is her personal interpretation of Carmen? "I'm not a stage director," she asserted. "But we are all still in the mentality that Carmen is this *femme fatale*, always flirting and over the top. I see Carmen instead as a regular woman of 2019 who is stuck in the 1800's. She is living her life and her sexuality on her own terms,

and that kind of freedom for a woman was outrageous at the time the opera was composed, and sadly it still is for some people.

"Carmen is a contemporary Instagram and Tinder girl. She could even be someone like me. Like Gypsies, I have no home, I go where work is, that's what Gypsies did, I'm not that different. I think it would be interesting to portray Carmen as someone who is more relatable." She added that Carmen is the perfect example of what some women still go through nowadays: dealing with jealous boyfriends and trying to be independent and free, even when this is not well regarded by everybody.

SUCCESS AT OPERALIA

Chaieb has fared well in competitions. In 2018 she won third prize at Operalia. However, just months before she walked away almost empty-handed from her home-town competition Concours musical international de Montréal. What changed? After all, the competitions took place just months apart. She explained that the main difference was the choice of repertoire. "In Operalia, I sang more of the what I call big-lady repertoire: Carmen, Dalila, Octavian. In Montreal I sang Carmen but I also experimented with some lighter repertoire and maybe too high of a tessitura in pieces like the composer's aria from *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Maybe I shouldn't have sung that, but I also wanted to make a statement. Many people disagreed, but I see competitions as an opportunity to try new repertoire. Sometimes it pays off but sometimes it doesn't. However, that was definitely the last time I sing the composer's aria". She added that in Montreal, the judges were not trying to 'cast' anybody. They were much more art-song inclined, which might not have favoured her.

"After the CMIM I took two months off," she said. "I just needed to relieve the pressure,

but I came back with a fresher idea of my technique and the kind of singer I wanted to be."

TALENT SHOWS AND AGEISM

"There is this trend in mass media nowadays to discover the new star: 'She is only thirteen and she can sing this.' I ask myself, can we just give it a break and hire an exceptional inspiring artist? I wish they would have a less sensationalistic approach and present people in a more humane way. I think this kind of mentality puts a lot of stress on young people. I remember being 23 and thinking: 'Oh my god I don't have a contract at the Met. Oh my god, I haven't won any competitions!'" Instead, she believes she should have been focusing on learning proper technique and taking the time to do so.

As she explained, there are usually two narratives for the public: either the young prodigy or the underdog who finds glory. "People love the underdog," she says. "It's like a movie. And you know what people don't like? Normal human beings. That's not cool."

Although the opera business has been influenced indirectly by these phenomena, many contemporary opera stars did *not* find success at a young age. "Really good opera singers like tenor Piotr Beczala had to wait and pay their dues. The same for Sondra Radvanovsky and Christine Goerke."

Chaieb will perform often in Canada next year. She will be in Montreal on Jan. 14 to perform with the OSM; Vancouver Feb. 7 and 8 with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra; Quebec City on April 16 with the Orchestre symphonique de Québec; and back in Montreal on April 12 for a recital at the Société d'art vocale. **LSM**

www.rihabchaieb.com



PHOTOS : TIM DUNK

WALLIS GIUNTA

SINGING OUTSIDE THE BOX

by ADRIAN RODRIGUEZ

PHOTOS : KIRSTEN NIJHOF

Wallis Giunta is the real deal. The Irish-Canadian mezzo-soprano combines a flexible and precise coloratura with a captivating stage presence. Hers is a transcendental talent. An offbeat artist, she has been able to stay true to her idiosyncrasies by using them to grow and explore new frontiers. She is also something of an archetype for a new and difficult-to-categorize opera singer who has eclectic tastes and constantly seeks new ways to communicate with her audience.

In October, the energetic redhead was making her debut with the Seattle Opera in the title role of Rossini's *La Cenerentola*. She returns to Canada on Nov. 24 for a recital for the Mooredale series with pianist Steven Philcox at the University of Toronto.

BEGINNINGS

Giunta grew up in Ottawa, where her house overflowed with an eclectic record collection ranging from Michael Jackson to Mahler. Her father, Mike Giunta, is a well-known radio announcer, producer and voice actor who was a founding program director at Galaxie (now Stingray), a multi-platform audio service that broadcasts continuous music.

From a very young age she sang and improvised harmonies to different folk songs with her sister, who accompanied her on guitar. She was a member of the Ottawa Central Children's Choir for six years and travelled with them to the United States, Italy, the U.K., Japan and across Canada.

At age 15, Giunta landed a spot in the chorus of the now defunct Opera Lyra Ottawa. She sang in productions of *Madama Butterfly* and *La Bohème*, and "just fell in love with it." She decided then and there to become an opera singer. She started her operatic path singing soprano at the University of Ottawa during her freshman and sophomore years, but her teacher Jean MacPhail at the Royal Conservatory's Glenn Gould School in Toronto was able to guide her vocally and help her develop as a mezzo-soprano instead.

At present Giunta is in the midst of becoming an established name in opera circles. She is known for her ability to adapt her silvery voice to contrasting vocal styles and is thoroughly at ease in concerts, recitals or full opera productions.

TEDX TALK

Last year Wally (as she is known to her friends and on Facebook) gave a TEDx Talk called "Singing out of the Box." The idea was to show all the different facets of her voice. She sang "Una voce poco fa" from Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, "I Can Cook Too" from the musical *On the Town* by Leonard Bernstein and an *a cappella* Irish folk song, "She Moved Through the Fair."

What was her motivation for this presentation? Opera can be a very rigid business ruled by vocal categorizations. Therefore, it can be difficult for multifaceted singers to be taken seriously.

"I have never had trouble personally finding work as a singer, but I think some people in the industry prefer that a singer specializes in one specific style," Giunta says.

For nonconformists it can be suffocating and detrimental to try to fit into a mould. The key to her success has been to embrace and explore different facets of her voice and artistry.

"I have had people contacting me for new exciting projects, offering me to sing in them because they've heard I was kind of weird. For example, the organizers of the BBC Proms in London reached out to me last year because they were celebrating Bernstein's 100th anniversary. They were looking for classical singers who were versatile and could do a recital consisting of standard classical repertoire, demanding and experimental contemporary music, and also musical theatre.

"Keeping on a very narrow path and never expanding horizons: Nah, I don't think that can help a singer, it would usually hold them back instead."

ART SONG, FOLK AND RECITALS

In recitals La Wally likes to include contemporary music, particularly folk/Canadian music from artists such as Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell and James Avery. The way Lightfoot uses his instruments and the way he composes for his guitar share characteristics with a classical Spanish song or an Irish or Celtic folk song. "These composers have a seriousness about their works that lend them to mixing well with other art songs".

"The Mooredale recital will include two Joni Mitchell numbers. "She's just a fantastic singer and also uses her instrument in a very healthy way, so when I'm singing her music I don't really have to change much. I don't put the full operatic sound into it, but I sing it in a healthy classical way."

VOICE TECHNIQUE

"I don't really have one specific regimen or technique," Giunta says. "I see this more as a toolbox full of ideas that I've collected from all the teachers and coaches that I've had throughout my life."

Giunta defines herself as somewhat in the middle between a technical and an intuitive singer. "I generally tend to be intuitive until something doesn't work," she says with a laugh. "At that point I go into my toolbox and try the different strategies that I remember working before." The most important thing for her is to be confident and to not think too technically, because it liberates her and makes her present emotionally and dramatically. "That's when you get real exciting performances!

"What was most difficult in my earlier years, mostly through my 20s, was breath support. I have a really high energy level, always buzzing around, and I'm naturally quite slender with a narrow ribcage. I've often felt that I couldn't get quite grounded to connect to my body and find enough space in my body to breathe as much as I needed to."

Moving to Leipzig and adopting a slower pace has helped Giunta ground herself. "I was alone and quiet and I had to be with myself," she says. "I had to chill out and connect to myself." She discovered a breathing technique in yoga that proved helpful. "It's the idea that creating space for breath is not an action, it doesn't involve any strength or effort, the lungs are like a vacuum. When you breathe out and completely exhale all of the air, the lungs almost automatically look to refill, that's part of being alive. So I started to change my mentality and instead of thinking about taking a forceful big breath, I started to make sure that I completely used all of my air in the previous phrase so that it feels like my lungs fill up on their own. I realized that when I was trying too hard to make the breath, I wasn't getting nearly as much air."

She stresses that it's important to strategize the breathing in every piece to have the adequate amount of air for each phrase, taking shorter inhales for a short phrase, so that she doesn't end up stacking air throughout the aria and creating unnecessary tension.

#METOO

"I've had several sexual harassment experiences," Giunta says. "Typically, a man in a position of power tries to take advantage of what they perceive as vulnerable young woman." Sexual harassment in opera, she says, is both common and difficult. "There is a lot of expression, you have to play your character and do things on stage with a colleague that you would never do in an office setting. People get confused and the lines of personal and professional life get bit blurred.

"I've had many propositions, but I always stand up for myself and say no!" Refusing advances has many times had negative consequences, because the rest of the working experience becomes unpleasant. "They will take it out on you and treat you differently," she says of the aggressors.

Nevertheless, Giunta has observed much improvement in the way companies deal with harassment. "A few times the companies that I worked for stood up for me and made sure that there were no repercussions. An example I have seen with several companies is that they start right from the beginning of each contract



PHOTO : KIRSTEN NIJHOF



PHOTO : KIRSTEN NIJHOF

and have someone from the administration show up and set some rules: 'Good morning. I hope you all have a great time. We have a strict no-harassment policy. Everyone here is treated equally. If you experience anything, this is the person to talk to, here is also a number you could call.' They give us an actual plan. It's transparent."

Giunta added that an environment conducive to harassment is one where people around the persons of power allow it to go on by turning a blind eye and finding justifications as to why it is not

their responsibility to do anything. That's why, in her opinion, the solution lies in everybody, not just women, speaking up when harassment occurs. "I know it's hard, and there is always a risk, especially if you're a young artist, of getting blacklisted or labelled as difficult. But the temperature is changing, especially here in North America, and the only way to continue that change is to keep talking about it and keep telling people: 'No, this is not OK.'" **LSM**

www.wallisgiunta.com

JESSYE NORMAN

MEMORIES OF A UNIQUE RECORDING ARTIST

by MARTHA DE FRANCISCO

JESSYE NORMAN IN THE TITLE ROLE OF STRAUSS' *ARIADNE AUF NAXOS* IN NEW YORK PHOTO: ERIKA DAVIDSON METROPOLITAN OPERA

My first encounter with Jessye Norman was at the Musikverein Hall in Vienna in 1983, as we prepared to record Mahler's Symphony No. 2 "Resurrection" with Lorin Maazel and the Vienna Philharmonic with the Vienna State Opera Chorus for CBS Masterworks. From the onset of "O Röschen rot" in "Urlicht" the musical impact of that magical voice and the depth of her performance made a lasting impression on me as a young musician and recording professional. It marked the beginning of my lifelong appreciation of Jessye Norman's amazing artistry and it established the basis for a fruitful collaboration on her unforgettable recordings.

Her rendition of *La Marseillaise* in the Berlioz setting with L'Orchestre de Paris and the Chœur de l'Orchestre de Paris under Semyon Bychkov for the 200th anniversary of the Storming of the Bastille in 1989 marked a milestone in my early career as a Philips producer. I produced the recording at Salle Pleyel in Paris. Images of Jessye wrapped in the *tricolore* during the bicentenary celebrations, singing the most palpable embodiment of French music in the spirit of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, are etched in my memory.

The recording of Richard Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*, in a lineup of the greatest vocal stars, including Edita Gruberová, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Julia Varady, with Kurt

Masur and the Gewandhaus Orchestra, offered me the opportunity to admire Jessye's immense musicality and the power of her voice from the closeup perspective of a record producer. We recorded the opera for Philips at the Neues Gewandhaus in Leipzig in 1988. Jessye's *Ariadne* was magnificent, majestic and profoundly human. During a longer break between our recording sessions, I was an accomplice as Jessye escaped to visit Johann Sebastian Bach's St. Thomas Church, where we listened to a concert of cantatas as sung by the Thomaner boys' choir. Sitting with Jessye Norman right next to Johann Sebastian Bach's grave, feeling her emotion and mine as we listened to this music together while being aware of the composer's physical presence in front of us, was a unique experience that I keep deeply in my heart.

Of personal and spiritual importance in Jessye's recording career are two productions I was entrusted with as recording producer for Philips. One was *In the Spirit*, a Christmas concert that we recorded in various churches around New York in 1996 for which Jessye put together a musical program and invited community choirs to accompany her on a spiritual adventure through music.

December 1990 saw the release of the recording and filming of *Jessye Norman at Notre Dame*, a major musical event that took

place during a freezing Parisian winter. The Cathedral was at capacity and the Christmas concert was conveyed to a crowd gathered on the square of Notre Dame who followed the concert live over a large screen and huge loudspeakers. Few of those who later listened to the CD or saw the film on television around the world were aware of the complexities that followed, as changes had to be introduced to the recording schedule. Jessye was at the centre of making it all work. I remember her involvement in a phone conference with Jacques Lang, minister of culture, capably leading the negotiations in impeccable French. This led us to getting the Cathedral to remain closed for an extra morning of recordings the day after the concert. I admired not only Jessye's musical prowess, but also her ability to make impossible things happen.

She demanded much of herself and it was only fair that she would demand equal professionalism from those around her. It was a wonderful privilege to see Jessye in collaboration with her musical partners, celebrated conductors and pianists, her fellow singers, opera companies, orchestras, symphonic or lay people's choirs, children's choirs, record label representatives and recording teams. She enjoyed the greatest degree of esteem and veneration.

A particular highlight was for me to witness the close artistic partnership between two mu-

sical titans, Jessye Norman and James Levine, which I experienced firsthand in our recording of their Salzburg recital in 1991, as well as while recording Schoenberg's *Erwartung* with the New York Philharmonic in 1993. These are unforgettable experiences.

I feel fortunate to have witnessed Jessye's human depth as we were struck by the passing of a common friend. I greatly admired Jessye Norman the faithful friend, a world star who would travel to Amsterdam to spend time with our dying friend, his family and friends, grieving together, offering all of us her warmth and consolation.

Among the happier memories in the course of the years are evenings at her home optimizing the mixes of our latest recording, which ended in the kitchen, cooking a simple pasta dish together and telling witty stories, before returning to our listening.

My final encounter with Jessye was during her last visit to Bogotá in 2010 where we reminisced on our common memories around her Philips recordings, music and friendship. Her final recital, which I witnessed accompanied by my family in Colombia, is still resonating in my inner ear.



PARIS, JULY 14, 1989- PREPARING TO SING LA MARSEILLAISE FOR THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Farewell, dear friend. I find solace in recognizing your spirit immersed in profound discourse with the composers in the recordings you left us, your gift to the world. **LSM**

Martha de Francisco, associate professor of sound recording at McGill University, was one of Jessye Norman's recording producers for the Philips label.



PHOTO: ROLEX / TOMAS BERTELSEN

JESSYE NORMAN

GRACE BEFITTING ROYALTY

by SUSAN PLATTS

Jessye Norman: where can one possibly begin? Be it the soprano, mezzo or alto repertoire, the music of Strauss, Wagner, Berg, Berlioz or Cage, the list goes on and on. Not to mention the spirituals. She always had a commitment to the music and texts that was incomparable, embodying a palette of emotions that reached deep into the soul of the listener.

My heart and soul are filled with an abundance of memories. It is deeply moving to have a platform to share them, as a tribute to this most amazing human being, who was a singer, performer and interpreter like no other.

My relationship with Jessye began in 2004 as part of the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. I was one of four finalists for the program who were chosen by a panel of musicians to meet and perform for Jessye, leaving her with the final decision as to whom she would mentor.

It was a cold February day. I remember waiting at the front of a church in the Upper East Side of New York City. Her arrival was, like every other time I met her, filled with a grace befitting royalty, a broad smile, warmth and un-

deniable connection to "you." She walked up the aisle of the church, extended her hand to mine and said in her elegant voice, "Susan, how wonderful to meet you." A grand, wooden chair had been placed halfway down the aisle. She seated herself and my "audition" began.

The repertoire was my choice. Instead of a mixed bag of tricks, I performed a song cycle: Gustav Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*. She smiled as I sang and I could sense that she was silently singing along, feeling every breath and phrase, and every emotion of the text. After I finished, there was a beautiful silence. I looked at Jessye and, smiling radiantly, she said, "Thank you for sharing that exquisite music so profoundly." Whether she chose me or not, in that moment, I was over the moon!

Weeks passed before I received the news that I was to be her protégée for 2004-2005. That is a phone call I will never forget. My musical life that day was changed forever.

Our collaboration was "officially" for one year, but we shared 15 beautiful years of music and friendship. When life and schedules permitted, we would meet. We attended concerts, worked, talked or sometimes simply enjoyed a cup of tea together. Whether in Europe or North America, we grew our relationship and

she made me feel like family. She always cared about me and took the time to ask about those close to my heart.

"What I am working on with Susan is to let that incredible voice, that is inside of her, live free."

Our first work session was at her home in upstate New York. The sessions together would typically last three or four hours. Over the years we covered a lot of repertoire including works of Mahler, Strauss, Brahms and Ravel, to name but a few. She guided me in such a way that my voice was able to really open up, become one voice and cut through an orchestra's sound without ever feeling I needed to push.

During our sessions she would usually be sitting 10 to 15 feet from me. As I sang, her arms would often be animated, indicting a spinning and forward motion, as if pulling the sound out of me. To this day, I feel that image burned in my mind and voice. It propels my sound forward and is a profound inspiration when I practice, perform or teach. The interpretive and diction side of our work was incredibly moving. We would often sit and talk for hours about the poetry, the emotions involved and the intricacies of the language, al-

ways finding a deeper meaning in whatever music we were discussing.

As well as the technical and interpretive aspects that we covered in our time together, Jessye also offered me, on countless occasions, advice and comfort about the ups and downs of this career.

Not long after we began to work together, I was having a tough time with a conductor. I was young and far from home. It was an emotional time. No matter how hard I tried I simply could not please the conductor. I reached out to Jessye via email and asked if we could talk. Almost immediately my phone rang. We chatted for over an hour, discussing the situation. At one point she said, "This is simply unacceptable, dear Susan. Would you like me to call this person and give them a piece of my mind?" A vision flashed before my eyes: Jessye Norman reprimanding the conductor. I smiled and my heart felt full and strong again. Just the thought of her offer had given me a renewed energy.

Then there was the time in 2012 that I had a BBC Proms performance at Royal Albert Hall. It was John Adams's *Nixon in China* and I was the Third Secretary. No part is insignificant, but this was the smallest role. I will never forget that evening. After the concert, Jessye and her friend Jane came backstage looking for me, with a bottle of Veuve Clicquot.

The three Secretaries shared a dressing room at the far end of the hall. To reach me, Jessye and Jane had to pass by the other



JESSYE NORMAN AND SUSAN PLATTS- "WE BOTH GO INTO THE STUDIO AND ENJOY MUSIC," PLATTS LATER SAID OF THE MANY HOURS THEY SPENT WORKING TOGETHER. NEW YORK, 2005

PHOTO : ROLEX / TOMAS BERTELSEN

dressing rooms. There were countless people milling about, as is usual, with a post-concert buzz. Then, in walks, or perhaps I should say *arrives*, Jessye Norman, with that regal manner I mentioned earlier. There was a definite feeling in the air of, "Oh, Ms. Norman, what are you doing here? Ms. Norman, how wonderful to have you here. May I have a photograph with you?"

As an aside, Jessye was always perplexed when people asked why she was attending a concert. She said to me once, "I am a musician and I love to attend concerts when I can. Why

would people question why a musician would attend a concert?"

Back to that hallway in Royal Albert Hall. There she was, creating a stir. I could hear her calling, "Where's Susan...where's Susan...?" I had THE biggest grin on my face as she approached with the bubbly! She handed me the champagne, embraced me and said, "Simply marvelous, my dear Susan. What an exceptional evening." Her compliments were for the performance as a whole, but I knew she had come to see, hear and support me.

One of my last and strongest memories of Jessye was an evening in December 2018. I was with her at National Sawdust, a performance space in Brooklyn, to sing at an event in her honour. There were a handful of performers. My contribution was Richard Strauss' "Zueignung". Jessye sat but 10 feet from me and her smile when I sang was one of love, support, pride and joy. I knew that she was with me every step of the way.

In "Zueignung", each verse ends with the words, "Habe Dank" ("have thanks"). I am eternally thankful for the countless ways Jessye Norman has blessed my life.

During that evening in Brooklyn, we heard a recording of Jessye singing "There Is a Balm in Gilead." Her undeniable presence filled the room. I cried then and I cry now. Jessye's voice will always be a balm for the world. She has departed this earth too soon but will grace it endlessly. **LSM**

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PAULINE VAILLANCOURT

ALTERNATIVE OPERATIC VISIONS

by RÉJEAN BEAUCAGE / APRIL 2007



It has been a while since we last heard soprano Pauline Vaillancourt in Montreal. In fact, it was back in 2000 when she shared the stage with actor Jean Maheux in *L'Enfant des glaces*, an “electro-opera” that she designed and staged (music by Zack Settel, libretto by Quevedo

and de Nerval). It was the ninth production of Chants Libres, the lyric creation company of which the singer is artistic director. To get a chance to hear Vaillancourt sing, you would have to go to Europe since it is there that she has been working with the Italian composer Maurizio Squillante these past few years. She played the main role in his experimental opera, *The Wings of Daedalus*, in 2003. In 2005, she also participated (along with Joelle Leandre on bass, Carol Robinson on clarinet, Marianne Schroeder on piano and Frances-Marie Uitti on cello) in a series of concerts honouring Giacinto Scelsi (1905-1988).

This July, Vaillancourt returns to Italy to work on Maurizio Squillante's new opera. “I love to participate in experimental creations that force me to push my limits,” she remarks, “but I have already done this a lot and I wonder if my body will be able to cope with the kind of staging that I prefer. There's no doubt that I'll manage to do it by concentrating to the maximum but I don't think I have much to prove any longer as a performer. On the other hand, as far as helping other performers evolve for my own creations is concerned, I still have many things to discover.”

Indeed, new forms of opera can often prove to be very demanding for performers. Vaillancourt's productions aim to make opera performances dazzling and to exploit the singers' capacity in a way that one would not think of doing in classical opera. She explains: “The singer starts with the body and it would be foolish not to make use of the different possibilities that this tool offers. When the body is used adequately, one can accomplish extraordinary things. This is what my experience as a performer has taught me and this is what I seek to portray in the aesthetic quality that I characterize.”

As such, the audience is not just watching a show but, as increasingly happens, it is in the show. This was already the case in the previous 2005 Chants Libres production, *The Archangel*, music by Louis Dufort, libretto by Alexis Nouss, which was designed and staged by Vaillancourt. The action was set on a raised platform surrounding the spectators who had

to turn from side to side to follow the action. In the case of the 12th Chants Libres production, of the augmented opera *Alternate Visions*, the action is set at a bar where the public and the characters can mingle. “I find it very interesting that the audience is with us,” says Vaillancourt, “because they are involved inside the story as opposed to watching the show with detachment. This is another challenge for the artists and the set design. It is not made of paper-maché, it is actually a high-tech bar.”

Technological developments are frequently at the core of Chants Libres productions but the artistic director does not make them a *sine qua non*. The company's next production will be a fairy opera by Gilles Tremblay, “who writes his music on paper,” and will be played live by a group of 26 musicians and 17 singers. “Nevertheless,” notes Vaillancourt, “we are in 2007 now and the opera is still a complete art form so it would be very foolish to do without the existing instruments that are at our disposal.”

For the production of *Alternate Visions*, Chants Libres has joined forces with Laboratoire DEII (Laboratoire de développement d'environnements immersifs et interactifs) and with Hexagram (Institute for Research/Creation in the Media Arts and Technologies, a result of a partnership between Montreal's two main universities for media-related arts, Concordia and UQAM, with the aim of integrating their expertise into this field. Needless to say, the technology applied to this production will showcase the finer points of what is currently being done. There is talk of miniature cameras being attached to some of the characters with direct re-transmission of virtual characters and of “interactive costumes.”

The genesis of this new production goes back to 1999, at a time when Chants Libres was hosting the eighth edition of the international conference of lyric creation companies, NewOp. John Oliver, the composer, played excerpts from his current work and Vaillancourt was especially captivated by Genni Gunn's libretto. Of course, the work evolved considerably later through various collaborations which were started and then abandoned (notably, with European groups). Jean Décarie from UQAM's School of Media, who is also a researcher at Hexagram, took an interest in the project and different partnerships developed. The OBORO (Montreal) and the Western Front (Vancouver) art centres are among the partners for another part of the production. “The opera tells the story of characters that meet virtually through Internet and arrange to meet at a bar,” Vaillancourt explains. “The last performance will be telecast directly through the Internet to the Western Front, where three musicians will improvise

along with our performance.” These musicians will join the Bradyworks ensemble of six musicians who will be in Montreal to interpret John Oliver's music.

Chants Libres has been working on the renewal of opera since 1991 (its first production: *Ne blâmez jamais les bédouïns*, chamber opera for solo voice, music by Alain Thibault, libretto by René-Daniel Dubois). Among the company's great successes are *Les Chants du Capricorne* (1995, Giacinto Scelsi), *Le Vampire et la Nymphomane* (1996, Serge Provost/Claude Gauveau), *Yo soy la desintegración* (2000, Jean Piché/Yan Muckle/Pauline Vaillancourt), the new children's opera *Pacamambo* (2002, Zack Settel/Wajdi Mouawad) and *L'Archange* (2005). Chants Libres is not looking to be a gateway for the public to get to “the other opera.” Vaillancourt explains: “I think that our work makes the public more demanding as far as opera is concerned and this is likely to force the big companies to demonstrate a little more creativity in their programming. The companies in Amsterdam and in Brussels have understood that it is in their interest to present contemporary work, but it is especially crucial during festivals when there is greater movement. For the moment, we are taking the risk of creating but we are also making a repertoire and we can only hope that the big companies might be interested in taking up some of these works.”

To pursue her incessant work in creating new forms of opera, Vaillancourt must surround herself with performers endowed with certain vocal abilities that are not necessarily taught in the classic voice studios. In fact, most singers' training remains very traditional, which is why, during these past several years, Vaillancourt felt compelled to teach the different techniques often used in new forms of opera in her professional training workshops for singers. Above all, the magic ingredient in shaping a voice for new singing techniques is the singer's interest in this type of repertoire. For Vaillancourt, “love, curiosity and perseverance are needed in becoming more eager to work. Finally, since one has to learn new scores which are often difficult, one should be able to go onstage without always looking at the conductor while singing more technically difficult pieces...Therefore, people who have plenty of time are needed. To meet this need for complementary training, we offer workshops where the focus is on making the body work, and on movement, on exploring the extended voice and on discovering new technologies.” **LSM**

TRANSLATION BY PARASHMANI CHANDRA

Pauline Vaillancourt received the 2019 Albert-Tessier Prize of the Prix du Québec

www.chantslibres.org

FRÉDÉRIC ANTOUN

EXPANDING VOCAL HORIZONS

by DON ADRIANO



PHOTO : MARC BOURGEOIS

Frédéric Antoun is one of the most internationally recognized Canadian tenors today. He is known for his versatility and fluidity in the high range and being able to perform anything from baroque to modern opera at a high standard. He is a regular at the prestigious Opéra de Paris and Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, performing roles such as Fenton (*Falstaff*) and Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*). He made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera in 2017, interpreting the role of Raúl Yebenes in the opera *The Exterminating Angel* by Thomas Adès. A notable career highlight was his debut at Covent Garden in the role of Tonio in *La fille du régiment* in 2014. He was replacing none other than the Peruvian superstar, Juan Diego Flórez.

We caught up with the Montreal-born tenor in the studios of the Opéra de Montréal before his role debut as Edgardo, the lead tenor in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. We began our meeting by discussing what seems to be one of his favourite topics: voice technique. He quickly jumped to the piano and gave me some very resonant examples, singing ascending fifths on the vowel "a." I immediately noticed that his voice had become richer, sounding like a full lyric tenor rather than the light tenor voice many might remember. He revealed that he feels his voice wants to expand more and more; that's why he's so excited for the opportunity to sing Edgardo for the first time.

He started to feel the need for vocal expansion about five years ago. "At the time I was in Toronto to sing Fenton at Canadian Opera Company and caught a viral laryngitis that made me lose my voice completely. The conditions were such that I had to rush my recovery. After that, I began to have a hard time singing my high notes. I couldn't understand what was happening to my voice. It was so frustrating! I then decided to take some time off, even if that meant cancelling some contracts."

Antoun began his recovery by experimenting with his voice and eventually found a new way of singing that placed less pressure on his lar-

ynx. "Before, I was obsessed with singing forward in the mask, but I figured out that we can't really put the voice anywhere, so instead of obsessing with the high voice and placement of the voice, I began to work from the bottom up. Vocalizing in the morning when the voice was more relaxed for example. I tinkered with it and for a period even made some mistakes like over-darkening the voice. However, at one point I found a good balance and that's the place where I think I am today."

At the moment he's seeking to explore that newly found full lyrical tenor voice in the *bel canto* repertoire, particularly in certain Verdi and Donizetti operas. He thinks of this new approach as a calculated risk, one that will require constant monitoring and paying close attention to orchestration, in order to avoid fighting the orchestra to make his voice heard.

He will be starting this new phase with Edgardo at Opéra de Montréal, followed by his debut as Alfredo in *La Traviata* at the Royal Opera House, and finally his first Duca di Mantova in *Rigoletto* at the Opéra de Paris. I asked him how he felt about premiering the last two roles in two of the biggest opera houses in the world. "It's funny because most tenors will premiere roles in smaller opera houses to test the waters," he answered. "In my case, it has been the opposite. I've premiered many important roles at the Royal Opera House and at the Opéra de Paris. It hasn't been a conscious choice on my part and I still don't understand why they keep taking risks with me. I want to thank them for having so much confidence."

GROWING PAINS

Although Frédéric's parents are not professional musicians, they are passionate about music. "Every day there was classical music playing through the speakers. Everybody in my family has a good singing voice and apparently my father wanted to be a singer when he was younger." Frédéric and his siblings were enrolled in piano lessons at a young age. Later he also received cello and trombone lessons.

However, by the time high school came along, classical music and music lessons were a thing of the past. Like many adolescents of his time, he enjoyed listening to rock music. Around the age of 20 he began re-connecting with classical music and heard for the first time Beethoven's Fifth and Ninth Symphonies. "I just thought it was genius, like an expression of God." Fuelled by his youthful energy and his new passion, he dreamed of becoming a composer. He amassed his courage and auditioned in both piano and voice at St. Laurent College and L'école de musique Vincent d'Indy, following the advice of some of his friends who thought he made a good imitation of an opera singer during pool parties.

Unsurprisingly, he wasn't accepted into the piano program. "I had three weeks to put a long piece together and hadn't really practiced in the last 10 years. In fact, I don't think I was even able to learn the whole piece for the audition. I was a bit unaware at that young age." In the end, his vocal talent did earn him enough attention to be admitted to the voice program at L'école Vincent d'Indy.

Fast-forward two years. After completing his CEGEP, Antoun held on to the idea of becoming a composer. He attempted to complete a double program in composition and singing at Université de Montréal. Unfortunately, some bureaucratic issues with the credits forced him to choose between the two specializations. "At that point I had already started to have a few engagements as a singer, so I decided to continue in the singing program and compose on the side, which never really happened."

After his stint at Université de Montreal, Antoun was accepted into the prestigious Curtis Institute in Philadelphia to perfect his craft. "Curtis was a godsend. There are moments in life you remember forever, and the day I read the acceptance email is one of those. It's a school that has such a personalized feel and is at the top of its game. It's all wood inside; it feels like a home and not like an institution."



PHOTO : MARC BOURGEOIS

having supervision. I had a lot of luck to have people believe in me.”

DONIZETTI VERSUS MOZART

“Mozart’s main vocal difficulty is in the ensembles, particularly the ones that come at the end of an act. The tenor has to sing high notes repeatedly in their passaggio F Sharp, G, F Sharp, G, F Sharp, G! This way of writing is more suited to instruments than the human voice. It creates a lot of tension, and if not properly learned with good technique, can be detrimental to the singer. You also have to follow a very strict metric, and you don’t have many high notes to show your voice. The highest note most of the time is A4, a minor third lower than the famous tenor high C.



PASSAGE FROM THE ROLE OF FERRANDO IN MOZART’S COSÌ FAN TUTTE, AN ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE COLORATURA ENDING WITH INTRICATE PASSAGGIO SECTION F#, G, F#, G.

“By contrast, in *bel canto* repertoire, if we take for example a role like Edgardo in *Lucia*, the singer has time to sing and do nuances. We don’t have to feel rushed and respect a static metric and we can do more rubato. I love being able to hold and sing B Flats, Bs and high Cs. *Bel canto* roles like Edgardo ask from the tenor to do exactly that. It’s part of the tradition.”

“Another example of the way Donizetti understood the tenor voice occurs in *La Fille du régiment* and the aria ‘Pour mon âme.’ I may sound like I’m bragging, but those nine consecutive high Cs are not difficult to sing! I know many of my tenor colleagues share the same opinion. The reason being they are well prepared for and the music almost helps you to be able to jump and get them.”

He added that overall, Tonio is a relatively easy and rewarding role for the tenor. “The character doesn’t have much more music to sing than two arias and he gets to steal the show with the nine high C’s, receiving the standing ovation at the curtain.”

He added that Mikael Eliassen, head of the opera department at the time, understood well that in order to be a professional singer, the most important training is to get some stage experience. “I only spent between a third and half of each year at Curtis, as I was hired by the ODM as Pang in *Turandot*, Chabrier’s *L’Étoile*, *Lakmé*, *Tito*... Curtis allowed me to dive into the professional world while still

STAYING CALM

“Being calm is the most important thing in the life of a singer,” Antoun said in an animated voice. This statement seemed contradictory coming from one with such a youthful, curious and energetic personality. When I queried him about it, he argued that it’s because he has so much energy and curiosity that he often has to tell himself to relax, stay simple and trust himself. He added that as a singer the breathing has to stay under control, even when he is feeling stage fright.

“You have to find the calmness by being in the moment,” he said. “The day of the show I also try not to talk and not to get bothered by anything. I also try not to be too strict about any particular routine. As singers we are constantly travelling and in changing conditions that we can’t control. If my routine is too strict and I can’t do it, I don’t want the situation to feel like a curse.”

SI CANTA COME SI PARLA

Frédéric has a resonant speaking voice, almost the same as when he’s singing. I asked him if he was aware of this. “People often say this and I don’t agree. Actually, talking tires my voice a lot more than singing.” He added that he feels the catchphrase used in some opera circles: *Si canta come si parla* (one should sing like one talks) has never helped him sing better. He said mockingly in Italian: *Non e vero. Per me, non e vero* (“It’s not true, for me it’s not true”).

He explained that when he talks he doesn’t pay the same attention to his breathing as when he sings. “If I sing like I talk, then the sound becomes one-dimensional and lacks harmonics.”



PHOTO : MARC BOURGEOIS

In his opinion the tenor voice is also the most difficult to master because it has the highest sub-glottic pressure, particularly in the high notes, so the smallest mistake can have catastrophic consequences.

“However, I can understand that as singers and communicators we should aim for the voice to sound natural and unforced. But let’s be clear, there is nothing natural about singing opera, particularly for the tenor voice.” He then quotes the Polish tenor Piotr Beczala: “A tenor has to be always ready to jump vocally – and act like a tiger ready to pounce on its prey!”

LSM

Lucia di Lammermoor, presented by the Opéra de Montréal, runs Nov. 9, 12, 14 and 17 in Salle Wilfrid Pelletier of Place des Arts. www.operademontreal.com

NOËL SPINELLI, PHILANTHROPIST

STILL FLYING HIGH

by WAH KEUNG CHAN / DEC. 17, 2007



It takes one hour into our meeting and some prompting before the noted patron of the arts Noël Spinelli discloses that he was a star crooner in the 1950s. Back then, Spinelli dreamed of being an opera singer. Although that dream never materialized, music has played and still plays a paramount part of Spinelli's life. Today he is known as one of the prominent philanthropists in Montreal.

Spinelli credits his father for his charitable nature. Growing up during the Depression in Lachine as the sixth of eight children, Spinelli remembers that although his family didn't have much, they had a bit more than their neighbours. Since 1922, Spinelli's father had been running a successful garage in Lachine and he often gave away his homemade wine and contributed to the church. "He believed in helping out the less fortunate families in the neighbourhood," Spinelli recalls.

When he was young, Spinelli caught the opera bug from his uncle, who always listened to the Saturday Metropolitan Opera broadcasts. Spinelli studied music, including trumpet, bass and voice at the Montreal Conservatoire. "I still have my graduation certificate signed by Wilfrid Pelletier, who founded the Conservatoire," laughed Spinelli. Studying voice, Spinelli learned all the Puccini and Verdi baritone arias. In 1949, Spinelli spent his savings on what became a monthly bus ride to New York to the Metropolitan Opera.

Meanwhile, Spinelli was making his living as a nightclub singer. At his prime, he had quite a following. A failed marriage and the desire to spend time with his kids convinced Spinelli to give up that lifestyle, even though it paid much more than working for his father. When Spinelli and his brother showed that they were capable of running the family business, Spinelli's father finally retired at age 70 in 1962. Two years later, the Spinelli garage started to sell cars made by Studebaker until the brand closed in 1966.

Undeterred, Spinelli took the next year to evaluate the market before taking on Toyota in September 1967. "Our experience running a garage taught us the importance of customer service, and Toyota believed the customer came before the shareholders." For Spinelli, employees are also important. He likes to say: "Who better to tell you which broom to buy than the janitor? And a lot of people forget their suppliers." With his customer-first outlook, Spinelli would favour opening dealerships on weekends and sees that change as inevitable.

The 40-year Toyota-Spinelli relationship has been good for both parties. Throughout, Toyota engineers have frequented Lachine for customer feedback. From a garage with eight employees, Team Spinelli has grown to eight dealerships (adding other Japanese automakers such as Nissan and Honda) and 400 employees. "You grow by being better," said Spinelli. "It just happens naturally; when the right opportunity occurs, you take it."

While running his garage/dealership, music had taken a back seat. All that changed in 1972 when Spinelli read in the daily paper that Canadian baritone Robert Savoie was lamenting the need for opera

in Montreal. Through a mutual friend, Spinelli met Savoie at a local diner and they became fast friends. The Concerts Lachine was born. The dynamic duo served for 20 years, Savoie as artistic director and Spinelli as president, bringing free concerts to Lachine residents while providing Quebec musicians with opportunities to perform.

Hearing Spinelli reminisce on their accomplishments, one can visualize the great experiences they had and the joy they gave. At their first opera gala, Spinelli got a phone call from two ladies asking how they should dress. When asked why this was so significant, Spinelli said, "It shows that people who were not 'sophisticated' were coming out, and that what inspires me." On another occasion, the only time when Spinelli had doubts about his friend's choice of repertoire, Savoie organized an all-Beethoven concert which was fraught with bad luck. Spinelli was ready to quit, but following the concert, when an elderly man thanked him for his first live experience at an orchestral concert, Spinelli found renewed energy. "Feedback like this give me wings."

Following his father's example, Spinelli officially retired from his day job at age 70 and has devoted his time to his philanthropic causes. The mayor of Lachine recommended him to the board of Place des Arts, and he has been involved on many other boards, including those of the OSM, Conseil des arts de Montréal, the National Arts Centre and the Opéra de Montréal. Spinelli laments that Montreal is falling behind Toronto as a cultural capital. "We need the new OSM concert hall and we need the Opéra de Montréal to thrive." With all his experience, Spinelli is blunt about boards: "The role of the board is fundraising." But he also advises artists to be financially responsible. Spinelli encourages others to give, even if it's just their time. "It's not so important how much you give. There are many small groups where \$500 or \$1000 makes a lot of difference."

For the last seven years, Spinelli's pet project has been the restoration of the Casavant organ at the Saints-Anges Church in Lachine where a full slate of concerts has already begun. An international organ competition is slated to open in 2008, and there are plans to webcast the concerts to seniors' homes. When the Saints-Anges parish celebrated their new organ last year, Spinelli was made an honorary archangel.

To keep his work going, Spinelli will create a foundation where 50% of the funds will go to arts and culture. "I have always had a lot of satisfaction from music. I will always find solace and fun with music. It's like water and air for me," said Spinelli. "I want to share this passion and to see how it affects people." **LSM**

Noël Spinelli's Most Treasured Musical Moments

- › Turandot with Corelli
- › Otello with Tebaldi, Del Monaco and Tito Gobbi
- › La fille du regiment with Pavarotti and Sutherland
- › Eileen Farrell in Gluck's Alceste
- › Cecilia Bartoli with MSO at Lanaudière
- › Pavarotti at Notre-Dame Basilica at Christmas
- › Tosca with Domingo and Behrens directed by Zeffirelli

One Regret

Never hearing Ezio Pinza live.
"He had a special voice with special colour."

Noël Spinelli received the 2019 Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts.

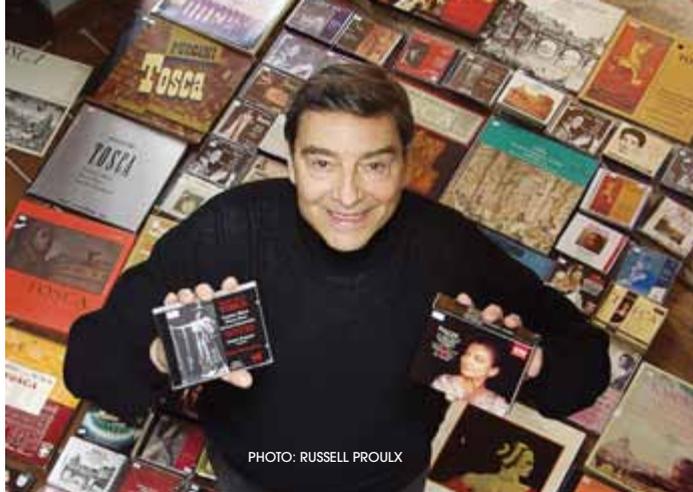


PHOTO: RUSSELL PROULX

A MANIA FOR *TOSCA*

by WAH KEUNG CHAN / MARCH 1, 2002

“It all started as a joke,” said Noël Spinelli of his collection of 124 different recordings of Puccini’s *Tosca*. “Robert Savoie told me he had sung the role of Scarpia and the Sacristan. I said I was going to learn all the roles and just for my curiosity, I wanted to see how many recordings I could find. Every time I went to the Metropolitan Opera or La Scala, I would find some more in their souvenir shop. When I got to 50, I thought that I would stop because I found them all.”

Spinelli’s collection now includes *Toscas* sung in Italian, German, French, Russian and English. Most are commercial recordings; there are about 35 live recordings and 10 to 15 videos. His method of cataloguing is by the name of the soprano who sings the title part. The list begins with one recording with Licia Albanese, seven recordings of Callas (with five different tenors) and 11 of Tebaldi (with many different tenors). “I like a lot of the live performances with all of their qualities and their faults,” Spinelli says.

WHICH ARE HIS FAVOURITES?

“I would choose the 1953 EMI recording with Callas, Di Stefano and Gobbi. This recording is generally acclaimed by the critics as the benchmark and I have to agree. Although Callas is not my favourite voice, she is my favourite *Tosca*. The colour of Callas’s voice: that is what I imagine *Tosca* looking and sounding like. Usually I prefer Tebaldi, but I don’t get as excited about her *Tosca*. Di Stefano is a wonderful Cavaradossi and Tito Gobbi is a fantastic Scarpia. De Sabata is the best conductor. He has an amazing understanding of the score. That’s what it should sound like. It’s a feeling.”

OTHERS OF INTEREST

“The oldest one I have is the 1929 VAI recording with Carmen Melis as *Tosca*, Piero Pauli as Cavaradossi and Apollo Granforte as Scarpia, and the La Scala orchestra. Because of the age, it is interesting.”

Spinelli also mentions the 1938 recording at Rome Opera House, RCA Victor, with Maria Caniglia as *Tosca*.

“I recently received the recording of Corelli singing in *Tosca* in Parma live on January 21, 1967. This is a crazy, crazy recording, Corelli singing beyond reason to a crowd that is totally insane. I don’t think there is a living conductor that would allow this kind of singing. Corelli almost sings *ad lib*.”

On video: “The DVD of the 1985 Met telecast of the Zeffirelli production with Domingo, Behrens and Cornell MacNeil, and Giuseppe Sinopoli conducting. It’s a must. The singing is first-rate.” **LSM**

Noël Spinelli is chairman emeritus of the Canadian International Organ Competition and a patron of the arts.

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GINO QUILICO

LESSONS FROM GREAT SINGERS

by WAH KEUNG CHAN

The vocal training of the Canadian baritone Gino Quilico, now 64, was unconventional by any standard. For one and a half years, starting at age 20, Gino studied almost daily with his late father Louis, Canada's greatest baritone, working only on technique and not singing any repertoire. The lesson plan followed Louis's Nine Laws immortalized in Jerome Hine's best-seller *Great Singers on Great Singing*. Today, Gino is ready to share the wisdom he gleaned from an international career singing beside Pavarotti, Domingo, Alfred Kraus and Mirella Freni, and the lessons from his father in his own *Six Rules*.

One might have thought that Gino's operatic voice was acquired genetically but the chance of a father-son opera duo is slight. In the annals of the Metropolitan Opera, they were perhaps the only such duo to have sung together in the same opera (*Manon* in 1987). Indeed, as a teenager Gino was a pop singer *enfant terrible*. Louis told Gino that the Canadian Opera Company was looking for extra choristers. Being on a big stage with costumes gave Gino the bug, leading to him to ask dad for lessons.

"In my first six months of training with my father there was no sound production, just technical aspects of opening the throat. The second six months was breathing. After that came sound: one sound, two sounds and so on. After six months of sounds, we started singing the same aria, "Avant de quitter ces lieux," over and over again. After two years of almost daily study, I was completely prepared.

The body is the singer's instrument and my whole body was tuned up."

"My father made me make ugly sounds so I could sense the voice. He was very methodical and a taskmaster. We didn't always see eye to eye, and I was impatient," said Gino who admitted to one big fight during the process. They made up and after two years, Gino was easily admitted into the University of Toronto opera program in 1978 at 23 and immediately assigned the role of Sid in the school's production of *Albert Herring* and the lead in *Don Giovanni* the following year. "My technique was so solid, I was making money on the side giving lessons to the other students," remembered Gino.

OTHER SINGERS

Louis's lessons carried Gino through his international career, and he became a keen observer, singing next to the great singers of the 1980s and 1990s. "I learnt a lot that way. How Mirella Freni used the Italian language, it's not in the score. It's all traditions passed down from the masters. I also learned how the great singers have different approaches. Being next to Alfredo Kraus hurt my ears. He had a philosophy of singing through a hole. You learned that standing right beside him, the sound is not pretty, but in the hall, as the sound comes out, it takes on another colour and gets rounded, it's much softer, yet it cuts through. You also learn from bad singers. On stage, you hear a big voice, but in the hall, it doesn't come across. Then you understand what daddy talked about singing

with a twang, even though it doesn't sound good to your own ears."

"Domingo knows how to sing, he's a smart singer and always calculating. When you watch Pavarotti, you can see it in his eyes, he is so focused in the mask and the voice is working. Carreras is about letting it out, and he was known to say that he rather would rather sing for 10 years like a lion than [longer] like a sheep. I was like Carreras at one point. Sometimes, I would give it a bit more, but that's not a smart singer.

"My father thought Jussi Bjorling had the best technique, and he learned how to breathe while watching him when they sang together. My father preached religiously about breathing. You need that to allow the cords to vibrate. It was about singing on the air and a round sound. You don't see the greats breathe; they let the air come in."

"A lot of young singers make the mistake of sucking the air in, they have too much air, and therefore they are not light. Luciano was light as a feather. The breathing is in the diaphragm. Not in the belly. You have to create the space and let the air come in. The ribs are open, with no air, and the lungs take the air and deflate as you sing. You then keep the ribs open to get the next breath. It took me six months to master this part." When it comes to "support," Gino laughs that it's like holding your urine, much like kegel exercises.

"The first three rules work together. Use the breathing to open the throat. Use the throat to get the breathing right. Use the sound to bring the breathing right." **LSM**

Gino's Six Rules

1. POSTURE

Head and neck straight. Spine straight. Loose jaw. Shoulders relaxed. Rib cage open and flexible. Knees never locked but slightly bent. Weight on the balls of the feet.

2. THROAT OPENING

Relax the jaw. Open the throat like you are going to yawn. Focus on the space in your throat but avoid creating tension. Raise and open the moveable soft palate. Vocal cords are to emit sound as the air is released.

3. BREATHING

Breath from the mid belly section (diaphragm) through the nose and mouth. Use your hands to guide the breath and the voice outwards and forward. Avoid sucking the air in. Breath into the back section of lungs. Relax into the breath and let the air flow outward unobstructed like a sigh.

4. SPACE AND RESONANCE

Feel Alert and awake. Lift the palate and feel cold air in the sinus cavities.

Hold a slight smile in the upper cheek bones. Make the sound in the space or what we refer as the mask.

5. AWARENESS AND CONNECTION

Body awareness is important, very similar to meditation. Awareness of the muscles in the abdomen. Awareness of the space around you. Your mood, feelings and sensations, are you ready? Connect with yourself and become one.

6. SOUND VISUALIZATION & VOCAL CORDS

Finding and recognizing the vocal cords. Tense cords for the right resonance. Imagine an egg shape inside your mouth. The nasal humming exercise. Start from a low note and increase by semitones while visualizing a decent.

.....
www.ginoquilico.com



GRÉGOIRE LEGENDRE LOOKS BACK

par DANIEL SAMSON-LEGAULT



PHOTO : OPÉRA DE QUÉBEC

He remembers that, in the staging of Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* by Robert Lepage, when the women emerge from a bath covered in blood, teenage girls sitting close to the stage reacted very strongly. Oh, my God! "They were like in the cinema! Young people are more open-minded than their elders when it comes to contemporary opera productions," says Grégoire Legendre, administrative and artistic director of the Opéra de Québec, who has announced his retirement. "A lot of people are very enthusiastic after a performance."

Most of the world's opera houses face hardships owing to the aging and contraction of their clientele, a trend also reflected in their financial statements. On his arrival at the Opéra de Québec, Legendre was tasked with expanding the audience. An endeavour he has achieved brilliantly. "In Quebec, music has been somewhat neglected by the education system."

For cultural institutions, one generation has been virtually lost. "Young people must be exposed at an early age. When I myself was in el-

ementary school, everyone learned music theory. Now, we must instead rely upon school 'leaders,' usually teachers, to organize special outings for their students."

Legendre's daring has surprised people. Not everyone agreed with the idea of an opera festival in Quebec City in 2011: naysayers said it would be the failure of the Opéra de Québec, the small city could not support so many productions, it was going to kill the company, etc. On the contrary, the festival has become a must-see event for many, attracting tourists who would not have come for a single production and highlighting Quebec City as an opera city. "The festival is known internationally. After the festival, media outlets started calling us and asking for interviews."

During his many years at the helm of the Opéra de Québec, Legendre has worked with a wide variety of artists. Among these are filmmakers, including François Girard and Robert Lepage. Both staging and acting are very different in cinema than in theatre. For the staging of an opera, do filmmakers take a distinctive approach?

"Yes, they pay more attention to the visuals, and transitions between scenes are easier when video projections are possible," Legendre responds. "We must not forget that, unlike theatre, operas are usually produced in very large halls, with the audience seated at some distance, and video broadcasting is becoming more and more widespread. Other than that, the difference lies in the timing: in opera, the actors must respect the general rhythm, while in the theatre, they have more freedom in their rejoinders. On the other hand, theatre directors sometimes have diffi-

culty dealing with choruses and what to do with them on the stage. François Girard is very good at that."

Legendre is preparing to hand over his role. He has often been asked to share his fondest memories of the Opéra de Québec or of the Festival d'Opéra de Québec. There are many. But he will tell me that it was the production of Thomas Adès' *The Tempest*, directed by Robert Lepage, that touched him most deeply. Might he also have regrets?

"I would have liked to present Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* and Poulenc's *Dialogues des carmélites* to Quebec City audiences. In both cases, however, it would have required an enormous amount of resources. For Strauss, we would probably have had to fill certain roles internationally, but for Poulenc, we could easily have found all our people in Quebec."

For him, one of the greatest pleasures is to encourage regional talents who then sometimes find themselves in important roles on international stages, like mezzo-soprano Julie Boulianne, tenor Frédéric Antoun, or soprano Marianne Fiset, who has just delivered a very beautiful performance as Violetta.

He has announced his departure and the arrival of his successor, though he is staying on until the end of 2020. Time enough for a production of *La Chauve-souris* by Johann Strauss in the spring and a festival the following summer. And after that? "I am 69 years old. I will first take some time to rest, then travel a bit." What about a return to singing or the cello? "Not singing. It takes a serious training and I stopped that about 15 years ago. But yes, I will undoubtedly take out my cello..."

LSM

TAPESTRY OPERA

LOOKING BACK WHILE MOVING FORWARD

by ARTHUR KAPTAINIS



ROCKING HORSE WINNER

PHOTO: TAPESTRY OPERA

Tapestry Opera is turning 40 and is celebrating in part by trying out something rare for this inventive Toronto-based company: a revival.

“Some people have chatted with me about bringing it back so soon,” Tapestry artistic director Michael Mori said of *Rocking Horse Winner*, an opera with words by Anna Chatterton and music by Gareth Williams that returns for six performances from April 23 to May 2. “But this is a special thing. It’s a strategic opportunity.”

Based on the eponymous short story by D.H. Lawrence, *Rocking Horse Winner* got

good reviews in 2016, plenty of social-media buzz and impressive formal endorsement in the form of nine nominations for Dora Awards and five victories, including wins for Outstanding Production and Outstanding Direction, the latter distinction earned by Mori himself.

“What resulted is that more people had heard about it than seen it,” Mori explained. “It’s not so much about bringing it back as a ‘greatest hit’ as knowing that not nearly as many people saw it as would have liked to see it.”

Rest assured that there are also premieres in the 2019-20 Tapestry season, even if the first presentation, *TAP:EX Augmented Opera* (Nov. 20-23), is not so much a singular piece of work as a high-tech miscellany that “delves into the world of augmenting and forcing us to question reality.” To judge by past instalments, punk rock, Persian classical music, physical theatre, turntablism and hip-hop are not necessarily excluded.

Next comes a production (Feb. 19-23) that seems quite the opposite of augmented: *Jacqueline*, an exploration of the art and life of Jacqueline du Pré set by composer Luna Pearl Woolf and librettist Royce Vavrek for precisely two performers: soprano Marnie Breckenridge and cellist Matt Haimovitz. It is more than a little interesting that Haimovitz, a McGill professor, was friendly with the British cellist and her husband Daniel Barenboim in the 1980s, when she was stricken by MS.

Songbook, the annual retrospective of Tapestry highlights, follows on March 20 and 21, with pianist Christopher Foley and mezzo-soprano Krisztina Szabó as mentors-in-chief. These performances showcase participants in Tapestry’s New Opera 101 masterclass program for young artists. “We may not be able to revive operas all the time, but there are some powerful, moving arias and scenes by great Canadian artists,” Mori says. “We need to celebrate them.”

On July 16, well after the run of *Rocking Horse Winner*, the company mounts another revival: a concert performance in Koerner Hall of *Iron Road*, the well-regarded 2001 opera by Chan Ka Nin (music) and Mark Brownell (words) that gathers a cast of 40 singers and dancers and an orchestra of 40, including players of traditional Chinese instruments.

The lineup is characteristically diversified in style and forces, and performances, as usual, happen in various locales, including some distinctly off-off-Broadway-type spaces. “We believe that changing the setting is as important to the experience of opera as finding the right home for the right piece,” Mori says.

He cites *M’dea Undone*, a 2015 update of Euripides by John Harris (music) and Marjorie Chan (words), as a particularly good match of piece and place. This run was in the Evergreen Brick Works, a semi-restored former industrial space discreetly adorned with graffiti and within earshot of the famous Don Valley Parkway. “The sounds of the city that came in through the open wall were really cool,” Mori said. “Other shows work better in a black-box setting. We like to be free to let the experience change according to the show.”

Tapestry audiences are, likewise, protean. Mori is grateful for his steady base of subscribers, without whom an experimental artistic policy would be too risky to sustain. They are important also in spreading the good word: “To have the subscribers as the evangelists is very helpful. But you can never grow if you rely only on subscribers.”

As for single-ticket buyers, they come according to the aesthetic of the show or because of the extra-operatic artistic partners that the company might be working with. “Our audience is composed of theatre people, people who go to opera, and that magical 30 percent of people who are interested in the show, intrigued by the marketing, or have heard by word of mouth that something’s good,” Mori says.

Sometimes the crowd is young, sometimes not. “We have an incredibly diverse audience. I feel it looks like Toronto.”

Despite all this diversity, certain contemporary protocols unite Tapestry productions, including freedom from cultural presuppositions that Mori detects in many standard operas of centuries past. The priority strikes him as not only valid in general terms but suited to the cultural character of Toronto.

“Politics is a big word,” he said. “But I certainly think it’s our responsibility to be in touch with the conversations that are happening in our city and in our world. We have a slogan this year: ‘Tapestry Opera is TO.’ Meaning we’re really proud of the kind of conversations and leadership that Toronto is showing the world right now.”

“We don’t have a political policy *per se* but we are not interested in continuing to repeat the old model of misogyny or the concept of ‘othering’ that’s involved in culturally-dated and exploitative works.”

“We are interested in what it means to be a citizen of the world from a Toronto point of view, and how we can make art that reflects this. If you see a special on Vienna and hear the music of Mozart, or see a special about Rome, Milan or Florence and hear the music of the time, the implication is that the music of the time is connected in some way. This is more of a creative philosophy than a political philosophy, but we intend to do the same for Toronto.”

Mori is not indifferent to the past. I spoke to him between rehearsals of the Opera McGill production of Mozart’s *La Clemenza di Tito* (Nov. 8, 9, 10), in which he is serving as stage director. “It is exceptional for Mozart because it seems to be politically motivated by a majority point of view, as opposed to the Da Ponte operas, which take a revolutionary point of view,” Mori says. “This is, kind of, propaganda paid for by Prague to crown the Holy Roman Emperor as King of Bohemia.”

“What interested me, so close the [federal] election, was looking at the piece as propaganda and opening the larger conversation about how we look at the storytelling given us by any government or political party running for office. Most of the time people are telling us to think something, which was one of the original purposes of this opera.”

Back to Tapestry. Another manifestation of the company’s new interest in the past is a project, supported by the Canada Council’s Digital Strategies Fund, to build an online digital archive of Canadian



opera, starting with the Tapestry catalogue but expanding to other companies. "All Canadian opera, ever," Mori clarifies. The Canadian Music Centre is also involved in this grand initiative.

None of this means that the company is prepared to abandon its progressive ways. Productions in the planning stage include *R.U.R.* – *A Torrent of Light*, a full-length opera by composer Nicole Lizée and librettist Nicolas Billon to be given in partnership with OCAD University; a co-commission with Opera Philadelphia; a partnership with the Luminato festival involving the creators of *Iron Road*; and a site-specific opera by composer Brian Current and librettist Liza Balkan.

It appears that despite the occasional revival, Tapestry will remain a forward-looking organization that stakes its reputation on presenting new material. "Until there are 10 other companies in Canada commissioning as many works as we are and doing it better," Mori says. "Then we might reconsider!"

LSM

www.tapestryopera.com

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OPENING NEW HORIZONS

La Scena Musicale has from its very inception had the goal of making classical music more accessible. We have done so by using the written word to educate, promote and share what we learn about the music makers who bring a so much fulfillment to so many. As times change, *La Scena Musicale* too has evolved as a print publication, an electronic publication and a source of information on the cultural scene, not only in Montreal but across Canada through our online calendar. In an age when listeners are seeking new experiences, *La Scena Musicale* has made the decision to take our evolution one step further.

Some of you may have seen references to the *La Scena Musicale Discovery Box*. This is an initiative to promote the arts and classical music and make them more available to people who wish to explore and discover the richness of Montreal's cultural scene. In it we provide experience – the experience to discover something new. With the Discovery Box we hope to provide our subscribers and others with the opportunity not only to read about music and culture in Montreal, but to experience it in a variety of ways.

Subscribers to the Discovery Box receive three boxes per year. In every box they are guaranteed to have a pair of tickets and a CD. Each Discovery Box contains goods valued at three to five times the cost of a subscription. Subscribers will receive their Discovery Box by mail at home. But we do not plan on leaving what you receive to chance. We want our subscribers to truly

enjoy discovering something new. We would like subscribers to help us identify their preferences. Sending you something you are not likely to enjoy is not in our best interests!

When you or another subscriber order the Discovery Box, there will be a questionnaire to fill out. This will assist *La Scena Musicale* in sending you something that will be fulfilling and a pleasure. Some basic questions will be posed, such as your favorite types of music. What other cultural events do you like to attend? These questions and a few more will help us provide you with a unique Discovery Box.

Some examples of what you could receive: a pair of tickets for the opera or a chamber music recital, or even tickets for other art disciplines, such as circus or dance. The accompanying CD would also be in the realm of your musical tastes.

With a starting price of \$99, a subscription can open up horizons for students on a limited budget. Is there someone you find it difficult to buy gifts for? The contents of the Discovery Box might be just right for a friend, family member or someone you would like to thank in a unique way.

The evolution of *La Scena Musicale* is ongoing. We hope that the Discovery Box will play a role in making classical music and cultural events more accessible, not only through the written word but through a live experience.

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THÉÂTRE LYRICHORÉGRA 20

BUILDING OPERATIC BRIDGES

by JUSTIN BERNARD

Since 1976 and its foundation by Alain Nonat, Théâtre Lyricorégra 20 has been helping young Canadian opera artists pursue their careers. It took time, energy and a lot of travel to build trust between different directors of opera companies and actors. In 1994, a program specifically dedicated to the professional integration of young emerging Canadian singers was set up. This is the Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques (JAL), whose goal is also to build bridges with partners from around the world. This is a great source of pride to Alain Nonat. The general and artistic director of Théâtre Lyricorégra 20 was just coming from a special event, held on Oct. 12 at the Regensburg Opera in Germany, to mark the 30th anniversary of relations between Quebec and Bavaria. “Three Quebec singers who were laureates of our program were with us: Geneviève Lévesque, Cécile Muhire and Jean-Philippe McClish, joined on stage by Bavarian singers,” Nonat said. “And our partnership with Bavaria does not stop there! This year, on the occasion of three concerts and the gala, we will be able to count on the presence of several directors Bavarian lyric theaters, coming from Regensburg, Augsburg, Würzburg and Nuremberg.”

THREE OPERA EVENINGS AND THE ANNUAL GALA

This year, the agenda of the Théâtre Lyricorégra 20 announces, once again, a full slate. The opening opera evening will be organized on Nov. 20, in the presence of the Consul General of China in Montreal. Accompanied on the piano, the selected candidates will have the chance to be heard individually in a series of operatic arias in front of more than 15 directors of opera companies invited for the occasion. Nov. 21 marks the second opera evening, this time chaired by the director of the delegation of Bavaria in Montreal. On the program: excerpts from German operas and a selection of *Lieder*. On Nov. 22, it is the turn of Italy and the Italian arias to be put in the spotlight. Chaired by the director of the Italian Cultural Institute, this third evening will give young artists one last opportunity to make their individual voices heard before approaching the 26th edition of the JAL's benefit gala at Montreal's *Rencontres lyriques internationales*. Indeed, as specified by Nonat, the program of the gala, organized on Nov. 23, will be exclusively composed of duets, trios and other ensembles. For this new edition, Nonat will be able to count on the participation of the Ensemble Sinfonia de Montréal under the direction of Louis Laviguer, and on the consul general of Mexico as dean of the consular corps and honorary president of the evening.

SELECTION PROCESS

Each spring, auditions are held in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. In the fall, successful candidates have the unique opportunity to be heard by directors of opera houses around the world. Some singers, such as mezzo-soprano Caroline Gélinas, baritone Jean-Philippe McClish and Geoffroy Salvat or tenor Marcel d'Entremont have tried their

luck more than once. It was an opportunity for them to become known professionals in the field, hoping to get an international contract.

In November, Théâtre Lyricorégra 20 will give a chance to 19 emerging Canadian opera singers. There are also 11 foreign singers from Germany, China, South Korea, France, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Slovakia and Switzerland. In total, 30 artists will compete.

A PROGRAM FOR YOUNG ARTISTS

The JAL program has several components: participation in auditions, masterclasses, advanced training courses in foreign opera institutions, direct entries in the semifinals of international competitions, engagements for concerts as well as for opera productions in Europe, Russia, Asia and Mexico. Since 2004, this program has enabled the creation of various projects, including auditions in China, a co-production of Bizet's *Carmen* in China and a masterclass program followed by a production at Opera Brasov. Also noteworthy in 2018 is a co-production of concerts with the Helikon Opera of Moscow.

Through the Théâtre Lyricorégra 20, this program supports the laureates by offering them travel grants and, if possible, part of the living expenses. It is, moreover, an international program of lyrical exchange which allows the annual arrival of nearly a dozen opera artists from various countries.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROJECTS

With its network of nearly 200 partners in 26 countries, the program has allowed many Canadian winners to perform in front of a hundred or so opera house directors. In 25 years, the program has offered its laureates nearly 300 commitments worldwide. These services have also allowed several winners to stand out and obtain other commitments in lyrical theatres that partner with the program.

For example, Suzanne Taffot recently appeared at the Minsk Opera in Belarus, at the San Miguel de Allende Opera House in Mexico, and at the Gärtnerplatz in Munich, where she was engaged for 11 performances as Mimì in *La Bohème*. In October she also participated, along with baritone Hugo Laporte, mezzo-soprano Rachel Tremblay and pianist Maxime Dubé-Malenfant, in two concerts in China. “We are currently seeking to develop our relationship, especially with a partner in Beijing and another at the Shenzhen Opera,” Nonat says. “Following the audition tour we conducted, we are also thinking of exporting the JAL program to China, which would open doors to other cities. It would still be very positive for our program and the Canadian singers we support.”

Nonat is proud that hundreds of laureates who were supported in their early careers by the JAL program continue to shine on stages around the world. This is particularly the case of mezzo-sopranos Michèle Losier and Julie Boulianne. An additional source of motivation for the creator of this program! **LSM**

Théâtre Lyricorégra 20 presents the 26th Gala des Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques on Nov. 23 at 7:30 p.m. in Salle Claude-Champagne.

www.l20.ca



OPÉRA BOUFFE DU QUÉBEC STAGES

LA FILLE DU TAMBOUR-MAJOR

by **BENJAMIN GORON**

MODEL OF LA FILLE DU TAMBOUR-MAJOR



SIMON FOURNIER

Premiered a little under a century and a half ago, Jacques Offenbach's operetta *La fille du tambour-major* was the last in a series of stage works that packed Parisian houses for 20 some years. Simon Fournier, artistic director of

the Opéra bouffe du Québec, shared a few of his insights on this work, with which he chose to mark the 200th anniversary of the composer's birth.

"Staging Offenbach is no piece of cake," Fournier states at the outset. "Tempos shift all the time. And being a man of theatre, his instructions and suggestions have to be accounted for in any production."

"In a nutshell, then, the Frenchman's works must be approached as a collaborative effort involving equal amounts of caution and care. My work goes hand in hand with that of stage director Alain Zouvi and choreographer Monik. Our task is to put together a package bound to keep audiences in stitches."

For all of the hearty laughter that was part and parcel of Offenbach's oeuvre, Fournier reminds us that the man was quite a practical joker: "Offenbach had an impish streak in him. Stories about the tricks he played on others while playing cello in pit orchestras are legion, like lifting tunes off other musicians' parts or toying with music stands to have them fall apart during a concert." But antics like those are just part of the Offenbach story. The timelessness of his operettas result from meticulous attention to detail, a sense of theatricality and a mastery of compositional craft, all of which aim at producing maximum effect, with hardly, if any, hint of outdatedness.

Set in a military environment, the operetta is actually a love story strewn with more plot twists you can count. True to form, the composer takes aim at the foibles of politicians, the military and the bourgeoisie. The looseness of the libretto allows it to be reworked according to need, including the deleting of references to past events of little relevance now, thus creating the possibility of giving it a more contemporary spin for today's audiences.

"It all boils down to telling a story," Fournier insists. "Which explains why Offenbach's works remain popular to this day, for people always love to be told stories. I will settle for nothing less than a very high standard in this production, and that goes for the acting, the staging and the music, all of these ingredients ensuring its fast and furious pace."

Also of note is its cast, chock full of rising talents like lead soprano Lucie St-Martin as Stella, Klara Martel-Laroche and Rose Naggartremblay, their male co-stars being Simon Chaussé, Pierre Rancourt, Guillaume Beaudoin, Eric Thériault and Alexandre Iannuzzi.

"In opera, the soprano dies," Fournier says with a twinkle in his eye. "In operetta, she dies, too, but laughing!" On that *bon mot*, may Fournier and his crew bring people to the edge of their seats and, maybe, have them fall out of them once and a while. **LSM**

TRANSLATION BY MARC CHÉNARD

La fille du tambour-major will be performed on Nov. 9, 10, 15, 16 and 17 at the Maison des Arts de Laval. www.operabouffe.org



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INDEPENDENT OPERA COMPANIES

by **ANDRÉANNE VENNE** & **JUSTIN BERNARD**

NOVA SCOTIA

MARITIME CONCERT OPERA

Founded in 2003 by Nina Scott-Stoddart, the Maritime Concert Opera Society aims to present works in concert (without staging, sets and costumes) and in original versions, to offer affordable tickets, to promote passion for opera, operetta and musicals as well as supporting culture and artists in Nova Scotia and the Maritimes. www.maritimeconcertopera.com

QUEBEC

MAISON D'OPÉRA ET DE CONCERTS

Since 2014 Sherbrooke's Maison d'Opéra et de Concerts has been offering high-calibre programming with talented artists with a thriving



career in Quebec and abroad, often from the Eastern Townships, but rarely in Sherbrooke. This season features *Don Pasquale* by Donizetti. www.maisondoperaconcerts.com

OPERA CONCEPT M.P.

Opera M.P. productions feature innovative and multidisciplinary opera projects that often



combine rock and operatic musical genres to make new works in their own right. Coming up in November will be the Toronto premiere of *Another Brick in the Wall: The Opera*, featuring the words of Roger Waters and a score by award-winning composer Julien Bilodeau. operaconceptmp.com

BALLET-OPÉRA-PANTOMIME

A ballet, opera and pantomime company founded in 2013 by young graduates of the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal, BOP wants to contribute to the discovery of little-known works by the Quebec public while proposing original productions. The young



company uses avant-garde artists from different disciplines. To engage the community, shows are often given in unusual places, without neglecting more traditional venues. BOP has presented to date six multidisciplinary productions, in partnership with organizations such as ECM + (*Images de Sappho*, 2015), the Arte Musica Foundation (*The Burning Fiery Furnace*, 2015) and the OFFTA Festival (*Quartet for the End of Time*, 2017). bopbop.ca

OPERA 101

A Montreal duo formed by pianist Laurence Lambert-Chan and mezzo-soprano Charlotte Gagnon, Opera 101 combines opera and humour of the clowning tradition. In their shows



that are presented as small educational pieces, they make fun of the clichés of the opera by deconstructing them and making them meet in the same concert as the staged production of giants of pop music and monsters of classical music. The company is the recipient of three Coups de pouce at the 23rd edition of *Vue sur la relève*. www.opera101duo.com

BELLE LURETTE PRODUCTIONS

Founded in 2004 in Laval by Étienne Cousineau and Pascal Blanchet, Belle Lurette is a comic-opera and musicals troupe featuring works rarely presented in Quebec or not presented for a long time (hence its name). It appeals broadly to the Francophonie and aims



to make the operatic arts more accessible to the general public through the humour and originality of its programming. Since its fifth anniversary in 2009, Belle Lurette has presented an operetta by Jacques Offenbach in concert each year. www.bellelurette.org

LA COMPAGNIE BAROQUE MONT-ROYAL

La Compagnie baroque Mont-Royal, founded in 2011 by young performers from the Schulich School of Music at McGill University, is a vocal and instrumental ensemble dedicated to Baroque and Classical opera from Montreal. The company showcases emerging artists and focuses on public education and performance on period instruments. Coming productions are *The Elysian Groves*, which will be presented on Nov. 24 with the Ponté Trio, and Gluck's *Alceste*, which takes place on March 7. www.cbmroyal.com

LE NOUVEL OPÉRA

The company founded by soprano Suzie LeBlanc produces baroque and classical operas and rare vocal works. This was the case of Paolo Lorenzani's *Nicandro e Fileno*, which had not been staged since its creation in 1681 and which the company presented in 2017 in coproduction with Les Boréades de Montréal. Part of the mission of this company is to update the traditional repertoire by combining various forms of arts such as dance, theatre and visual arts to create original shows in tune with contemporary culture. The company also has an educational component and offers professional workshops. www.lenouvelopera.com

1 OPÉRA 1 HEURE

A Montreal-based collective formed in 2014 around emerging Quebec musicians, 1 Opéra 1 Heure focuses on the leading works of the French lyric repertoire. As its name suggests,



the abbreviated format is privileged, which creates an intimate and accessible opera that goes to the essence of the work. 1opera.wixsite.com

OPERA VOXPOPULI

A theater/opera company co-founded in 2006 by Patrick Mathieu and Paul Buissonneau, Voxpopuli works in a more family-oriented niche and is behind the Voxpopuli Young Audience program, which enables thousands of



children attending public schools to attend free of charge opera performances for young neophytes every year. Voxpopuli offers series of concerts featuring with humour and the great composers. www.operavoxpopuli.com

OPERA OUTSIDE THE BOX

Created by singer Émilie Versailles and theater artist Kim Crofts, this meeting between vocal art and theatre defies the accepted borders between genres and integrates even more forms of art, with the stated aim of renewing the operatic genre and shaking up its conventions. The works, short and intimate, are presented in unusual places to meet an ever new and unexpected audience: park, art gallery, abandoned factory, bar, etc. www.operaoutsidethebox.com

LIGHT OPERA OF MONTREAL (LOOM)

LOOM is a Montreal group made up of musicians, singers, composers, actors, dancers, visual artists and filmmakers, all united in their desire to create stage and screen shows that are inclusive of the people by and for whom the productions are created. Works are presented in accessible places such as training centers, pubs, centres for the elderly and neighbourhood cinemas. Rehearsals for the

spring 2020 production of *The Weill Woman* begin in November. www.lightoperaofmontreal.org

ONTARIO

BICYCLE OPERA PROJECT

Founded in 2012 by two young singers, Larissa Koniuk and Nadia Chana, Bicycle Opera Bicycle is a company that tours by bi-



cycle and presents contemporary operas to audiences living in remote municipalities. www.bicycleopera.com

ESSENTIAL OPERA

Founded by co-artistic directors Erin Bardua and Maureen Batt, Essential Opera produces vibrant, accessible opera concerts in Ontario and the Maritimes. This management duo creates opportunities for performers and composers, promotes the role of women in all aspects of opera, while providing audiences with a good time. www.essentialopera.com

PELLEGRINI OPERA

Since 2004, the mission of Pellegrini Opera has not changed: to make great opera music accessible to everyone, regardless of age, income, social background or musical education. Pellegrini Opera was founded by soprano Maria Pellegrini, who is committed to sharing the opera with people who otherwise would not have the chance to live this experience. Last October, the company presented Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* at Centerpointe Studio in Ottawa. www.pellegriniopera.org

VERA CAUSA OPERA

Vera Causa Opera aims to offer its audience an affordable and entertaining experience by combining acting, comedy, singing, music and dance. In short, be faithful to this total form of art that is opera. Next show: Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (Nov. 15, 16 and 17). www.vcopera.ca

LOOSE TEA MUSIC THEATRE

Founded in 2013 by Alaina Viau, Loose Tea Music Theatre revitalizes classical music and opera by associating them with current social issues. The company seeks to highlight the timeless character of the works it presents. Raising public awareness of social causes through music is its other vocation. This fall, there will be two creations on the program, *Singing Only Softly* (Nov. 2 and 4) and *Carmen #YesAllWomen* (Dec. 3 and 5) and a workshop on an Aboriginal opera to be presented in the spring. www.looseteamusictheatre.com

AMPLIFIED OPERA

Co-founded by director Aria Umezawa and creator Teiya Kasahara, Toronto-based Amplified Opera is involved with various communities. It seeks to offer artists the



opportunity to tell their story as they see fit and to open the public to new cultural experiences. www.amplifiedopera.com



MY OPERA

MyOpera is aptly named. It is intended for young emerging artists in all sectors related to the world of opera: singers, directors, musical directors, lighting designers, scenographers, etc. www.myopera.ca

FAWN CHAMBER CREATIVE

FAWN seeks to raise awareness of contemporary repertoire, offering new operas and mul-



tidisciplinary works on stage. Its main goal is to commission and promote chamber music written by Canadian composers. fawnchambercreative.com

OPERA ATELIER

Opera Atelier is a Toronto-based company whose mission is to rediscover and revitalize early music through operas and ballet, partic-



ularly works from the Baroque period. From Oct. 31 to Nov. 9, Opera Atelier will make a detour to Mozartian repertoire with *Don Giovanni*. www.operatelier.com

TORONTO OPERETTA THEATRE

Established in 1985, the Toronto Operetta Theatre is the only professional Canadian company specializing in the repertoire of comic operas. During the holidays, the TOT



will present *The Gypsy Baron* by Johann Strauss II. www.torontooperetta.com

VOICEBOX: OPERA IN CONCERT

Founded in 1974, Opera in Concert seeks to offer an ever-renewed experience of opera and its power to unleashing the expressive power of music. Next production: *Kátya Kabanová*

by Leoš Janáček in English (Dec. 1). www.operainconcert.com

OPERA 5

Opera 5, born in 2011, offers unknown treasures, new Canadian creations, but also more established works. Its mission is to change the way people view opera, to attract new audiences and to showcase women in the various fields of activity, whether in creation, performance or production. In November, the company plans a chamber-music concert honouring Hindemith and Shostakovich. www.opera5.ca

OPERA BY REQUEST

Opera by Request member artists perform a variety of concert opera styles. Until now, there's been nothing new! However, this is the originality of the project: the repertoire is not chosen by the artistic director, but by the participants themselves. This is an opportunity for singers to learn and play a role for the first time, in a friendly and pleasant atmosphere and for listeners to hear the music they like, at a low cost. Note that in October, a fundraising evening was held for the next major production of Opera By Request in 2020: the complete cycle of Wagner's *Ring*. www.operabyrequest.ca

MANITOBA**LITTLE OPERA COMPANY**

Spencer Duncanson, who is still the artistic director, founded the Little Opera Company, based in Winnipeg. This non-profit organization is dedicated to producing high-quality operatic entertainment and making the genre ever more accessible. The company also wants to allow local artists to express their talents and to make themselves known. Last October, an evening was organized with Menotti's *The Medium* and Mollicone's *The Face on the Bar-room Floor*. www.littleopera.ca

MANITOBA UNDERGROUND OPERA

Manitoba Underground Opera was born out of the desire of a group of music students in Winnipeg to address the lack of opportunities for artists in the region and to meet the need for stage experience. Led by general manager Brendan McKeen and artistic director Brenna Corner, it now offers large-scale opera pro-



ductions as part of an annual festival. Much more than thematic concerts with singers who have been with the company since its beginning! www.manitobaundergroundopera.com

ALBERTA**CALGARY CONCERT OPERA COMPANY**

The Calgary Concert Opera Company is holding auditions for singers of all types. In February, the company presents, in collaboration with the Calgary Civic Symphony, a program hits from the Italian and German operatic repertoire. On the occasion of the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth, the CCOC will also present excerpts from *Fidelio*, the composer's only opera. www.calgaryconcertopera.com

BRITISH COLUMBIA**OPERA MARIPOSA**

Opera Mariposa is a Vancouver-based company run by young artists for young artists. Already in its eighth season, its mission is to create an accessible and inclusive stage for emerging talent, featuring promising performers from the Vancouver and British Columbia region through concerts, staged operas and musical comedy productions. In November, Opera Mariposa presents Puccini's *Gli anni Schicchi*. www.operamariposa.com

YOUNG PEOPLE'S OPERA SOCIETY OF BC

YPOSBC is a charitable organization that provides affordable opportunities for young and old alike to learn about opera and singing. The next event: *A Dickens Christmas*, a mix of sto-



ries and English Christmas carols (Dec. 8, 13 and 14). www.yposbc.org

CITY OPERA VANCOUVER

City Opera Vancouver is a professional lyric chamber company. Repertoire ranges from early baroque to contemporary. COV also commissions Canadian works. Its presentations seek to maintain a close link with the audience. The next production, in January, is *Berlin: The Last Cabaret*, a mix of opera, cabaret and jazz.

www.cityoperavancouver.com

LSM



PHOTO : TRISTAN BRAND

OPERA IN THE PARK

DEMOCRATIZING THE LYRIC ART

by HASSAN LAGHCHA

“Opera attendance is declining.” That was the worrying finding that motivated soprano Nadia Neiazy to establish the creation of Alma Viva Productions in 2009. In 2014, this non-profit organization launched the Opera in the Park project at the rate of one production each summer presented free of charge and outdoors in a festive and family atmosphere.

“We gave ourselves the mission to democratize and decompartmentalize opera,” the company’s director says. “And to approach the public in a public square, in the most frequented places.” Over the years, the process has paid off. Opera in the Park is among the projects selected by JeFaisMontréal 2019.

“Initially, this was also a love story with Girouard Park in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce,” Neiazy recalls. “My fascination with this place has greatly inspired the concept.” She describes the stages of evolution of the project that was born in her own neighborhood. Her joy is great in view of the growing enthusiasm for this unifying event. The popular success guarantees the continuity of partner support.

She warmly welcomed the contribution of the Côte-des-Neiges-Notre-Dame-de-Grâce borough and emphasized the importance of the production partnership with NDG Arts Week.

OPERA IS NOT INTELLECTUAL

Since 2014, this summer lyric event has presented seven productions, including *Così fan tutte*, *Carmen* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*.

“For adaptations, we reduce the format to accommodate the public and also the singers,” the director explains. She notes that, to guarantee a certain dramatic coherence, it was necessary to integrate a narrative text (in two languages) in a staging that does not include chorus or orchestra.

For next season, she plans another comic work. “We have noticed the popularity with the public especially for this type of opera,” says this opera singer. Baritone Vincent Ranallo is delighted with the success of the various productions and particularly highlights the success of the adaptation of *Barbiere* presented last summer, in which he sang Figaro. “We had very good singers for all



PHOTO : TRISTAN BRAND

roles,” he says. Ranallo is optimistic about the future of the concept: “Little by little, we have become one of the major events of NDG Arts Week,” he says. “Sometimes, especially when the weather is nice, there are about a thousand spectators at our performances. It is surprising!” This makes it possible to convince the different categories of the public that opera is not at all intellectual and is not especially reserved for a certain social class and the initiated. “It’s theatre and entertainment for all audiences.” **LSM**

TRANSLATION BY VASYL PAWLOWSKY

www.operadansleparc.com

TEMPÊTES ET PASSIONS

FLASH MOBS TO DEMYSTIFY OPERA

by HASSAN LAGHCHA



FILLES DU RHIN
PHOTO : LOUISE LEBLANC

Flash mobs in workplaces, shopping malls and other everyday environments, with singers in jeans: these are among the innovations favoured by Tempêtes et Passions, a Quebec City non-profit organization founded in 2007. This producer and broadcaster seeks to demystify opera and to make the lyrical art known and familiar to the general public.

Storms and Passions is distinguished also by its programming, which gives pride of place to the little-known works of the Romantic period. “We also have a mentoring component for the promotion of young talent in support of

young singers in their transition to professional life,” says Guy Lessard, creator and chairman of the board of directors. Lessard, a Wagnerian singer who distinguished himself notably during the prestigious competition of the Liederkrantz Foundation in New York in 2001, also stresses the research and development initiative of Storms and Passions, which explores the possibilities that digital technology offers to opera artists.

MORE SPACE FOR LYRICAL GROWTH

A concert on Nov. 2 in the chapel of the Musée de l’Amérique francophone is devoted to French Romantic opera with works by composers Meyerbeer, Boieldieu, Gounod and Thomas. This concert, funded by the City of Quebec, is aimed at an audience under 35. It features both established professionals and young artists who are at the beginning of their careers, with the aim of stimulating interaction between different generations of opera singers. Dec. 15 marks the return to the traditional Christmas concert at the German Christmas Market at Holy Trinity Cathedral.



JERUSALEM
PHOTO : JOCELYN G.

Also noteworthy is *Viennoiseries musicales IV* on Feb. 23, back at the chapel of the Musée de l’Amérique francophone. This will be a return to the golden age of the Viennese operetta with excerpts from *Das Land des Lächelns* (Lehár), *Die Csárdásfürstin* (Lehár) and *Die Zirkusprinzessin* (Kálmán). On May 2, at the same locale, you can take in *Hansel and Gretel* by Englebert Humperdinck, an opera for all! **LSM**

www.tempetesetpassions.com

AGAINST THE GRAIN

REACHES 10 YEARS

by WAH KEUNG CHAN



LA BOHÈME 2019
PHOTO : AGAINST THE GRAIN THEATRE

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The 10-year-old Against the Grain Theatre (AtG) company is flying high, breaking down walls in the world of opera one offbeat performance at a time. In addition to being company-in-residence at the COC, and the appointment of co-founder Joel Ivany as artistic director of opera at the Banff Centre, AtG has reached several milestones in the last two months: they hired their first Executive Director, Robin Whiffen; they embarked on their first cross Canada tour with *La Bohème* thanks to a Canada Council grant; and became the first opera company to be live-streamed on CBC Gem.

The last part may sound impressive, but the YouTube live stream only reached 340 people during the live portion, although another 2,000 have seen it since. Nevertheless, when it comes to outreach to non-traditional audiences, the English *Bohème*, set in a 21st century bar, is hitting all the right notes. Touring to small cities (including Medicine Hat, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Kenora), the company reached many who have never heard or seen an opera.

There is nothing new about transporting an opera's plot to modern day, so the heart of the organization's success was Ivany's visionary idea 10 years ago of translating the libretto to English in today's language. "Existing translations in opera are pretty archaic, so it just made sense to do it myself," said Ivany, who was helped by co-founding soprano Miriam Khalil, who later became his wife. "Miriam made sure the words fit well with the singing line, and the singers also gave feedback. Things got easier with practice." Most of AtG productions have been translated to English and they own the copyright. "We've done six translations so far," said Ivany, who cites Debussy's *Pelléas and Mélisande* as one of the few operas they performed in the original language.

Setting the opera in bars may seem "innovative," but it's based on practicality. "Bars let us use the venue for free, and they keep the concessions," says Ivany, who has started thinking beyond the 100- to 125-seat performance capacity of such venues. "It's something we have been thinking about but I don't think we'll be performing much in venues bigger than 350.

Meanwhile, over the last 10 years, Ivany's personal career as a stage director has taken off outside of AtG. His portfolio includes 20 projects from LA Opera to the COC and includes Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. He will be staging the COC production of *Hansel and Gretel* in February. And the Ivany-Khalil duo has flourished at home with a 5-year-old.

Since giving birth, Khalil has felt her voice blossom. In her return to the December revival of *Figaro's Wedding* (the AtG's version Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*), she will graduate from Suzanna to the Countess.

When asked about how he manages everything, Ivany says, "I have to juggle being a good husband and being a good dad before everything else." **LSM**

www.againstthegraintheatre.com

MISSISSAUGA HAS ITS OWN MSO

AND OPERA IS ON THE SCHEDULE

by ARTHUR KAPTAINIS

Denis Mastromonaco, 45, had just finished a rehearsal of Rachmaninoff's *Symphonic Dances* with the MSO, the resident orchestra of the sixth-largest city in Canada.

"We are typically about 95, 98 members," he explained. "It's a healthy-sized orchestra."

The conductor was speaking about the Mississauga Symphony Orchestra, an ensemble that concluded its 2018-19 season with Mahler's Second Symphony ("Resurrection") and is looking forward to presenting a fully-staged production of Verdi's *La Traviata* on Jan. 25 and 28.

Other works Mastromonaco has led during his seven years as music director are Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Bruckner's Fourth, Nielsen's Fourth ("Inextinguishable") and Vaughan Williams's *A London Symphony*. Not bad for a municipality which, however dynamic in economic terms, is not exactly famous for its cultural infrastructure.

The MSO builds these eye-popping programs on the strength of a professional core of 14 players – the string, woodwind, brass and percussion principals – and an enthusiastic community component, with extra professionals hired as required. Most pros are from nearby Toronto but the principal second violin is from Mississauga.

As, of course, are most of the remarkably loyal listeners. The MSO receives support from Mississauga and Ontario, but box office and earned revenues make up 50 percent of the MSO's budget of about \$700,000, a percentage of which most orchestras can only dream. About \$100,000 comes from an annual book sale.

One attraction for Mississauga music lovers is Hammerson Hall in the 1997 Living Arts Centre. Compared with the school auditoriums and churches that many community orchestras settle for, this is acoustical heaven.

Repertoire is not confined to the biggies on the Masterworks series. After the Rachmaninoff program on Nov. 16, the MSO will present a pair of Christmas concerts, one (on Dec. 14) a sequence of highlights from Handel's *Messiah*, another (on Dec. 15) a program of familiar seasonal fare. Among the populist offerings after *La Traviata* are a *Star Wars* night (April 25) and the ultimate tribute to democracy, *Music by Request* (March 28).

The varied programming has attracted not one audience but a few. "If you consider a classical audience, you think of the 50-and-older end," Mastromonaco said. "But we have also attracted a younger audience, because of the variety of concerts."

There are ticket-buyers from Brampton to the north and Etobicoke to the east. The MSO also supports an adjunct youth orchestra of 170 members. At least once a year – this year, for *A Merry Little Christmas* – the masses gather for a concert comprising almost 270 musicians.

Mastromonaco arrived in Mississauga by a circuitous route. A native



MISSISSAUGA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
PHOTO : COURTESY

of Toronto, he was raised partly in Argentina in a family of Italian extraction. After earning his bachelor's degree at the University of Toronto in 1997, he pursued graduate studies at SUNY, the Salzburg Mozarteum, the Vienna Conservatory and the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena. He speaks Spanish and Italian as well as English. "And French by default, being Canadian."

His stay in Siena got him into opera, an interest he has transferred to Mississauga with productions of Bizet's *Carmen*, Puccini's *La Bohème* and now, *La Traviata*.

Fully-staged operas do not come naturally to symphony orchestras. "As far as we know, the MSO is the only Canadian orchestra currently successfully producing traditional opera annually," says MSO executive director Eileen Keown. The MSO must hire a production staff and build the performance from the ground up.

Period settings are preferred. "We don't update it or modernize it," Mastromonaco says. "Because for the audience here, keeping in mind it is Mississauga, opera is something still fairly new to them. I wouldn't alter an opera when they haven't seen the original."

Opera programming has been such a success that Mastromonaco no longer holds auditions. "There has been such an influx and we get so many requests from people who would love to sing for us," he says.

The *Violetta* in January is Cristina Pisani, a Mississauga resident. The Alfredo, Keith Klassen, is a U of T graduate. "Just fantastic" is how he describes these Canadians. The rest of the cast is settled but not signed at press time.

Not many organizations in North America can claim to be both the only orchestra and the only opera company in town while operating a big youth orchestra and presenting pops programming. "We provide something for the community that they can't get anywhere else in Mississauga," Mastromonaco says. "I hope over the coming years, we can push the cultural identity of the city a little further along."

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www.mississaugasympphony.ca

IWAN EDWARDS

A LIFE IN MUSIC

by IWAN EDWARDS



PHOTO : DAVID PATERSON

FOUNDER OF THE ST. LAWRENCE CHOIR, THE FACE SENIOR TREBLE CHOIR, CONCERTO DELLA DONNA, THE CANADIAN CHAMBER CHOIR AND THE CHOEUR DES ENFANTS DE MONTREAL, IWAN EDWARDS IS ONE OF THE PREMIER CHORAL CONDUCTORS IN CANADA AS WELL AS AN INTERNATIONAL FIGURE BY VIRTUE OF HIS YEARS AS CHORUS MASTER OF THE OSM. LA SCENA MUSICALE HAS ASKED EDWARDS TO REFLECT ON HIS LONG CAREER, STARTING IN HIS NATIVE WALES AND INVOLVING, SURPRISINGLY, EXPERTISE ON THE VIOLIN.

It was my good fortune to grow up in Wales, where music played such an important part in everyday life. There were two primary influences, chapel and school. I received a strong musical foundation in both.

CHAPEL

Soar Baptist Chapel had about 600 members at the time. There were three services on Sunday, morning, afternoon and night. The chapel would be full and all the hymns would be sung in four-part harmony. During the winter months, there would be an *Ysgol Gan* (Singing School), where members of the large orator-sized choir would rehearse a major choral work such as Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus* or Handel's *Israel in Egypt* in preparation for a concert in late March with professional soloists from London and a local semi-professional orchestra.

In addition there would be a Cultural Society meeting on Monday, where someone would present a paper, a Band of Hope rehearsal for children on Wednesday and a Drama Group on Sundays. On March 1, there would be an *Eisteddfod* in which the congregation would be divided into four groups which would then compete against each other. Competitions included solos, duets, choruses, recitations and choral speaking. Once a year, three chapels in the village combined forces for a *Cymanfa Ganu* (Singing Festival) where an eminent *Cymanfa* conductor would be invited to lead three sessions, one for children and two for adults. Several rehearsals of unfamiliar hymns were held in advance, thus ensuring that we could all sing our respective parts confidently on the big day.

SCHOOL

Gowerton Boys' Grammar School had a wonderful music program, including a choir and an orchestra. Instruments were taught by peripatetic teachers who came to the school every one or two weeks to give private lessons. I played the violin and my parents decided that I should take my lessons privately. My father was a steelworker, my mother stayed at home, which meant that they had to make sacrifices in order that I should have private lessons. Such was the quality of the instruction and training by Mr. Watkins, the music teacher, that many of us were selected to perform with the regional County Youth Orchestra and, ultimately, the National Orchestra of Wales. All rehearsals were held at lunchtime or after school and the orchestra would perform in a school assembly every morning. As in chapel, there would be an *Eisteddfod* involving four competing groups. It was at these

Eisteddfod competitions that I had my first experiences as a conductor – without any instruction whatsoever!

The music curriculum for the first three years consisted of basic theory and music listening. In Year 4, we made our first major decisions and chose between Arts and Science courses. Two years later, we had to make further choices, selecting three subjects to study in depth in our final two years. By the time I left grammar school, I had a firm grounding in harmony, 16th-century counterpoint, form, analysis, sight reading and ear training.

At the University of Wales I enrolled in the three-year B. Mus. degree program. I played in the Faculty Orchestra and even the Faculty String Quartet for one semester when my teacher was indisposed. I sang in the student Choral Union and was concertmaster of the student orchestra. I conducted performances of *H.M.S. Pinafore* for the student Gilbert and Sullivan Society and I conducted a wonderful student male choir in my final year. My only instruction in conducting had been a 15-minute lesson on how to beat 2, 3 and 4 time. After one year of teacher training, I was appointed head of the music department at Holyhead County Secondary School in Anglesey, North Wales. In view of the wonderful upbringing that I had enjoyed, coupled with my great love of children, my mission was to share my passion for music with children (and adults too, if the opportunity arose).

When I arrived at Holyhead, I found that there was a good choir and a strong orchestral program already in existence. The headmaster was very supportive of the music program. The content of the music classes adhered to the same syllabus I had been exposed to at Gowerton. I was happy and comfortable. Unfortunately, however, the headmaster retired at the end of my third year and his replacement did not have a positive attitude at all. Furthermore, I was beginning to “itch” for broader conducting experiences outside the school, but the only way that was possible was to wait for an established conductor to retire or create a new choir, which would have created intense rivalry and animosity in the community.

EISTEDDFOD AND MONTREAL

The *Eisteddfod* played a prominent part in Welsh cultural activities. There were numerous local *Eisteddfodau* and a week-long National *Eisteddfod* during the first week of August. Competitors would compete as individuals in both music and poetry competitions too numerous to mention but the highlight of the week occurred on Saturday when the

choirs would compete – the largest being the Male Voice Choir. I shall refer later to one competition in particular.

The local Eisteddfod and the Annual School Eisteddfod on March 1 gave me my first experience conducting choirs (albeit small ensembles). Early in 1965 I came across an advertisement in our morning paper which announced that the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal was looking for teachers. After long discussions with my wife, Undeg, and our respective families, I decided to apply. I was summoned to an interview in Manchester and a few weeks later, I was offered a position at Lachine High School. I accepted, and my life was suddenly transformed.

LACHINE HIGH SCHOOL

Prior to arriving, I had been told that the school had a strong choral tradition but when I started searching for singers to form a choir, only a handful of students showed any interest. My desire to share my passion for music became a source of some frustration. Fortunately, however, I was asked to conduct an alumni group called the Lachine High Alumni Singers. Soon the group adopted a Welsh name, becoming the Glanllyn Singers (The Lakeshore Singers).

In Wales we would start working on repertoire from the very outset of the first rehearsal so I was completely taken aback when I was asked to start rehearsals with a ‘warm-up’. I had no idea what a warm-up was. Needless to say, all my rehearsals started with warm-ups thereafter. Other opportunities to conduct adult choirs followed in short order. I was very grateful for these new opportunities. In each case I was approached by the organization and not vice versa.

Meanwhile, at Lachine High, I approached two colleagues, Phillip Baugniet and David Paterson, who had expressed an interest in musical theatre. We staged *H.M.S Pinafore*, *Oklahoma*, *Oliver* and *My Fair Lady* in the four years that followed. The principal of the school was an avid band enthusiast and persuaded me – despite my lack of knowledge of wind instruments – to start a band program. The choir grew and a band materialized so that by 1972, 100 students from the music program participated in an exchange program with the Pontarddulais Male Voice Choir, an ensemble I had sung with when I was a student in Wales.

ST. LAWRENCE CHOIR AND FACE

Suddenly, my life was full of music. In May 1972 I was approached by a group of choral enthusiasts about creating a choir in the West

Island area of Montreal. There were large choirs at their disposal in Montreal but the singers wanted to have a choir locally rather than drive downtown. In September the St. Lawrence Choir was created, an ensemble which I directed for 36 years and which played a pivotal role in my life.

The music program at Lachine High School continued to expand and the Concert Band and Singers took advantage of opportunities to travel abroad, notably to Denmark, Sweden and East Germany. However, disaster struck in 1978 when the teachers across the board opted to reduce the number of periods in the day from seven to six, which meant that option programs such as music, art, drama and home economics no longer had the same access to students.

In 1979, David Paterson (an art teacher who had been involved in the musicals years before) and I moved to FACE School where Phillip Baugniet – stage director of the musicals – was principal. History repeated itself! When I called for singers for a choir, the response was dismal. I suggested to Mr. Baugniet that choir might be part of the curriculum (Grades 1 to 7) and he agreed. At that point, the school was in the process of expanding the program to Grade 11. By 1983, the whole school was involved in the choral program. Students were also involved in the Band, in Art and Drama.

MOVING TO MCGILL

In 1981 the Montreal Symphony Orchestra asked me if I would prepare a children’s choir from the school to perform in Liszt’s “Dante” Symphony. This marked the creation of the FACE Senior Treble Choir, which I was destined to conduct for the next 20 years. In 1986 I was appointed chorus master of the OSM, with the St. Lawrence Choir as the core amateur group and the FACE Choir as the children’s choir. I discuss this formidable assignment in another article.

In 1999 I took a year’s leave of absence from the school. I needed a break from the intensity. Then in August I was approached by the McGill Faculty of Music to conduct the McGill University Singers. This led to a full professorship. My great regret in leaving FACE was that I was severing my association with children. You can imagine my delight when I was asked to form a new children’s choir in Montreal, the Choeur des Enfants de Montreal.

MAKING THE CHOIR ACCESSIBLE

As I look back, I realize how significant the move to Canada had been. In spite of the initial frustrations, I became more and more

PREPARING A CHOIR FOR CHARLES DUTOIT

When I began as chorus master of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra in 1986, I had some experience with the orchestra in that I had prepared the Montreal Elgar Choir for an MSO performance of *Messiah* in 1971 under Franz-Paul Decker, the FACE Senior Treble Choir for Liszt’s *Dante Symphony* in 1981 and the St. Lawrence Choir for Mahler’s Symphony No. 8 (together with two other choirs, of which Jean-François Sénart was the chorus master) under the direction of Charles Dutoit in 1984. (In those days, “MSO” was a very common usage, although “Orchestre symphonique de Montréal” and OSM were official.)

One of the first works I prepared for Maestro Dutoit was *Messiah*. I had heard his performance of the work some two or three years before and was struck by the fact that he approached the work in the traditional European manner, with slower tempi. I was unsure as to how to prepare the chorus for him and, even after we had met briefly to discuss the matter, I was no wiser.

I had prepared a boys’ choir from FACE for an MSO performance of the work conducted by Christopher Hogwood the previous year, so I kept the same articulations, but I varied my tempi in rehearsal so that the conductor had a supply instrument with which to work. Maestro Dutoit did not take a choir rehearsal beforehand so I had a couple of sleepless nights before the combined chorus and orchestra rehearsal. Fortunately, everything worked out well.

The only time Maestro Dutoit took a chorus rehearsal was prior to a performance of *Harmonium* by John Adams. Furthermore, we never discussed repertoire beforehand. I came to realize very quickly that if there was to be any success at all, it all hinged on the preparation.

The MSO Chorus had two component parts: A professional choir of 50 voices (as stipulated by the Union des Artistes) and an amateur choir, which in my case was the St. Lawrence Choir. Preparation took five stages:

- 1 – The St. Lawrence Choir would prepare the work on its own.
- 2 – The professional choir would be added.
- 3 – The combined choirs would join the orchestra for the first time under the baton of Maestro Dutoit.
- 4 – Two or three rehearsals with soloists, chorus and orchestra (including the dress rehearsal).
- 5 – The performances.

aware of the opportunities to share with singers of all ages. I saw myself as a facilitator who was willing to encourage singers to participate. The audition procedures I adopted with children was usually to place them according to voice type and not to exclude any.

Only once in all those years did I encounter a child who had an irreversible vocal problem. Occasionally I would come across students who had difficulty pitching notes, but I would either find the time to work with the student alone or sit him or her alongside another singer who had a strong voice. I never asked a student to sit at the back of a class or an ensemble and “imitate a goldfish.” As far as adults were concerned, I found only two cases of singers who were actually “tone deaf.” I was often amused by jazz musicians at McGill who had to take choir for credit who claimed they could not sing, and who discovered that this was not the case. With adult choirs, restrictions on membership were the result of necessity relating to balanced sections.

FINDING REPERTOIRE

Repertoire played a very important part in my preparations. For many years I would travel to Toronto to look for repertoire because there wasn't a music store in Montreal which was sufficiently well-stocked. If I visited a big city in Canada, the United States or Europe I would seek out a music store. In later years, I started to search the internet as a source. In addition, there were workshops to be visited, and conventions such as Podium, ACDEA and the World Symposium of Choral Music where one would hear outstanding performances of new repertoire. Inevitably, because of my interest in so many ensembles (mixed choirs, treble choirs, children's choirs) I accumulated a vast amount of sheet music which needed constant updating and cataloguing.

I chose music which met the needs of the singers with whom I was working, repertoire which would challenge them (within their comfort zones), stimulate their emotions and their imaginations. I paid a lot of attention to text. I found that if I dealt with the text first, then the singers would be more receptive and eager to tackle practical problems relating to notes, rhythms, etc. Enunciation and articulation were important so that the listener could understand the words. If questioned about this approach, my response would be: “What came first? The words or the music?” I would often ask questions: e.g. “Why do you think the composer wrote a ‘f’ here?” And the answer would lie in the text. One question would always elicit a response

from everyone: “Why did the composer start this piece ‘pp.’ Answer: to create an illusion of distance. Invariably, if I felt that the music did not reflect the spirit of the text, I would cast it aside.

One of the competitions at the *Eisteddfod* in Wales was Choral Speaking, in which groups of four, eight or 16 male or female voices would take an assigned extract (from the Bible, poetry or prose) and recite it with exactly the same nuances, inflections, pauses etc., always sounding like one voice. It was wonderful training in text interpretation and presentation.

THE ART OF THE PROGRAM

Creating programs was a great joy and a big challenge. Contrasts in tempo and mood were important – for the singers as much as for the listener. However, one vital aspect of my programming has been a key system which my teacher had taught me at Gowerton Boys' Grammar School. Amid all the solid advice he gave about programming, he always came back to this: “Yes, you need solid contrast in tempi, tonality and styles. However, don't forget your key signatures!” As far as a key system was concerned, I would open the program on the “sharp” side and then move to the “flat” side. Why? It's much more tiring for the singer to go in the opposite direction. His analogy: “It's easier to coast downhill than it is to slog uphill.” Here is a simple example:

OPENING SET:

ITEM 1:

lively tempo, A major (3 sharps)

ITEM 2: slow tempo, D major (2 sharps) or D minor (1 flat)

ITEM 3: quicker tempo, G major (1 sharp) or G minor (2 flats)

ITEM 4:

slower tempo, C major or Bb major (2 flats)

ITEM 5: quick tempo E flat major (3 flats)

In this example, when one arrives at the end of Set 1, we are already well into the “flat” side. The next obvious choice is to go to C minor or Ab major. But what if one needs to go back to the “sharp” side? Answer, go to a key which is an augmented fourth above, which would be A major/minor and start again. This is just one of the tricks one learns over time. It adds to the complexity of program selection but I have used this system and found that however challenging and time-consuming creating the program might be, the singers do not tire, lose their freshness and energy or lose intonation.

Both choirs would undergo auditions on a regular basis. Moreover, I insisted that the professionals should prepare the repertoire in time for the first combined rehearsal. I wanted to ensure that both choirs began the final rehearsals as a single unit and as equals. My role was to ensure that all musical details – notes, dynamics, intonation, sound quality, diction, etc. – were accurate and expressive. I would spend time on text where appropriate and vary the tempi constantly. The same pattern of preparations would be followed for guest conductors except that they would almost invariably request a choir rehearsal so that they could acquaint themselves with the ensemble.

It was a privilege to work with the guest conductors. Each had his or her own style and almost all shared a vision of the work to be performed. On the rare occasion when a conductor wasn't as inspiring, the chorus and I would try to compensate in whatever way we could.

I am deeply indebted to Maestro Dutoit for the trust and confidence he showed the MSO Chorus, the FACE Senior Treble Choir and myself at all times. Our collaborations led to performances at Carnegie Hall and Avery Fisher Hall in New York City; the Saratoga Performing Arts Centre in Saratoga Springs, NY; and the Mann Music Centre in Philadelphia with the Philadelphia Orchestra. He was demanding but fair. If there was a problem with a chorus part in rehearsal and there wasn't time to rehearse it at length, he would turn to me and say: “fix it.”

One extreme example comes to mind. We had performed *The Planets* at Place des Arts the previous spring and I had worked hard to produce “an illusion of distance” in the pianissimo section at the conclusion of the work. We took the work down to Saratoga Springs where we were to perform it in the open-air Amphitheatre. Maestro Dutoit could not achieve the desired effect in the final section so he asked me to “fix it.” I was at a loss. I went to my room and thought about it. I knew that there would not be a possibility of rehearsing the section again. Eventually, I went down early to the Amphitheatre and spoke to the sound technician. After strong protests on his part, he agreed to

WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

When I arrived in Lachine in 1965, it soon became apparent that this was a society very different from the one I had enjoyed in Wales. If I wanted to reach out and attract students to the choral program, then I had to take a very different approach. Fortunately, by the end of my second year there were enough singers available to start rehearsals on *H.M.S. Pinafore* and once rehearsals began, others started to trickle in as well. By the time we reached the first performance of *My Fair Lady*, even the school football team participated in the dance sequence in the Ascot Ballroom Scene. In 2001, to attract children to the newly-formed Choeur des Enfants de Montréal, David Paterson agreed to help me stage simple musicals for children as part of the program for three years. The same ruse worked again.

Repertoire was the key to the development of any ensemble with whom I was privileged to work. When Mr. Baugniet introduced the all-school choral program in 1979, I found myself alone with classes numbering over 100 – French and English streams combined. I had to find repertoire for Grades 4, 5, 6 and 7 that children could relate to in French and English and which would allow me to share the passion for music which remained uppermost in my mind. Inevitably in classes of this size, there would be some who did not want to be there. I would stand in the doorway, assess their states of mind as they entered the room (which classes might have had a substitute teacher in the previous class, which class was coming from the gym, etc.). I would use the warm-up as a means of calming them down and my rehearsal preparations were sufficiently flexible that I could change my plans if I felt that the repertoire would not meet our needs. I wanted the choir room to be a welcoming place, where students could leave their problems at the door and have fun. I would not raise my voice and if a child started to become a problem, then I would seat him or her in the front.

I loved my work at FACE, but in June 1999 I was beginning to suffer from burnout. When I took my leave of absence and accepted a part-time position at the McGill Faculty of Music, I feared that I would lose contact with children altogether. When I was approached about the creation of a new community children's choir, I jumped at it.

MATCHING MUSIC TO THE CHOIR

Repertoire played a critical role in my work with adults. The St. Lawrence Choir was very much in its infancy in the early 70s. It became obvious that the potential was there to build an oratorio-style choir and I tried to engineer that growth systematically. I chose major choral works according to the size and the ability of the choir and its financial position. Smaller works were drawn from a very wide range of repertoire. Whatever the repertoire, I tried to maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect, good humour and hard work. When I conducted the Ottawa Choral Society, I was faced with a well-established ensemble and would choose repertoire which I felt would build on the traditions already established.

Each choir or ensemble I encountered over the years was special in its own way. The FACE Treble Choir was a little different in that it kept challenging me. I remember the first time I gave them *Miniwanka* by R. Murray Schafer. I worked through it, explaining the text, the imagery, the symbols, the diagrams and the way they needed to use their imaginations to make it work. Their immediate response was, "This is cool!" *Miniwanka* was included in a program we performed in Wales in 1985. It brought the house down following each performance and for years afterwards, when I visited family in Wales I would be asked, "Does your choir still sing that 'water' music?"

CONCERTO DELLA DONNA

When I left the FACE Choir in May 1999, some of the older singers asked me to conduct a female group, which became known as Concerto Della Donna. Their spirit and determination allied with great musicality and sensitivity resulted in an outstanding ensemble that drew on my work with, and my faith, in children.

I cannot personally attest to the fact that I succeeded in sharing my passion for music with the singers (and instrumentalists) with whom I worked. All I know is that I had so much satisfaction trying. I also know that I am grateful for the opportunities which Canada afforded me and my two sons Aled and Owain, who have become successful research scientists. I recognize that I had so much support from administrators, fellow music teachers who worked tirelessly with me; from the multitude of parents who supported the programs; and from the hosts of singers, young and old, who made the whole process so much fun. Last, but not least, my wife Undeg, who has been a tower of strength from the very beginning. I could not have done it alone.

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move the microphones six inches away from the chorus and to control the sound from his booth.

At the appropriate point Maestro Dutoit cued the choir on the offstage monitor and I saw a look of horror on his face. When I went to take a bow with him at the end of the performance, he turned to me and said, "Where was the choir?" I replied: "They sang." At his bidding, we went to his dressing room and before I could explain, three orchestra members came in to congratulate him and each asked, "Where was the choir?" "They sang," he replied – and they left perplexed! Finally, officials from the Saratoga Festival and the Philadelphia Orchestra arrived and they began to comment on the choir's outstanding performance. Maestro smiled. I left, and nothing more was said. Later I came to the realization that the sound of the choir had been relayed to the audience through the speakers, but not to the conductor and orchestra on stage!

Maestro Dutoit left the orchestra under unfortunate circumstances in March 2002. My own inclination was to withdraw but I decided to remain until a new conductor was appointed out of loyalty to the MSO Chorus. Kent Nagano was appointed in 2006 and then I stayed for another two years until my replacement was finally found. It was particularly difficult to part with the St. Lawrence Choir after 36 years but I felt that under the circumstances, it was better that way. Nevertheless, fond memories of both Maestro Dutoit and the MSO Chorus remain as vivid as ever.

TORONTO MENDELSSOHN CHOIR

CANADA'S OLDEST CHOIR CELEBRATES 125 YEARS

by DENISE LAI



TMC IN KOERNER HALL

Founded in 1894, the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (TMC) is Canada's oldest choir. It performed its first concert at the inaugural season of Massey Hall in January 1895. John McCrae, who famously penned the war memorial poem "In Flanders Fields," was in attendance. Throughout its long history, the TMC has been served by eight artistic directors. Since 2018, David Fallis has been its interim conductor. Now the TMC is in the midst of an international search for an artistic director to take the helm in 2020-21.

The choir consists of a professional core of about 20 and has its own concert series featuring a broad range of repertoire, including commissions from Canadian composers. It frequently performs with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. The annual TSO/TMC performances of Handel's *Messiah* have been a longstanding holiday tradition.

The TMC performed in the opening concerts of Roy Thomson Hall (1982) and Koerner Hall (2009), two important Toronto venues. Other notable moments in the choir's history include singing at the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal and the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. The choir has embarked on several tours of Canada, the United States and Europe. In 1995, it received the Lieutenant Governor's Award for the Arts. Its recordings, many made with the TSO, have received Grammy and Juno nominations.

The choir has a huge following of dedicated members. Many stay for decades, with 50 years being the longest record of service. This season the choir has 114 members ranging in age from 18 to 75. Forty percent are under 35, and a similar percentage have sung in the choir for 10 years or more.

Now in his 45th year in the TMC, Daniel Parkinson is the longest-serving chorister. He recalls when the choir used to be 160 voices strong, and says he learned a great deal from Elmer Iseler and Noel Edison, the two artistic directors he has worked with. He does not tire of *Messiah* because "every conductor brings a different style" to the masterpiece. Parkinson now coordinates Singsation Saturdays, an outreach program that offers participants an opportunity to sing in a large choir under many different conductors and expe-

rience a wide range of music. Participants are as eclectic as the conductors and musical genres. Besides classical choral masterpieces, Singsation Saturdays have featured opera, Gilbert & Sullivan, gospel, jazz, barbershop, Latin, Indian and Jewish music, as well as Canadian works.

The TMC has an associate conductor program designed to provide talented conductors at an early stage in their career with coaching, training and mentoring while they provide the TMC with conducting support. Since its inception in 2011, there have been four associate conductors, each holding the position for two years. Another initiative is the TMC apprentice program for choristers aged 17 to 22. In addition to receiving full subsidy of the cost to join the choir, apprentices are mentored by an experienced TMC chorister and receive four coaching sessions per year by a qualified instructor.

Some TMC members have gone on to successful solo careers. Mezzo-soprano Catherine Robbin is one example. Robbin sang with the TMC and the Festival Singers, its then professional core, in the early 1970s and went on tour to Western Canada and Europe. Her most vivid memory of singing on stage as a chorister in the TMC was standing behind and above Maureen Forrester singing Mahler's Second Symphony. "Watching her back expand with every breath was something I can never forget," says Robbin. "But truly, it was the choristers as much as the soloists who impressed me and introduced me to the life of committed musicianship. Singing chorally with such an illustrious group was a brilliant launch to my own life of singing." Robbin had an illustrious 30-year career performing in recital and concert. Retired in 2003, she became the director of Classical Voice Studies at York University, a position she held until 2018.

Mezzo-soprano Jean Stilwell, a noted Carmen, originally studied social work. Her mother discovered that she had a voice and urged her to take lessons and audition for the TMC. Stilwell ended up singing with both the TMC and the Festival Singers in the 1970s, sitting next to her mother, Margaret Stilwell, herself a well-known contralto who had sung at Carnegie Hall with the TSO. She has fond memories of Poulenc's *Gloria* in her first TMC concert. Another memory is of singing music by Penderecki that included "fiendishly difficult" quarter tones. The TMC opened many doors for Stilwell, which led to a long career of operatic, oratorio and even cabaret work with Northern American and European orchestras and opera companies. She still performs occasionally but is known now as the co-host of *Classical Mornings* on The New Classical FM station in Toronto.

Listeners to this station will also be familiar with the velvety voice of Alexa Petrenko, host of *Breakfast Classics* and *Sunday Night at the Opera*. Petrenko sang in the TMC and the professional Elmer Iseler Singers in the 1980 and 90s. She remembers the opening concert of Roy Thomson Hall, when the candles on the celebratory cake set off the fire alarms. She recalls Iseler as "one of (her) favourite complicated, gifted, brilliant music people on the planet." Petrenko jokes that she still uses her opera voice to call her dog. **LSM**

The TMC celebrates its momentous birthday with a 125th anniversary gala concert on Oct. 20 at Koerner Hall. *Singing through Centuries* features three works from three centuries: Fauré's *Requiem*, Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* and Andrew Balfour's *Mamihcimowin*, a TMC commission.

For more information, visit www.tmchoir.org



JEAN STILLWELL



CATHERINE ROBIN

MEMORIES OF A TMC ALUMNUS

by DENISE LAI



Marg Fisher and Denise Lai at the 125th anniversary concert

In 1995, I was fresh out of university and just moved to Toronto. The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir was the only choir I knew about in Toronto, and I decided to audition for it. I sang “Oh Thou That Tellest Good Tidings to Zion” from Handel’s *Messiah* for Elmer Iseler. Upon learning that I grew up in Hong Kong, his eyes lit up and all he wanted to talk about was his spectacular flight landing experience at the then-city airport, where planes almost grazed the roofs of residential building. He then said, “See you tomorrow,” to which I asked perplexedly, “Am I in?” The answer was yes, and I later learned that I was one of only two altos admitted that year.

The next day, I remember my first impressions being there were so many seniors in the choir, some even older than Elmer! I was so young and green – while it took me

some time to fit in socially, I immediately felt artistically right at home. It was thrilling to be surrounded with incredibly talented singers, and to learn challenging repertoire from different centuries. I was very fortunate to have a great mentor in Marg Fisher, my assistant section leader, who took me under her wings and included me in many events, and with whom I am still friends today. I am eternally grateful to the late Ernest Clark, choir marshall, who drove me home from choir practice every week. I was honoured to sing at Ernest’s funeral, and delighted to learn that the choir now has an award in his name honouring his 50 years in the choir.

The choir introduced me to so many great choral works. Besides singing in the requisite Latin, German, French and Italian languages, I had to learn Russian, Polish and Czech. At

my very first TMC concert, we sang Bernstein’s *Chichester Psalms* which I immediately fell in love with. My favourite concerts were those with the TSO, the most memorable included *Carmina Burana* with almost 300 musicians on stage; Mahler’s Second Symphony with Maureen Forrester; Prokofiev’s *Ivan the Terrible*, with the great Christopher Plummer as the narrator. I accosted Mr. Plummer at the dress rehearsal and asked him to autograph my *Sound of Music* CD and DVD collections, which he kindly obliged!

I had only sung with the TMC for five years when other priorities in life took over, but those five years made such an indelible mark and changed my life in so many ways. The fire that kindles the love of singing never dies. Once or twice a year, it is fuelled by singing at *Singsation Saturday*, when I also proudly wear my TMC alumnus pin! **LSM**

ST-LAMBERT CHORAL SOCIETY

A CENTURY OF CHORAL ACHIEVEMENT

by HASSAN LAGHCHA



CONCERT TO MARK THE ST-LAMBERT CHOIR CENTURY
PHOTO: MAXENCE BILODEAU

The St-Lambert Choral Society celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. It is the first to reach this venerable age among the 3,300 choirs of Québec.

“This longevity is due in particular to its ability to adapt to the changes of this group throughout its century of existence,” said Xavier Brossard-Ménard, conductor and artistic director. He also emphasized the importance of the ability to renew oneself and the principles of good governance that underpin the choir’s practices and focus on future prospects.

The conductor discussed the rules of good governance that are firmly established in the choir’s practices, with a management framework that clearly defines powers and responsibilities. He also mentioned that standards of punctuality and the choir members’ consistent attendance at rehearsals are taken seriously.

THE CURIOSITY OF AUDIENCES

Turning to the choir’s program, Brossard-Ménard said that he opts for a balance between the great works of the repertoire and new discoveries. He emphasized the desire to introduce new works that stimulate the intelligent curiosity of listeners who want to hear something new and different from what we’re used to hearing from an amateur choir. “I’m testing diversity and discovery,” said this artist, who loves exploring new avenues in the choral repertoire. “We’re lucky to live in an era of true restructuring and growth in the professionalization of choral singing.” Brossard-Ménard also highlighted the remarkable increase in the quality of choir conductor training and noted the importance of the Alliance chorale du Québec’s unifying role.

The high point of the celebrations of this historic anniversary was the Grand concert du centenaire on May 11 with the Longueuil Symphony Orchestra and renowned soloists Myriam Leblanc, Nicolas Burns and Hugo Laporte. The program included *Chichester Psalms* by Leonard Bernstein and *Dona Nobis Pacem* by Ralph Vaughan Williams. It should also be noted that this 100th season was sponsored by the late great Canadian bass Joseph Rouleau and was marked by many tributes, including the National Assembly medal. **LSM**

TRANSLATED BY ISABEL GARRIGA

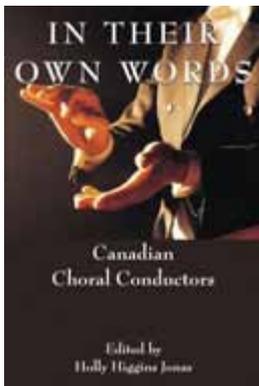
The St-Lambert Choral Society presents *Chants nordiques* with harp and horn on Nov. 17 at St-Lambert Catholic Church to mark the closing of the 100th anniversary celebrations. Later in the season it will perform the *Messe solennelle* of Louis Vierne (Feb. 22) at the Co-Cathedral of Saint-Antoine-de-Padoue; and, along with two other choirs, Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with the Orchestre classique de Montréal (June 7) at the Maison symphonique.

www.chorale-stlambert.qc.ca

NATHANIEL DETT CHORALE

SINGING IN SERVICE TO A GREAT TRADITION

by BRAINERD BLYDEN-TAYLOR



Sometimes, when one door closes, another opens. In the early 1990s I found a way to be of service in the field of education. I was hired to work with classroom teachers in North York, creating a choral program for schools that would allow the teachers to instruct the students themselves. It was a challenge. Teachers came with a varied range of expertise and I had to aim for their individual comfort level and at the same time introduce incremental challenges as their skills improved. This worked well until 1998, when all municipal school boards were amalgamated into the Toronto District School Board. Many fine programs have fallen by the wayside since. For me the venture was meaningful for many reasons, not least

verticalised in the press and radio and by word of mouth, it is a 20-voice SATB choir. Not all the singers are black, but most are. Our first rehearsal took place on Sept. 12, 1998, and our first public appearance was a few weeks later, at the SkyDome in Toronto, as part of concert to help launch the Canadian Friends of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund. I also had the honour of conducting a mass choir of 400 children from all over Canada, with Nelson Mandela in the audience. This was followed by the chorale's own inaugural concert in Niagara Falls, in the presence of Dett's granddaughter, to observe the 55th anniversary of the death of our namesake.

Our Toronto debut was broadcast nationally from the Glenn Gould Studio before a live audience. Our first Christmas concert, *An Indigo Christmas*, showcased black and Afrocentric Christmas music, with African carols, vocal jazz, spirituals, funk and gospel. We're beginning to be more active in terms of touring, especially within Canada, but also in the United States, where we sang at the Midwest Arcs Conference in Kansas City, Missouri, and we hope soon to expand our touring south of the border.

As founder and artistic director, I am pleased that we appear to be filling a significant musical and cultural niche. It is my hope that we will create a legacy worthy of our namesake, Robert Nathaniel Dett.

that I was once again following in Lloyd Bradshaw's footsteps, since he had served the North York board in a similar capacity. Today I serve the ministry of music by consulting in schools, adjudicating festivals, running workshops and leading weekend retreats, particularly with children and youth. I always enjoy my visits to music camps in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. I love the Maritimes, where I first visited Canada back in 1971. Moreover, having been brought up in the West Indies, I like being close to the sea. My new venture is a professional chamber choir, formed in 1998, dedicated to the performance of Afrocentric choral music. This is music written by black composers or by composers influenced by the Afro experience: George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* is an example of the latter, especially since he stipulated that the opera should be performed by an all-black cast in order to achieve authenticity of sound. Our repertoire necessitates research in areas all over the world: it ranges from classical to spirituals, gospel, jazz and indigenous folk music. The choir is named after the Canadian Dr. Robert Nathaniel Dett. He was born in Drummondville, Ontario, which is now part of Niagara Falls. Although he spent most of his life as a professional musician in the United States, he maintained his family connections in Canada, and in fact is buried in his Ontario birthplace. By honouring his name we honour his personal mission of disseminating Afrocentric choral music, and reconnect him in the minds of Canadians with his country of origin. The Nathaniel Dett Chorale, the first of its kind in Canada, attracts professional singers from all over Ontario. Starting with auditions ad-



We were honoured to be invited by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra to participate in the opening concert of its 1999-2000 season with Kathleen Battle. That was an amazing experience. Miss Battle was *very* generous with her time in rehearsal and seemed delighted with our work, expressing a desire to collaborate with us in the future. Also with the TSO, in January 2001, we presented four very successful concerts to celebrate Martin Luther King Day. We are now in the planning stages for a Christmas concert with the TSO this year. We have been blessed with wonderful support from the Toronto community and beyond. In April 2001 we toured Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia for 12 days, and there, as elsewhere, the response from audiences made us realize that a group like ours is long overdue in Canada.

As founder and artistic director, I am pleased that we appear to be filling a significant musical and cultural niche. It is my hope that we will create a legacy worthy of our namesake, Robert Nathaniel Dett, who himself paid tribute to America's first black chamber choir, the Fisk Jubilee Singers, in these words: "With their coming there was poured into the astonished and delighted ears of the world an indigenous music, sung by its own creators, a music as fresh as the morning, as intimate as the breath, and as vital as the heartbeat." **LSM**

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale celebrated their 20th anniversary last year. For concerts: www.nathanieldettchorale.org

Excerpt from *In Their Own Words: Canadian Choral Conductors*, by Holly Higgins Jonas, Dundurn Press, 2001.

CHŒUR DE CHAMBRE DU QUÉBEC

AN ORIGINAL CALLING

by HASSAN LAGHCHA

The mounting successes of the Chœur de chambre du Québec as foremost interpreters of French choral music, both old and new, rests on the shoulders of a 16-member collective and its frontman Robert Ingari. This full-time professor at the Université de Sherbrooke founded the group in 2011 to pursue his deep-seated interests as a composer of vocal works and graduate level instructor. The ensemble's highly polished performances south of the border and in Europe have, in the leader's view, enhanced not only the ensemble's profile but that of the university, which is recognized to be a centre of excellence for the performing and writing of choral music.

The choir has a considerable repertoire of French-language choral works at its disposal, a number of them penned by Ingari himself, some provided by its members. For the choir-master, cultural exchanges are vital in spreading the word. For him, the choir has a dual purpose, one aimed at revealing the wonderful subtleties of the French language, the other being its calling within a contemporary music context. In March 2015, the Chœur was invited to sing at Carnegie Hall in New York for its A

Cappella Next! program. Other appearances include those at Festival Classica, the Piopolis Festival, the Prestige Mondial Loto-Québec event and the Choralies internationales in Edmonton.

PROMISING FIRSTS

The choir will have several opportunities to enhance its growing reputation through this year's concert season. On Nov. 16, it debuts at the Montreal Bach Festival during the choral night, at which time it will perform the *St. John Passion* and some original works by the leader. On Feb. 7, it travels to Ottawa to take part in a showcase event staged at the National Arts Centre. But May 14 may well be its most important engagement to date, with an opening-day concert held at the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul during Choral Canada 2020, a biennial event with a festival and conference rolled into



one. Running for three days until May 17, Choral Canada is much sought after in the choral community, both in Canada and abroad. Montreal plays host to it for the first time ever, with assistance provided by l'Alliance chorale du Québec.

LSM

TRANSLATION BY MARC CHÉNARD

www.chœurdechambre.ca



Christmas Secrets with Gino Quilico

December 5, 2019, at 7:30 p.m.

Opening concert of Les Choralies Festival

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LA CHAPELLE DE QUÉBEC

by JUSTIN BERNARD

of the musical narration and the admirable way Handel constructed this work, which at moments resembles a choral opera.”

A LITTLE HISTORY

Composed exclusively, today, of professionals of the same calibre as Les Violons du Roy, la Chapelle de Québec was officially founded in 1985. Actually, it emerged from a choir that had already existed for several years. It originated from what was then Université Laval's École de musique, according to Labadie. It was also during this period that the young conducting student gave his first concert with choir and orchestra. “I was 19 years old at the time. This project symbolized everything I wanted to do later on: a Purcell opera, *Dido and Aeneas*, with a small string orchestra and a choir. The repertoire for choir and orchestra is in fact the origin of my vocation. It was what I had to do – what I wanted to do with my life.”

LE CHEMIN DE NOËL

Along with Les Violons du Roy and La Chapelle de Québec, Bernard Labadie is also the founder of the Le Chemin de Noël festival,

which is already in its fourth edition. This festival was designed as a Quebec adaptation of the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols of Cambridge (U.K.), an annual event that has helped propagate English-language Christmas songs for over 100 years.

“I had the chance to attend it, and the idea took shape in my mind when I returned from this visit,” Labadie says. “I wanted to create a blend of texts and choral music associated with the holiday season that was ‘poetic-musical.’” With *Le Chemin de Noël*, La Chapelle de Québec and I wanted to give back to Quebec City, which actively supports us. Today, we can count on exceptional cultural venues such as Palais Montcalm, la Maison de la littérature, and even the Diamant, which has just opened its doors.”

La Chapelle de Québec will present Handel's *Messiah* on Dec. 11 and 12 at Quebec City's Palais Montcalm and on Dec. 13 at the Maison symphonique in Montreal. **LSM**

TRANSLATED BY ISABEL GARRIGA

www.violonsduroy.com

La Chapelle de Québec isn't performing its first *Messiah* by Handel – far from it. On this side of the Atlantic, tradition has it that this oratorio is sung during the Christmas season. Each performance seems to bring its share of new experiences. This year, the ensemble will be joined on stage by soloists of international renown, including British countertenor Tim Mead. “Collaborating with such talented artists opens up new interpretive possibilities, such as the choice of arias I can do,” said Bernard Labadie.

For the founder and music director of La Chapelle de Québec, it's essential to keep the pleasure of conducting such a seminal work intact. “In my career, I've conducted the *Messiah* hundreds of times. From now on, I'll dive back into it once every four years or so. I'm not tiring of it. I rediscover the exceptional quality



THE OTTAWA BACH CHOIR

IN CANADA AND BEYOND

by MARIE-CLAIRE FAFARD-BLAIS

led by conductor and founder Lisette Canton, the Ottawa Bach Choir presents *A Bach Christmas* in Toronto on Nov. 30 and in Ottawa on Dec. 1. Now in its 18th year, the ensemble will perform three Bach cantatas for Epiphany: *Meinem Jesus lass ich nicht* BWV 124, *Ach Gott, wie manches Herzeleid* BWV 3, and *Was mein Gott will, das g'scheh allzeit* BWV 111.

“In 1725, these cantatas would have been sung during Epiphany Sundays,” said Canton. “Bachfest Leipzig requested these cantatas. We wanted our Canadian public to discover them.” The choir will perform them as part of the prestigious Leipzig festival in June. The Ottawa Bach Choir is one of the few choirs, and the only Canadian one, to take part in this festival featuring the complete Bach chorale cantatas.

This vocal ensemble of about 20 professionals will be joined by four internationally acclaimed baroque soloists: soprano Meredith Hall, countertenor Nicholas Burns, tenor Philippe Gagné, and bass Andrew Mahon. “To

stay as true to tradition as possible, soloists will join the choir when the movements call for choirs, all the while alternating with their own solos,” added Canton. “Organist Jonathan Oldengarm will present a prelude before each cantata, followed by the choir singing the chorale and the audience singing with us. The choir will then sing the complete cantata before the audience joins us for the final chorale. This was standard practice in Bach's time, giving the concert a livelier feel.”

Ensemble Caprice, a faithful Ottawa Bach Choir collaborator conducted by Matthias Maute, will provide the accompaniment. “In 2016, Caprice performed with us in China. That was a wonderful experience,” said Canton. “What's more, our recent album was recorded with Caprice. The album received rave reviews. We couldn't be any happier!” In February 2019, ATMA Classique launched *Handel: Dixit Dominus; Bach & Schütz: Motets*. “Maute and I have a similar approach to music, creating complicity between us,” Canton added.

“We have a great passion for this magnificent music,” Canton stated. “The choir has put together an educational program in the Ottawa area. It is crucial for our ensemble to open another generation's eyes to classical music – a generation that would have otherwise not known of its existence.” The Ottawa Bach Choir has visited close to 50 schools in the Ottawa area since the program began.

The last word goes to Canton: “I like saying that Bach is the Alpha and the Omega – the beginning and the end. We underpin this with *A Bach Christmas*.” **LSM**

The Ottawa Bach Choir presents *A Bach Christmas* on Nov. 30 at 7:30 p.m. at Toronto's Grace Church on-the-Hill; Dec. 1 at 7:30 p.m. at Ottawa's Knox Presbyterian Church. Information: www.ottawabachchoir.ca

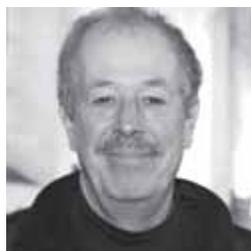
TRANSLATED BY DWAIN RICHARDSON

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POTENTIAL FOR ABSOLUTE PITCH

REVISITING OLD ASSUMPTIONS

by CAROL XIONG

In the West, the possession of absolute pitch (AP) – the ability to identify and/or produce a pitch without a reference pitch – is met with admiration and envy. No wonder, seeing as the prevalence of AP possessors in Canada and the United States is estimated to be 1 in 10,000. Even in university music programs, AP possession features as a mere 9% among students of non-Asian heritage. Compare this to 90% among students from China studying in North America. Western scholars have long attributed this “Asian advantage” to genetics and then, for the past 20 years, the “advantage” of speaking tonal languages in childhood.

However, a study that I conducted at the Eastman School of Music (Rochester, New York) under the supervision of Professor Ellen Koskoff has found evidence that casts doubt on these theories. Instead of administering computerized tests and quantitative surveys, as has been the convention of other scholars, I took the ethnomusicological approach of conducting one-on-one interviews. The in-depth conversations with Eastman students hailing from China, Korea and the United States ultimately challenge not only the theories on how AP is acquired, but the concept of AP itself.

THE CHINESE CONSERVATORY PARADOX

The story begins with the discovery of a little-known paradox at music conservatories across China. Conservatories there are typically split into two parallel sectors: one for Western music and another for traditional Chinese music. According to the interviewees who came to Eastman from pre-college conservatory programs in China, almost everyone in the Western music sector has AP. However, it comes as a disarming surprise that the Chinese interviewees all reported that AP is “just as rare as it is in North America” within the traditional Chinese music sector. How can it be that there is such a striking difference of AP occurrence in an environment where almost every variable – genetics, language, age, rigour of training – is identical?

The pervading cultural attitude in China towards AP is that it is a trainable skill. Among the Chinese interviewees, AP did not even have a separate name, but was referred to simply as “having pitch.” In order to “have pitch,” Chinese students in the Western music sector undergo an ear training curriculum of several years that focuses on singing in fixed-do solfège, visualizing notes on an imaginary keyboard or staff, and writing out increasingly complex music dictations. Youngsters may enter pre-college programs without AP, but by graduation, “having pitch” is as commonplace an expectation for Chinese students of Western music as being able to sight-read.

The idea that AP can be learned even if one is not born with it is further substantiated by the paucity of AP occurrences in the traditional Chinese music sector. Here, AP is unnecessary and even burdensome, because Chinese music prioritizes being able to freely transpose and is notated in relative values. Consequently, students in this sector can manage such impressive aural feats as identifying microtonal intervals, but AP remains a rare ability.

GODIFICATION COMPLEX

The Chinese conservatory paradox shows that if a skill is valued enough by a group, then that group will pursue training until it becomes ubiquitous. If, indeed, AP can be learned, why then are there so few musicians in the West with AP?

Western zeal for AP has given rise to what I call a “Godification complex,” which has idolized rather than popularized this skill. The attitude towards AP is so glorified among Westerners that AP is colloquially known as “perfect pitch.” The American interviewees, some of whom had AP themselves, spoke of AP as a “gift,” a mark of “talent,” an act occurring “without effort” and “as though by magic.” In all, AP has been lifted to a place so sacred that instead of training for it, people who struggle with identifying pitches without reference are told to give up before they have begun to practice. From the beginning of their musical education, Western children born with AP are sorted into an elite group in which their acuity of identifying pitches is honed even further. For everyone else, there is relative pitch, which, because it is learnable, is implicated as a lower-grade alternative.

MIND OVER CULTURE

Western theorists have drawn a cutoff line for AP at the semitone, but in reality, aural skills exist on a spectrum. One musician might possess aural accuracy within a fifth, while another might be able to identify pitches down to the quarter-tone. Hence, the line that divides AP possessors from non-possessors proves both meaningless and limiting: It is meaningless because it is based not on anything to do with cognitive or aural ability, but rather on one culture’s arbitrary definition of the smallest musical interval. It is limiting because it bars the people from one side of the line from crossing over to the other.

The “Asian advantage” coined by other scholars is also a self-sabotaging and inaccurate designation. Asian students do not actually have any inherent advantage over their Western counterparts. The only benefit they have is cultural: Theirs is a culture that is not obsessed with the AP cutoff line, but rather believes in each musician’s potential for growth. Therefore, the dearth of AP in North America can be ameliorated with, foremost, a culture-wide change of attitude toward this skill. Indeed, AP is available to all who dare to seek it with audacity and deliberate, hard work. **LSM**

NYO CANADA YOUTH AND ENERGY

by MARIE-CLAIRE FAFARD-BLAIS

The National Youth Orchestra of Canada (NYOC), in collaboration with the European Union Youth Orchestra (EUYO), will present the Frenergy Tour from Nov. 12 to 17. This historical association, made possible by the European Union Delegation to Canada, brings together 76 young musicians of exceptional ability. The tour takes them to Toronto, Kingston, Montreal and Ottawa.

Led by the Austrian conductor Sascha Goetzl, the concerts will feature as soloist the fast-rising young violinist Blake Pouliot. Formerly a member of the NYOC, Pouliot is effusive about the organization. "I played with the orchestra in 2012 and 2103, an extraordinary experience that I loved," Pouliot says. "That completely changed my career. Winning the Michael Measures Prize in 2013 gave me the chance to play as soloist on tour throughout the country. My career was boosted by being heard and known by various broadcasters. It was an incredible experience and I am grateful for the

two summers I had with the orchestra. It's an honour to return as a guest soloist."

The orchestra and the violinist will perform Saint-Saëns's *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso* Op. 28 and Ravel's dazzling *Tzigane*. This work is on Blake Pouliot's first disc, on the Analekta label, recorded with pianist Hsin-I Huang. "These two works are flamboyant and highly virtuosic," Pouliot explains. "The program choices will show the orchestra's versatility in playing the different styles of the era. The two pieces that I will perform fit the spirit very well. It will also be the first time that I perform *Tzigane* with an orchestra. It's so motivating!"

The program also includes works by Rossini, Stravinsky and Wagner. Each concert will begin with the *Frenergy*, a composition by Canadian John Estacio. An ode to friendship and frenetic energy, it has been performed several times since the premiere by the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra in 1988. *Frenergy* is the tour's anthem to evoke the

musicians' passion and youthfulness. Although he is not performing the work, Blake Pouliot wanted to emphasize the importance of giving a special place to contemporary Canadian music: "It is vital and inspiring that our country support the composers. I'm pleased that a Canadian composition is on the program. I firmly believe in the importance of programming contemporary music."

"The tour will truly celebrate what it is to be a young professional musician," the violinist concludes. "I'm really delighted to be returning to Canada as a soloist so I can show my gratitude to the NYOC and show other youth all that they can achieve." **LSM**

TRANSLATION BY KARINE POZNANSKI

The National Youth Orchestra of Canada will perform *Frenergy* on Nov. 12 at 7:30 p.m. in Koerner Hall in Toronto; Nov. 13 at 7:30 p.m. in the Isabel Bader Centre in Kingston; Nov. 14 at 7:30 p.m. in Notre-Dame Basilica in Montreal; Nov. 17 at 3 p.m. in the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. www.nyoc.org



BLAKE POULIOT



EUYO - 2019 SPRING TOUR
CONCERT IN RESIDENCE IN FERRARE
PHOTO: MARCO CASELLI NIRMAL



ENSEMBLE VIRTUOSOS MUSICAL FUSION FROM HUNGARY

by MARIE-CLAIRE FAFARD-BLAIS

As part of its first tour outside Europe, the Virtuosos ensemble will perform in Canada for the first time. There will be concerts in Montreal on Nov. 15, Ottawa on Nov. 16 and Toronto on Nov. 18. The Hungarian Embassy is supporting the tour.

Virtuosos comprise 10 young Hungarians who have taken their native land by storm. These musicians were recruited after their performance in a televised contest. Their mission is to promote classical music and make it accessible to the public, all the while supporting education for young, talented, passionate musicians.

"Our goal was to provide a televised and jury-based competition in the same spirit as *The X Factor*," said András Batta, director of the Young Virtuosos Foundation. "However, the overall environment and communication with youth are different. In this environment, people are honest, polite and serious."

"Along with 26-year-old pianist Apor Szüts, we founded the Virtuosos last year to give young musicians a vehicle for their sim-

ilar musical interests and develop an exciting, easy, entertaining approach to classical music styles while adhering to the highest standards," added Batta. In addition to playing piano, Szüts conducts and writes arrangements.

The ensemble's concert presents short works from Bach to Bartók, Tchaikovsky to Piazzolla. Because the ensemble does not conform to standard instrumentation – with three violins, a viola, cello, double bass, two flutes, clarinet, and piano – each work has been arranged by Szüts. "We offer well-known repertoire to our public under a different light," said Batta. "It's like comparing music to fusion cuisine. We rethink and recreate traditional meals. We add colours and flavours to traditional harmony. Most importantly, we wanted to present works by Hungarian composers."

Classical music holds a significant place in Hungarian life and culture. Many high-profile music schools are based in Hungary, including the Franz Liszt Academy of Music,

founded by the composer. Hungarian educational programs include music education from kindergarten. Additionally, the Virtuosos Foundation has launched a project that encourages young composers to gain inspiration from Hungarian traditional music and create new works for the ensemble. "Though Hungarian isn't the easiest language to learn and disseminate, our desire is to reveal our nation's loveliest aspects through language and music – a universal language," concluded Batta. **LSM**

Virtuosos perform Nov. 15 in Oscar Peterson Hall in Montreal (www.eventbrite.com); Nov. 16 in the Ottawa Hungarian Community Centre (www.omh-ohcc.ca); and Nov. 18 in the Meridian Arts Centre in Toronto (www.meridianartscentre.com). All concerts start at 7 p.m.

TRANSLATED BY DWAIN RICHARDSON

HIGHER EDUCATION NEWS

by CAROL XIONG

GLENN GOULD SCHOOL

Following a banner academic year, which saw the convocation of The Glenn Gould School's first class of Bachelor of Music students, GGS welcomes soprano Adrienne Pieczonka as Vocal Chair and Head of the Vocal Department. In August, two students, mezzo-soprano Jillian Bonner and cellist David Liam Roberts, were included in the 2019 CBC Music "30 Hot Canadian Classical Musicians Under 30" list. In fall 2018, Clara Wang, harp, won the 2018 OSM Manulife Competition, while Sae Yoon Chon, piano, received Third Prize at the Vendome Prize for Piano at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland this summer. Hillary Simms, trombone, won the Stratford Symphony Orchestra's 2019 Emerging Artist Concerto Competition in May.



SCHULICH SCHOOL OF MUSIC, MCGILL UNIVERSITY

Professors John Rea and Hank Knox were inducted into the Royal Society of Canada and Professor Peter Schubert was awarded The Gail Boyd de Stwolinski Prize for Lifetime Achievement in Music Theory, Teaching and Scholarship. The Schulich School of Music welcomed Professor Dorian Komanoff Bandy to a position in historical performance practice and musicology, held jointly between the school's Performance and Music Research departments. Alumni Victor Fournelle-Blain, Rémi Pelletier and Yolanda Bruno were hired by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and alumna Lara Deutsch won the \$125,000 Mécénat Musica Prix Goyer. Student Jacob Do won the first Oliver Jones Award from the Montreal International Jazz Festival and doctoral student Marina Thibeault joined the University of British Columbia's School of Music as Assistant Professor of Viola and Chamber Music. This Schulich concert season includes the third edition of the Musical Chairs Chamber Music Festival, an event which brings together musicians from eight institutions across four continents for almost 10 days of workshops, concerts and masterclasses.



ORFORD MUSIQUE

The winner of this year's Orford Music Award was Vendome laureate Sae Yoon Chon, who received the prize with a unanimous vote from

the jury. To celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Orford Music Award, this year's competition will be open to all musicians who have attended Orford Music Academy since 2016. The goal is to identify emerging artists who are not only technically excellent but who also have interesting stories to share through their music. The competition is open to all instruments, including voice.

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



T. Patrick Carrabré joined the School of Music as its new director this summer.

The School of Music also welcomed Marina Thibeault as the new Assistant Professor of Viola and Chamber Music. Pianist Nicole Linaksita (BSc/BMus '16) and composer and conductor Jaalem Bhat (BMus '17, MMus '19) are listed among the 2019 CBC Music "30 Hot Canadian Classical Musicians Under 30."

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH



The University of Guelph has broken ground on the renewal and expansion of its performing arts facilities. The 45,000-square-foot project aims to inspire the next generation of performers. A new theatre will be dedicated to the study of improvisation. The project is expected to be completed in the spring of 2021.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



Undergraduate Jazz Performance student Evan Gratham received the Developing Artist Grant for Jazz Performance from the Hnatyshyn Foundation. Recent graduate Sara Schabas also received a Developing Artist Grant for Classical Voice Performance. Composition Professor Christos Hatzis celebrated the Mexican tour of *GOING HOME STAR: Truth and Reconciliation* in October, as well as the world premiere in November of his new work *Face to Face* at Lincoln Center in New York City. Professors Michael Thaut, Aiyun Huang and Eliot Britton

have acquired a state-of-the-art MOCAP system. This new research tool has potential applications in movement disorders and the study of high-performance motion in music.

DON WRIGHT FACULTY OF MUSIC, WESTERN UNIVERSITY



Associate Professor Colleen Richardson was elected President Elect of the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles.

Professor James Grier was awarded the Margaret Wade Labarge Prize for his book *Ademarus Cabannensis, Monachus et Musicus* (Brepols, 2018), which is about the musical life and legacy of medieval monk, Ademar de Chabannes. Associate Professor Patrick Schmidt has a new book aimed at music teachers titled *Policy as Practice: A Guide for Music Educators*.

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY



Laurier appointed award-winning Kira Omelchenko as conductor of the Laurier Symphony Orchestra. Order of Ontario recipient Leslie Fagan was appointed as head of the Voice Program. Community Music Undergraduate Program Coordinator

Deanna Yerichuk received the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance Award for Teaching Excellence. Student Ramya Ramchandra was awarded the 2019 Tamil Karaoke Star Champion in the first international competition of its kind. Alumnus Liam Gordon was a recipient of the 2019 MusiCounts Scholarship. Laurier kicked off this year with a new campaign, Making Space for Music, which aims to expand practice and performance facilities. Laurier was named by Maclean's magazine as No. 1 in Student Satisfaction for the fourth consecutive year.

MORNINGSIDE MUSIC BRIDGE PROGRAM



Over the course of its first two decades, about 1,000 young artists have benefited from the barrier-free music making experience offered by Morningside Music Bridge, a program supported by the Calgary Philharmonic. In October alumna

Yuja Wang won a Gramophone Classical Music Award in the instrumental category for her recording, "The Berlin Recital." **LSM**

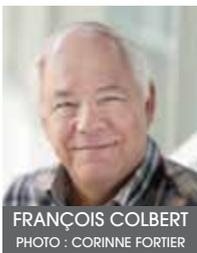
HEC MONTREAL

AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

by MARIE-CLAIRE FAFARD-BLAIS

Arts management is a complex field that has been through major changes over the last few years. HEC Montreal offers a wide range of programs in response to pressing needs. The Master of Management in International Arts Management (MMIAM), available since 2013, established by François Colbert, professor of marketing at HEC Montreal, is unique and offers an original education program. “There are many Masters of Cultural Management in the world, but none focuses on the international dimension,” Colbert explained. “Our basic principle is that to be able to offer an international perspective, truly international experience is required.”

The MMIAM is an intensive program, concentrated into one year, intended mainly for arts students between 25 and 35 who wish to take their career into the international field of arts management. The current group has 13 international students. Through partnerships with the Southern Methodist University in Dallas and the SDA Bocconi in Milan, the students acquire international experience in 10



FRANÇOIS COLBERT
PHOTO: CORINNE FORTIER

cities spread over six countries and four continents. Their journey takes them to Dallas, Montreal, Bogotá, Mumbai, Delhi, Beijing and Milan, among others. In the course of the program year, they are immersed in varying management realities from one country to another. “Meeting high level managers in several countries, students discover diverse ways of doing,” Colbert says. “The realities of management are completely different if you compare Dallas and Bogotá, for example. In Colombia and in India, they find organizations that truly use art as a social vector, art that lifts people out of poverty.”

Throughout their journey, students need to demonstrate a high degree of openness and adaptability while living on the road. “It makes them aware of what artists might be experi-



encing,” Colbert adds. “If you haven’t lived it, you can’t understand it. You have to be ready for jet lag, luggage, uprooting, the solitude. It’s not easy. In spite of all the disruptions, you also have to study and work.”

The master’s program ends with a mini-thesis on an area in the arts. “At the end of the program, students tell us the experience was a life-changer for them,” Colbert explains. “They confront realities that are completely different from their own, not only educationally, but also in terms of health and food. They build a team spirit through memorable moments and also, at times, through difficulties. They are ready to be hired by art organizations, and I am proud to say that they rise quickly up the ladder.”

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www.master-in-international-arts-management.com

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Carole-Anne Roussel, master's degree graduate, and Michaël Theriault, graduate student in voice, Conservatoire de musique de Québec
Photo © Louise Lablanc

Conservatoire de musique et d'art dramatique Québec

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HIGHER MUSICAL EDUCATION

To help students find information on music education, this month's *La Scena Musicale* offers a guide to the major educational institutions in Canada.



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Montreal, Qc, H3T 2A7
Phone: 514-340-6925
Fax: 514-340-6432
mmiam@hec.ca
www.mm-iam.com

• **PROGRAM OFFERED**

International Arts Management Master's (MMIAM)

• **FACILITIES**

Students in the MMIAM program use the facilities of the five partner universities: HEC Montréal, Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Universidad de los Andes School of Management in Bogotá, SDA Bocconi in Mumbai, Delhi and Milan, and Peking University in Beijing during their travels to seven cities. HEC Montréal's Côte-Sainte-Catherine building houses the Myriam

and J.-Robert Ouimet Library, the largest bilingual business library in Canada and one of the largest business libraries in the world.

- **FACULTY** 15
- **PART-TIME FACULTY** 5
- **FULL-TIME STUDENTS** 18 max
- **PART-TIME STUDENTS** 0 (students must be full-time)

- **TUITION FEES**
US\$45,000 including transportation between campuses. Merit-based scholarships are available.

• **DESCRIPTION**

The MMIAM program is a unique, one-year intensive 45-credit master's program that provides its students with the management tools and international knowledge they need to give their career paths a boost and make them stand out of the crowd. It brings them different perspectives on arts management based on international cultural experiences. They study at seven campuses of five partner universities – the best in their fields – in Dallas, Montréal, Bogotá, Mumbai, Delhi, Beijing and Milan, where they also visit many arts organizations and meet with managers.



FACULTÉ DE MUSIQUE DE L'UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL
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Montréal, Québec H3C 3J7
Tel: 514-343-6427
musique@umontreal.ca
www.musique.umontreal.ca

• **PROGRAMS OFFERED**

Bachelor's: music, musicology, performance (classical, jazz), composition, writing
Master's: musicology, ethnomusicology, performance, composition
Diploma of specialized graduate studies (D.E.S.S.): performance (classical, jazz), orchestral repertoire, music mediation
Diplôme d'études professionnelles approfondies (professional advanced certificate, postgraduate-level): performance, composition for film and stage productions
Doctorate: musicology, ethnomusicology, performance, composition, conducting

• **SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS**

Digital music: minor, major, bachelor's and D.E.S.S. (graduate diploma)
• **FACILITIES**
Salle Claude-Champagne (952 seats), two other concert halls, electroacoustic and multitrack recording studios
• **FACULTY**
160 (professors and instructors)
• **STUDENTS:** 788
Undergrad: 472
Graduate: 316
• **TUITION FEES**
Full-time (undergrad):
Québec residents: \$1,771
Canadians (non-Québec residents) and French students: \$4,470
International students: about \$10,000

• **DESCRIPTION**

On the national level, the Faculty of Music distinguishes itself by welcoming close to 316 graduate and postgraduate students (master's, doctorate, graduate and postgraduate diplomas). Linked with international institutions for internships abroad. Financial aid available for all levels. Large research department in musicology, popular music, performance, acoustics, and creation, including the *Observatoire interdisciplinaire de création et de recherche en musique* (Interdisciplinary Observatory for Musical Creation and Research), OICRM.



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www.usherbrooke.ca/musique

• **PROGRAMS OFFERED**

BMus and Certificate: Majors in composition, performance, music pedagogy, or personalized path
Microprogram and DESS in choir direction
MMus in choral direction
DESS in development and realization of an artistic production in music

• **FACILITIES**

Completely renovated
1 concert and recording halls (up to 100 musicians) also including 4 specialized sound recording booths
1 recital room with a view of the Campus (80 seats) which can also be

used as a sounding board
2 studios for performance/pop/jazz/world music
1 large research platform in percussion
3 recording, mixing and post-production boards (7.1)

- **FACULTY**
57 (lecturers included)
- **STUDENTS**
120 full-time and 30 part-time
- **TUITION FEES**
Resident of Quebec: \$ 1610
Canadian outside Quebec, French student and French-speaking Belgian student: \$ 4200
International: \$ 9775

• **DESCRIPTION**

In 2018, the School of Music has completely revised its programs and teaching methods. In fully renovated spaces, the studios are now focused on the synergy between composers and performers. The School of Music is becoming a leader in film, video game and commercial film production training.

Hearings: February 15, 2020



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 musicadmissions@vaniercollege.qc.ca
 www.vaniercollege.qc.ca/music
 Audio Recording Technology info:
 mcneilp@vanier.college or
 514-744-7000

• PROGRAMS OFFERED

- 2-year DCS in Pre-university Music
- 3-year Double DCS in Science and Music
- 3-year Double DCS in Social Science and Music
- 3-year Double DCS in Languages and Cultures and Music
- 3-year DCS in Professional Music and Song Techniques; in composition/arrangement or performance stream.
- 6-month ACS in Audio Recording Technology

• FACILITIES

Vanier College Auditorium (400 seats).
 Robert Frederick Jones Choir Room with 2

grand pianos and stadium seating, Concert Band/Big Band rehearsal room with full complement of percussion instruments and 2 pianos. Digital Sound Design lab, recording studios, computer labs, 35 practice studios, piano studio with 2 grand pianos, 49 pianos including 8 grands.

• FACULTY 40

• STUDENTS 150

• TUITION FEES

Quebec residents: \$190 / semester
 Out of province applicants: \$1,572
 International students: \$6180-\$9580 per semester depending on the program

• DESCRIPTION

Outstanding facilities, programs that lead to university and the professional world, weekly student concerts, large ensemble concerts including Big Band Benefit and Choir Concerts, music theatre productions, master classes/workshops with guest Classical, Jazz and Pop artists. Entrance, interim and graduation scholarships available.

• INFORMATION SESSION

OPEN HOUSE: Saturday, November 2, 2019, 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm

INFORMATION EVENING: Tuesday, February 4, 2020, 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm



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• PROGRAM OFFERED

The Glenn Gould School offers degrees and diplomas for three levels of study:

- Bachelor of Music, Performance (Honours)*,
- Artist Diploma (for post-Bachelor studies), and
- The Rebanks Family Fellowship and International Performance Residency Program (1-year post-graduate program; tuition-free with \$6,000 stipend).

• FACILITIES

Extraordinary facilities give our students an edge when it comes to preparing for a professional career. The Glenn Gould School is one of the few music schools in North America that is integrated with a major performing arts centre. The superb facilities at The Royal Conservatory's TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning

include Koerner Hall, Mazzoleni Hall, Temerty Theatre, and practice and teaching studios available during the week and on weekends and holidays.

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- The Vocal Studies and The Price Opera Program with Adrienne Pieczonka, chair, and
- The Ilnatowycz Piano Program with Leon Fleisher, chair.

• TUITION FEES

The Glenn Gould School is able to offer EVERY student substantial scholarship support for the duration of their program, with more than half of our students receiving full scholarships.

• DESCRIPTION

The Royal Conservatory's Glenn Gould School (GGS) is a post-secondary institution with a focus on performance. GGS school has inspiring faculty including Dean James Anagnoson, outstanding performance spaces such as the acoustically-perfect Koerner Hall, and a small school size of 130 students which allows for 50% more one-on-one studio time. Students also benefit from outstanding facilities, an unparalleled master class program, as well as numerous performance opportunities throughout the year.



FACULTY OF MUSIC, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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 Toronto, Ontario M5S 2C5

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Graduate: (416) 978-5772

Fax: (416) 946-3353

undergrad.music@utoronto.ca

grad.music@utoronto.ca

www.music.utoronto.ca

• PROGRAMS OFFERED

- B.Mus.: Performance (Classical or Jazz); Composition; Comprehensive Studies (Classical or Jazz); History, Culture, and Theory; Music Education (Classical or Jazz)
- Diplomas: Artist Diploma; Advanced Certificate in Performance; Diploma in Operatic Performance
- M.A.: Ethnomusicology; Music Education; Musicology; Music Theory; Music & Health
- Mus.M.: Collaborative Piano; Composition; Conducting; Early Music; Instrumental; Jazz; Opera; Piano Pedagogy; Technology and Digital Media; Vocal; Vocal Pedagogy
- Ph.D.: Ethnomusicology; Music Education; Musicology; Music Theory;

Music & Health

- D.M.A.: Collaborative Piano; Composition; Conducting; Early Music; Instrumental; Jazz; Opera; Piano Pedagogy; Vocal; Vocal Pedagogy

• FACILITIES

Walter Hall (seats 490), MacMillan Theatre (seats 815), Electroacoustic and Recording studios, most extensive music library in Canada

• FACULTY 55 full-time, 150 part-time

• STUDENTS 900

• TUITION FEES

(1 academic year, full-time domestic undergraduate): \$6,100 (excl. student fees)

• DESCRIPTION

The Faculty of Music has a great tradition and reputation as one of the finest institutions in North America for music studies. We host master classes, lectures, and recitals given by renowned artists and leading scholars. The diversity in our course offerings is hard to match; jazz, chamber music, opera, world music, contemporary music, and early music, to name a few. With their international careers, our scholars, performers, and educators disseminate our knowledge, skills, and passion for music with the community and the world. Our students participate in colloquia, conferences, concerts, recordings, and in internships.



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 N6A 3K7

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Fax: (519) 661-3531

music@uwo.ca

www.music.uwo.ca

• UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

BMus.: Music Education, Performance, Music Theory, Composition, Music History.
 BA: Honors or Major in Music; Specialization in Music Admin; Major in Popular Music Studies.
 Music Performance Diploma (3-year) (concurrent with non-music program)
 Artist Diploma (1-year)
 Minor in Music, Minor in Dance

• COLLABORATIVE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

Degree/Diploma in Music Recording Arts Collaborative program with Fanshawe College
 Bachelor of Musical Arts (Honors Music)/HBA (Ivey)
 BA (Honors Specialization in Music)/HBA (Ivey)
 Major in Music/HBA (Ivey)

• GRADUATE PROGRAMS

. Music Theory (MA, PhD)
 . Musicology (MA, PhD)

. Composition (MMus, PhD)
 . Music Education (MMus, PhD)
 . Performance (MMus, DMA)
 . Popular Music & Culture (MA)

• PERFORMANCE FACILITIES

48 seat small recital hall
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 • FACULTY 42 full-time, 75 part-time
 • STUDENTS 450 undergraduate, 163 graduate

• TUITION FEES

(1 academic year, full-time undergraduate-domestic) \$ 7,754.05

• DESCRIPTION

Western's Faculty of Music is one of the top-rated university music programs in Canada. Few other schools have the depth and breadth of programs offered here.

We offer a full range of traditional music programs, opportunities to combine music with other disciplines and new and unique programs such as Music Administrative Studies, Popular Music and collaborative programs with business and sound recording.

Western is also a leader in technology and computer applications in music. More than 350 concerts are presented each year. Our facilities include a recording studio, with live-streaming capabilities and a full-time technician, instrument repair shop that includes hundreds of instruments for student use, string instrument bank of rare and valuable instruments and bows for student use and more than 150 pianos.

CONSERVATOIRE DU QUÉBEC

A NEW DYNAMIC AND A NEW BEGINNING

by HASSAN LAGHCHA



“Our mandate is to train the next generation and to strengthen the complementary expertise of the various components of the network of conservatoires to better serve our students across the province,” says Nathalie Letendre, general director of the Conservatoire de musique et d’art dramatique du Québec. Letendre is guided by the main proposals of a strategic plan (2018-2022) approved by the Quebec government that focuses on various development projects.

One is the establishment of an orchestra drawing on all conservatories in the province. This project will provide space for ensemble music practice for students

and lead to a first joint concert to be held in November in Trois-Rivières. The second, in the spring, takes place in Rimouski. Another pilot project in theatrical improvisation involving the drama conservatories of Montreal and Quebec City will be renewed this year.

Letendre emphasizes the importance of working with the Conservatoire Foundation to meet the needs of different regions, in



NATHALIE LETENDRE

collaboration with the directorates of the network components. The idea is to focus on the characteristics that make up the personality of each of the conservatories. Orchestral conducting, for example, distinguishes the Conservatoire de Montréal. In Rimouski there are early-childhood centres to develop the awakening of music and arts in toddlers and classes dedicated to young people in disadvantaged areas in Val-d’Or.

It is vital to strengthen the presence of conservatoires in their communities. The strategic plan aims, among other things, to

increase specialties and enhance the scope of courses and programs. Other priorities are to promote the development of skills allowing professional integration and improving the recognition of university-level courses to ensure the continuation of studies at higher levels. More stress will be laid on the success of alumni. Recent examples include filmmaker Monia Chokri (Coup de Coeur winner at the 72nd Cannes International Film Festival); actresses Anne-Élisabeth Bossé, Évelyne Brochu and Micheline Bernard; and pianist and composer Jean-Michel Blais, a former student at the Conservatoire de musique de Trois-Rivières. **LSM**

www.conservatoire.gouv.qc.ca



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- UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
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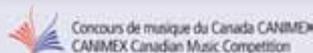
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CD REVIEWS

by BENJAMIN GORON, ARTHUR KAPTAINIS, NORMAN LEBRECHT

Shostakovich plays Shostakovich

Dmitri Shostakovich, Iosif Volovnik, Daniil Shafran, David Oistrakh, Maxim Shostakovich, Milo Sádlo, Nina Dorliak, Zara Dolukhanova, Aleksei Maslennikov, Mieczysław Weinberg, Alexander Gauk, Samuil Samosud

Melodiya MELCD1002596

Five CDs. Total time: 5:42:00

★★★★★



Most records are disposable. A few are memorable, a small handful are treasurable and every now and then now one comes along that is indelible. This box is something else. I

think this is the first time I have ever described a record set as indispensable. The five CDs collect all the Russian state recordings of Dmitri Shostakovich playing his own music. The composer was a terrific pianist and the interpretations can be regarded as authoritative – a reference point for all future performances. But the recordings are imbued by place and time – the Soviet Union, 1946 to 1958, with one final session conducted in the composer's Moscow apartment in 1968, when he was too weak to attend studio sessions for the violin-piano sonata with David Oistrakh.

In the earliest of these recordings, as Stalin is about to launch his second wave of terror, Shostakovich performs 11 songs on Jewish folk poetry with three singers join him around the piano. None of the artists has a window-shattering voice. The composer is seeking intimacy and an air of mourning: six million Jews have just been murdered and you can hear it in the subtexts of this masterpiece. Shostakovich has a knack for capturing Jewish speech rhythms and modes of complaint. The Rivkes and Dovids in his songs are living, breathing Jews. The lead voice belongs to Nina Dorliak, Sviatoslav Richter's partner; the contralto is Zara Dolukhanova and the tenor, Alexei Maslennikov. Some songs do not sound Jewish. Shostakovich aims to transcend ethnicity in pursuit of humanity. I hardly drew breath through the whole of this cycle. Why do we hear it so rarely?

The two piano concertos are fairly familiar recordings, though new listeners will be stunned by the trumpet playing of Iosif Volovnik, an immortal master of his instrument. The composer, as piano soloist, almost shrinks into background. Oistrakh and the cellist Daniil Shafran join him for chamber music, as do the Beethoven Quartet for the Op. 57 piano quintet. He trusts these men: they won't betray him, he thinks. There is a four-hand Concertino that he performs with his

son, Maxim, as well as the complete 24 Preludes and Fugues.

But the truly shattering experience is saved for the final disc where Shostakovich sits down in 1954 with his friend and neighbour, Mieczysław Weinberg, and plays his new symphony, the Tenth, four-handed on his home piano. Mark the date. Stalin has been dead for a year and Weinberg has been sprung from an NKVD cell by the brave intervention of Shostakovich. The symphony draws a line under an era of sheer terror and moves tentatively into light, barely daring to imagine a better future. I listen open-mouthed. Rarely has music so accurately reflected a moment in history, projecting and preserving it for all time. Indispensable? That might be an understatement. **NL**

The Enlightened Trumpet

Concertos by Haydn, Telemann, Mozart and Hummel.

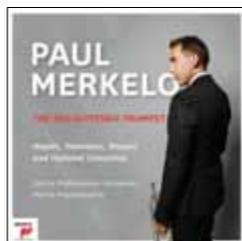
Paul Merkelo, trumpet. Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra,

Marios Papadopoulos, conductor

Sony Classical 80358118463

Total time: 49:29

★★★★☆



Principal trumpet of the OSM since 1995, Paul Merkelo has always played with the heart of a soloist. He realizes his ambition impressively in a Sony Classical disc comprising the Trumpet Concertos of Haydn, Hummel, Leopold Mozart and Telemann. It says something about the significance of this release that it replaces recordings in the CBS Masterworks catalogue by a certain Wynton Marsalis. Indeed, the 1983 album combining Haydn, Hummel and Leopold Mozart turned Marsalis into the first (and so far, only) artist to win Classical and Jazz Grammy Awards in the same year.

How do they compare? Some will prefer Marsalis's burnished tone over Merkelo's brilliance, although the opposite opinion might prevail among those partial to a silvery sound. A good A-B is the athletic rising fanfare that marks the solo entry in Hummel – startling in the new release, convivial in the old. Possibly the impression is influenced by Merkelo's enterprising decision to perform this concerto in its original key, E, rather than the habitual E Flat, and commission Yamaha to build a custom instrument to facilitate the choice. (It seems that Anton Weidinger, the Viennese virtuoso for whom both Haydn and Hummel wrote concertos, owned keyed trumpets in E and E Flat.) The gallop of the Hummel finale

is a delight, as is the cadenza by Timofei Dokshizer. For many listeners the money piece will be Haydn. Merkelo is assured throughout, and his own acrobatic cadenza adds a welcome surprise. In the ceremonial concertos of Telemann and Leopold Mozart, the solo instrument glows gracefully atop the subtle strings of the Oxford Philharmonic under Marios Papadopoulos. The ease of articulation in Leopold Mozart's finale (one of two movements extracted from a serenade) astounds the listener without in the least compromising the atmosphere of easygoing noblesse. **AK**

Azrieli Music Prizes Vol. 2

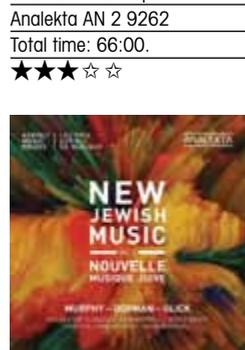
Kelly-Marie Murphy: *En el oscuro es todo uno*. Avner Dorman: *Nigunim* (Violin Concerto No. 2). Srul Irving Glick: *Seven Tableaux from the Song of Songs*. Couloir (cello and harp); Lara St. John, violin; Sharon Azrieli, soprano.

Orchestre classique de Montréal, Boris Brott, conductor

Analekta AN 2 9262

Total time: 66:00.

★★★★☆



The Azrieli Music Prizes for New Jewish Music are a great addition to the cultural infrastructure of Canada and the world. Most years. The 2018 winner of the commission prize,

Kelly-Marie Murphy, starts *En el oscuro es todo uno* by toggling atmospheric wisps reminiscent of Mahler's First Symphony with interjections of rougher barks and growls. In the second movement the composer settles on a bluntly rhythmic rendering of a Ladino folk song that scans as a noisy approximation of the score to *Casablanca*. The cello-harp duo Couloir manages some soulful turns in the cadenza but the finale (which ends abruptly) offers more hard-to-listen-to pastiche. Avner Dorman's *Nigunim* explores the similarities of indigenous Jewish styles from various parts of the world to create a miscellany that does not hold together as a violin concerto despite the estimable solo work of Lara St. John. *Seven Tableaux from the Song of Songs* by the late Srul Irving Glick, as arranged for soprano, piano and orchestra, comes as a relief for being in a straightforward Sondheim style. Sharon Azrieli pours her heart into this, even if her voice is not always suited to the Broadway idiom. Expert backup by the Orchestre classique de Montréal under Boris Brott and excellent engineering by Analekta. Looking forward to next year. **AK**



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Beethoven: Piano Concertos 0-5 (including Piano Concerto in E flat major, WoO 4)

Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin. Mari Kodama, piano. Kent Nagano, conductor
Berlin Classics 0301304BC

★★★☆☆☆

Beethoven: Piano Concertos 0, 2, 6 (including Piano Concerto in E flat major, WoO 4 and a fragment completed by Nicholas Cook and Hermann Dechant)

Sophie Mayuko Vetter (piano/fortepiano). Hamburg SO, Peter Ruzicka

Total time: 68:00

★★★★☆☆



Two recordings arrive, both claiming to be Beethoven world premieres. At issue is a piano concerto the great man wrote in 1784 at the age of 13 or 14 and, after copious revisions, apparently forgot about. The autograph manuscript sits in the Berlin State Library and two pianists have had recourse to it, with a quick trip to the photocopier. First things first: is the concerto

a significant work? Not in the sense that it reveals much we did not already know about Beethoven, music or humanity. The opening theme does not grip the ear and the development is fairly conventional. If someone marketed this as a discovered work by Clementi or Dussek, you would not doubt their word. There are phrases in the second movement that give an intimation of what lies ahead but the emotional barometer is turned very low and there is little to command the listener's attention over the course of 23 minutes.

So which of the performances is to be preferred? Mari Kodama gives a perfectly agreeable account of the work with her husband, Kent Nagano, conducting the DSO-Berlin as part of a set of six Beethoven piano concertos. Sophie-Mayuko Vetter, playing a Beethoven-era Broadwood fortepiano, sounds marginally more convincing, accompanied by the Hamburg Symphony Orchestra, conductor Peter Ruzicka. Her album offers, in addition to the well-known B-Flat Major Concerto Op. 19, an unheard fragment of yet another discarded piano concerto. Undated, this one contains hints of an opening phrase from the future "Emperor Concerto." In a year full of Beethoven, these workshop scrapings exert a haunting fascination. Vetter's the one to try. NL

Mozart: Piano Sonatas K. 310, 331, 576

Yaron Ross, piano

YRCM 63569

Total time: 62:36

★★★★☆



This concluding installment in a cycle of Mozart Piano Sonatas by the Concordia professor Yaron Ross offers distinctive phrasing from the start, with a daring hesitation in the opening bar

of the Sonata in A Minor K. 310. Accompanying triads define the pulse with crisp articulation rather than relentless pounding. First-movement variations are subtly defined in the Sonata in A Major K. 331. A full-hearted and pastoral Menuetto follows, then a surprisingly thoughtful *Rondo alla Turca*. The jubilant fanfares of the first movement Sonata in D Major K. 576 lead to a deeply felt Adagio and plenty of fun in the finale. Everywhere rubato is applied with inherent musicality and a refreshing absence of pedantry. This disc works as both a pick-me-up and a settle-me-down, which is to say it is a faithful reflection of the composer. AK

Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn: Works for Cello and Piano

Johannes Moser, cello. Alasdair Beatson, piano

Pentatone PTC 5186781

Total time: 75:80

★★★★☆



The near-symbiotic relationship between Mendelssohn and his older sister, examined in my forthcoming book *Genius and Anxiety*, was so central to both musicians'

lives that Felix was felled by a stroke on hearing of Fanny's death and died before the year was out. Fanny, the first to evince musical talent, was silenced by their father as she neared puberty in order not to deflect attention from her genius kid brother. In her 30s she found a publisher and began – to Felix's chagrin – to produce chamber music. His anger abated on finding that the music was of high quality. At their last meeting, the pair sat at the piano and gleefully played each other's latest works.

It is almost impossible on record to hear them together, which is why the present release is such a gift. Between Felix's two sonatas for cello and piano, we hear a delicate Fantasia in G minor by Fanny, followed by a delicious, meditative Capriccio in A-flat. Beside Fanny's secure inner voice, Felix sounds

hard-sell and bombastic. Where he is writing for instant applause, she has a more distant audience in mind. The performers, Johannes Moser and Alisdair Beatson, capture this contrast to perfection. It's my favourite Mendelssohn listening of the year. NL LSM

Into The Stone: Music for Solo Violin by Canadian Women

Gillian Smith, violin

Leaf Music, LM228



Leaf Music has just released the first solo album of Ontario violinist Gillian Smith, an album that is quite timely since it brings together five contemporary works by five Canadian composers: Kati Agócs, Alice Ping Yee Ho, Veronika Krausas, Chantale Laplante and Ana Sokolović.

This repertoire requires great virtuosity, if only in the adaptation to different musical territories. In this exercise, Gillian Smith demonstrates a great skill and mastery that allows the listener to identify the uniqueness of each universe. Ho's virtuosic *Caprice* opens with a catchy rhythm, a veritable technical cascade opening into a phantom glade, played pianissimo in the high passages. Sokolović's *Five Dances* have the appearance of hammered rhythmic studies, using a wide range of modes of play to give the instrument a percussive role. A long musical track strewn with double strings, Krausas' *Inside the Stone* unfolds a colorful speech that does not run out of steam, with skilfully written and judiciously interpreted lines. *Versprechen d'Agócs* is a kind of serial variation of Bach's chorale, which reappears at the end of the piece as an island of consonance at the heart of the album, which ends with a slow and very airy piece of Quebec's Chantal Laplante. Feminine mosaic universe and personalities, this album reveals that of the violinist Gillian Smith, who magnificently appropriates Canadian repertoire.

www.gilliansmithviolin.com, www.leaf-music.ca

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AEC @ 50

STILL ON THE EDGE

by MARC CHÉNARD



2003 and, just last February, reedman Joseph Jarman, thus leaving saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell and “Famoudou” Don Moye as its last original torchbearers.

EARLY HISTORY

In the mid-1960s, Mitchell assembled a first band under his own name with Jarman aboard, but the latter always insisted it was his colleague's group after it became the AEC. Barely in the band's infancy, those two musicians, with Bowie and Favors at their side, did something unusual: rather than testing their mettle in the Big Apple, they flew off to Paris, where they rounded off their group by offering the drum chair to Moye. As trailblazers of the nascent Free Jazz movement, these African Americans could not have fit in better with the heady politics of that time and place. The honeymoon was great, but by 1971, two years after landing in the French capital, the band made its way back home to the Windy City.

A SLOGAN FOR THE TIMES

As much as the AEC was identified with the New Thing movement, its players had more on their minds than could be contained by that one bag. They would soon come up with a catchphrase that became their calling card: Great Black Music, Past, Present and Future. Their interests cut a much wider swath of musical styles, going as far back as the ancestral traditions of Africa, running the gamut of the African-American tradition, from jazz to R&B and soul, even stretching beyond its bounds into the realm of contemporary concert music. Given its wide embrace of musical styles, it could be argued that the AEC may well have been the first group to display a truly post-modern approach in the world of jazz, well before the appearance of this now commonplace label.

THE MIDDLE YEARS

In its first decade, AEC built itself into the flagship ensemble of the AACM (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians), a Chicago-based artist collective founded in 1965 (and still active to this day). Supported initially by the jazz cognoscenti, the group was still a little too esoteric for public taste, their recordings strewn with sound collages too befuddling for the uninitiated. Not to mention their African robes, face make-up, cartloads of percussion instruments and at times confounding on-stage rituals.

But as its second decade rolled around, the AEC's profile received a considerable boost thanks to a most unlikely recording deal with the ECM label. Four albums would result from this association, and a host of offshoot projects. In late 2018, the complete recordings of that group and all of its side ventures were issued in a most impressive box set entitled *The Art Ensemble of Chicago and Associated Ensembles* (ECM 2630). All told, there are 21 CDs, a sprawling 300-page book that reprints all 19 album covers, their liner notes, writings by its members and new essays penned by sundry musical collaborators.

Spanning close to four decades, from 1978 to 2015, the discs are sequenced not quite chronologically but according to the overall title of the set: the set begins with all AEC albums (four in total, a fifth being a 2003 tribute album to Bowie with an AWOL Jarman, the remaining 14 divided equally between projects led by or involving either Lester Bowie or Roscoe Mitchell).

Of the AEC's members, Bowie and Mitchell were clearly its most prominent figures, a fact underlined by the heading of a section in the book that refers to them as “Two Pivotal Artists.” Pivots, by definition, imply a direction, and each headed in his own.

LEADERS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT

Bowie, for his part, engaged in a more popular approach with his *Brass Fantasy*, an ensemble that spun out almost mocking covers of pop, R&B and soul evergreens like *Blueberry Hill*, *The Great Pretender* and *Save All Your Love for Me*. Even if its leader did not exclude more abstract pieces, like those culled in his 1982 solo trumpet outing (*The One and Only*) and the one track he took part in on Leo Smith's *Divine Love* album, he would gradually expunge these from later recordings. Case in point, the final ECM Brass Fantasy release (*Avant Pop*) would be something of a misnomer, in that the “avant” was essentially discarded in favour of the “pop.” Prior to all these projects, the trumpeter lent his cunningly subversive and raggedy playing style to the more jazzy-sounding New Directions quartet of drummer Jack de Johnette, a band documented in two recordings, one in studio, the other in concert.

With the emergence of jazz a century or so ago, the once frowned-upon practice of improvisation was thrust back into the spotlight of Western music. Jazz musicians, unlike their classical counterparts, had license to make things up on the spur of the moment and become instant composers. This in turn loosened the grip of the written score over the performance of music to the point of unshackling it completely, within the realm of music-making otherwise known as “free improv.”

By nature, improvisation is ephemeral, and that has several implications for the way music is performed. The history of jazz, for instance, was shaped by individual players who worked in ad-hoc groups rather than long-lasting ones, which is the rule in classical music, where symphony orchestra musicians and string quartet players enjoy more stable employment. Yet, there are exceptions, the most famous one being the Duke Ellington orchestra, and the many ghost bands celebrating the legacies of their long-departed leaders.

One outfit that is still active, the Art Ensemble of Chicago (AEC), has withstood the test of time like few others in jazz, exceeding the ducal run by three years. Now marking its 50th anniversary, this quintet of African-American musicians has lost three of its members along the way, trumpeter Lester Bowie in 1999, bassist Malachi Favors “Maghostut” in

Mitchell, on the other hand, elected to push his music further off the beaten paths entrenched in the AEC's agenda. From the late 1990s onwards, the reedman would move away from more conventional forms of music making with his Note Factory. While still present in its 1997 debut *Nine to Get Ready*, discernable melodic lines or hooks, harmonic progressions or grooves would dissolve into sound washes in ensuing albums such as *Far Side* (2010) and *Bells for the South Side* (2015).

As for the AEC itself, its first two albums *Nice Guys* (1980) and *Full Force* (1982) were about as close as these men got to producing hit records, largely owing to its dedications to Miles Davis (*Dreaming of the Master*) on the first disc and Charles Mingus (*Charlie M*) on the second. Yet, its next two outings, the live *Urban Bushmen* and *The Third Decade*, never lived up to the success of their predecessors, the former earning quite lukewarm reviews at the time.

ONWARD INTO THE NEW MILLENNIUM

In spite of its assorted spinoffs, the AEC's own tenure with ECM ended in 1985 with *Third Decade*, just seven years after its groundbreaking *Nice Guys* studio session. In the 1990s, the quintet found a new home with the Japanese DIW label, which also picked up the Brass Fantasy, some albums with added special guests, the most notable of all being

Cecil Taylor. After the passing of Bowie and Jarman's withdrawal from the scene, the group filled in the gaps with other Chicago confederates like veteran saxman Ari Brown or the relative newcomer, trumpeter Corey Wilkes. Activities have been spottier since, especially after the death of its bassist, but it has not given up the ghost yet.

But its surviving members did not want this banner year to go unnoticed. In the New Year, a double disc package was issued by PI Records, a label profiled in this section last



month. In a matter of weeks, *We are on the Edge* (Pi180) was earning rave reviews, including a Downbeat feature story. Its title is also that of a track heard in two distinct versions on both discs, the first bearing a lyric that says: "We are on the edge of victory." In true AEC spirit, the pieces are wide-ranging in scope, albeit divided between two categories, one definitely aligned to Western contemporary chamber-music, the other unfolding over heavy percussion backdrops. Both discs run around the 70-minute mark, the opening studio side divided into a dozen pieces, all of recent vintage. The second, recorded live, reprises five of the pieces of the first, but are quite different, these

rounded off with two older numbers, Mitchell's theme-song *Odwalla* that brings the concert to a close and an extended workout on *Tutankhamun* by the group's late bassist. Far from limiting itself to the original five-man lineup, AEC's personnel has expanded three-fold with six strings and as many percussionists, most of whom also chip in as vocalists. Five of the studio pieces are reprised in concert, but



ART ENSEMBLE 1990
PHOTO: BARBARA BAREFIELD

are treated very differently – which is par for the course for musicians never content with playing the same thing twice. For its 50 years, the AEC is more resolute than ever to measure up to Joseph Jarman's enjoinder to "Keep the music strong!" **LSM**

OSDL GRAND CHRISTMAS CONCERT

CROSSOVER MEETS A CAPPELLA IN A SEASONAL MOOD

by HASSAN LAGHCHA



On Dec. 5, the magnificent Pratt & Whitney Canada Hall of the Théâtre de la Ville in Longueuil will be the site of the Grand Christmas Concert of the Orchestre Symphonique de Longueuil (OSDL) under the direction of Alexandre Da Costa. The evening features some special guests: Giorgia Fumanti, one of today's best classical crossover singers, and the very popular QW4RTZ vocal quartet with its four eccentric and inspired guys.

"It's nice to have been invited to the show," says François Dubé. This member of QW4RTZ, also known by his artistic alias Fa2, states that his group will present Christmas songs aimed at a diverse family audience as well as songs from their *a cappella* repertoire. "And we step out of our comfort zone a little bit to present some songs with the orchestra," he adds. "It's a bit of a homecoming." He reminds us that each of the four members of QW4RTZ had initially trained in classical music. According to Fa2, the show will give his group, which rarely presents Christmas concerts, a great opportunity to relive some of the nostalgia and magic of the holiday season.

QUEBEC LOVES BIG VOICES

François Dubé remembers a time when each parish had its own country tenor who sang at Christmas. "Quebec has always been a fertile ground for big voices," he says. He is delighted by the craze for a *cappella* singing in North America. The popularity of

QW4RTZ is due, in his opinion, to an artistic approach combining vocal harmonies and a *cappella* songs with variety skits, humorous musical sketches and theatrical stagings. This allows this atypical group to appeal to all kinds of audiences.

For Giorgia Fumanti, this will be an opportunity to present her latest work under the theme *Noël en lumière 2019 / Aïmons-nous* with her characteristic artistic generosity. This soprano, listed as one of Billboard's Top 20 Classical Crossover artists, reached the top position in ADISQ's list of top sellers in 2018 with her 10th album, *Amour*. Her 11th album, *Aïmons-nous*, was released in May. She is known for her light and airy interpretations of the great holiday classics, including *Adeste Fideles*, *Ave Maria* (whether by Caccini, Schubert or Gounod), *Amazing Grace*, *Silent Night*, *Minuit Chrétien*, *Agnus Dei*, *Pie Jesu* and *Panis Angelicus*. **LSM**

www.osdl.ca



Greater Montreal... p.65 Ottawa-Gatineau... p.70 Toronto... p.71 Radio... p.73

Date de tombée pour le prochain numéro: 16 novembre.
Procédure: myscena.org/fr/calendrier-procedure/

Deadline for the next issue: November 16.
Procedure: myscena.org/calendar-instructions/

ABRÉVIATIONS:

arr. arrangements, orchestration chef / dir. /
cond. chef d'orchestre / conductor
(cr) création de l'oeuvre / work premiere
CV contribution volontaire = FD freewill donation
(e) extraits / excerpts

EL entrée libre = FA free admission
LP laissez-passer obligatoire / free pass required
MC Maison de la culture
O.S. orchestre symphonique
O&Ch orchestre & chœur / orchestra & chorus

RSVP veuillez réserver votre place à l'avance /
please reserve your place in advance
S.O. symphony orchestra
x poste (dans les numéros de téléphone) /
extension (in phone numbers)



GREATER MONTREAL

5e Salle, PdA. Cinquième Salle, Place des Arts, 260, boul. de Maisonneuve Ouest, Montréal.
Bon-Pasteur. Chapelle Historique du Bon-Pasteur (Montréal), 100 Sherbrooke Est, Montréal.
Bourgie. Salle Bourgie, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 1339 Sherbrooke St W, Montréal.
Centre Cult. NDG. Centre culturel de Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, 6400 av Monkland, Montréal.
Christ Church. Cathédrale Christ

Church (Montréal), 635 rue Ste-Catherine Ouest, Montréal.
Claude-Champagne. Salle Claude-Champagne, 220, avenue Vincent-d'Indy, Montréal.
Ch. St. Andrews & St. Paul. Church of St. Andrew & St. Paul, 3415 rue Redpath, Montréal.
College Vanier. College Vanier, local : A-250., 821, avenue Ste-Croix, Ville St-Laurent.
Conservatoire Mtl. Salle de concert du Conservatoire de musique de Montréal, 4750, avenue Henri-Julien, Montréal.
É. Wilder. Édifice Wilder - Espace danse, 1435, rue De Bleury, Montréal.
É. St-Andrew & St-Paul. Église St. Andrew et St. Paul, 3415 Rue Red-

path, Montréal.
Église Très-St-Nom-de-Jésus. Église du Très-Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, 4215, rue Adam, Montréal.
Ég. lut. St-Jean. Église luthérienne Saint-Jean / St. John's Lutheran Church, 3594 rue Jeanne Mance, Montréal.
É. NDG. Église Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, 5333 ave Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Montréal.
E. St-Joachim. Église Saint-Joachim, 2 rue Ste-Anne, Pointe-Claire.
Hector-Charland. Théâtre Hector-Charland, 225, boul. de L'Ange-gardien, L'Assomption.
Jeunesses Mus.. Salle Joseph-Rouleau - Jeunesses musicales du Canada, 305, avenue du Mont-

Royal est, Montréal.
Le Gesù. Amphithéâtre du Gesù, 1200, rue de Bleury, Montréal.
L'Oratoire St-Joseph. L'Oratoire St-Joseph, 3800 Queen-Mary, Montréal.
M. de la Cult. C-Léveillé. Maison de la culture Claude-Léveillé, 911, rue Jean-Talon Est, Montréal.
Marriott. Marriott Château Champlain, 1050 de la Gauchetière O, Montréal.
M. de la Cult. Ahuntsic. Maison de la culture Ahuntsic-Cartierville, 10300 Rue Lajeunesse, 1er étage, Montréal.
M. symph. Maison Symphonique, 1600, rue Saint-Urbain, Montréal.
Mountainside United Ch. Mountainside United Church, 4000 The

Opérart présente

Souper-Concert / Dinner concert
BROADWAY
à l'Opéra / to the Opera

30 NOVEMBRE 2019
NOVEMBER 30, 2019

Cocktail 18h30
19h30 - 22h00

5 DÉCEMBRE 2019
DECEMBER 5, 2019

Cocktail 18h30
19h30 - 22h00

11 DÉCEMBRE 2019
DECEMBER 11, 2019

Cocktail 18h30
19h30 - 22h00

14 DÉCEMBRE 2019
DECEMBER 14, 2019

Cocktail 18h30
19h30 - 22h00

Caf' Conc'

Marriott Château Champlain
1050 De La Gauchetière West,
Montréal, QC H3B 4C9

Billets / Tickets

144\$ + frais et taxes
www.kubidez/broadwayopera

Boulevard, Westmount.

N-D du Bon-Secours. Chapelle Notre Dame de Bon Secours, 400, rue Saint-Paul Est, Montreal.

Notre-Dame Basilica. Notre-Dame Basilica, 110 Notre-Dame St W, Montreal.

Petit CampusC. Petit Campus, 57 Prince-Arthur Est, Montreal.

Presbyterian College. Presbyterian College, 3495 Rue University, Montreal.

Pierre-Mercure. Salle Pierre-Mercure, 300, boulevard Maisonneuve Est, Montreal.

Pollack. Salle Pollack, 555 Sherbrooke St W, Montreal.

Relais Mnt-Royal. Le Relais Mont Royal, 500, Avenue du Mont-Royal Est, Montréal.

S. Claude-Léveillé. Salle Claude-Léveillé, Place des Arts, 175 Rue Sainte-Catherine Ouest, Montréal.

St-James Ch. St James Church Hall, 642 Main Road, Hudson.

Tanna Schulich. Tanna Schulich Hall, 527 Sherbrooke St. West, Montreal.

Ch. Of St-John Bapt. The Church of Saint John the Baptist, 233, av. Sainte-Claire, Pointe-Claire.

Th. Maisonneuve. Théâtre Maisonneuve, 175, rue Sainte-Catherine O, Montréal.

Bar Verre Bouteille. Verre Bouteille, 2112, Mont-Royal Est, Montreal.

Victoria Hall. Victoria Hall, 4626 rue Sherbrooke O., Westmount.

Wil.-Pel. (PdA). Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier, Place des Arts, 175, Ste-Catherine ouest, Montréal.

Wirth Opera Studio. Wirth Opera Studio - Elizabeth Wirth Music Building, 527 Sherbrooke St. West, Montréal.

NOVEMBER

01 Friday

▶19h. *M. symph.* \$53. **OSM Concert: Phantom of the Opera.** 514-842-2112.

▶19h30. *Bourgie.* \$28-54. **Angèle Dubeau et la Pietà.** 514-285-2000, option 4.

▶19h30. *Pollack.* \$12-18. Works by **Lemay, Daugherty, Varèse and Husa (cond. Alain Cazes).** 514-398-4547.

02 Saturday

▶00h30. *Presbyterian College.* Gratuit. Organ recital **by Hans-Ola Ericsson.** 514-398-4547.

▶16h. *Christ Church.* Freewill offerings. **Marc-Antoine d'Aragon, baritone & Philippe Prud'homme, piano.** 438-929-9911.

▶19h30. *Relais Mnt-Royal.* \$15. **Méodies & Lieder with la Chorale du Relais Mont-Royal & soloists.** 514-528-7033.

▶19h30. *Tanna Schulich.* \$12-18. Students and professors play John Hollenbeck. 514-398-4547.

▶19h30. *M. de la Cult. Ahuntsic.* Free. **Tribute to Katia Makdissi-Warren by the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne (NEM).** 514-872-8749.

▶20h. *Bourgie.* \$28-54. **Karina Gauvin, Pacific Baroque Orchestra.** 514-285-2000, option 4.

03 Sunday

▶14h30. *Bourgie.* 28.05\$ - 53.92\$. **Angèle Dubeau et la Pietà.** 514-285-2000, option 4.

▶15h. *Centre Cult. NDG.* Gratuit. **A voyage across more than a century of Québec choral music.** 514-872-0777.

▶15h. *Pierre-Mercure.* \$10-60. **The Petits Chanteurs du Mont-Royal perform Vivaldi's joyous choral work Gloria.** 514 487-5190.

▶15h. *Conservatoire Mtl.* Recital at the **Société d'art vocal de Montréal.** 514-397-0068.

▶16h. St-James Ch. \$20-25. **Piano Trios by Beethoven, Schumann and Chausson.** 450-458-5107.

▶16h. É. NDG. Gratuit. **Couperin Recital IX: Ordres 20, 21, 22 et 23; Denis Bonenfant, harpsichord.** 514-502-5349.

04 Monday

▶ 20h. Bar Verre Bouteille. \$10-15. **Singer Rayannah in show at the Verre Bouteille.**

07 Thursday

▶19h30. É. Wilder. \$21-\$29. **Geneviève Duong + Keren Rosenberg.** (514) 525 - 1500.

▶12h. *M. de la Cult. C-Léveillé.* Free. Concert. 514-872-6131.

08 Friday

▶19h30. Ch. St. Andrews & St. Paul. Free / Gratuit. **Dvorak: Mass in D major with the Vanier College choir.** 514-398-4547.



50th season

Berta Rosenohl, piano;
Luis Grinhauz, violin
& Joshua Morris, cello.

Saturday, November 16th at 6PM
Chapelle Historique du Bon-Pasteur
100 Sherbrooke East
Concert Co-sponsored by Mme. Vanda Treiser

THREE TRIOS

Beethoven: "Kakadu Variations" Op 121a
Ernest Chausson: Trio Op 3
Schumann: Third Trio Op 110

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Info & reservations: 514 489 8713
www.cameratamontreal.com

PREVIEWS CONCERT PICKS

MONTREAL

by JUSTIN BERNARD &
ANDRÉANNE VENNE



PENTAÈDRE: HOMAGE TO JACQUES HÉTU

The year 2020 marks the 10th anniversary of the death of this great Quebec composer. Accompanied by pianist Philip Chiu, the musicians of Pentaèdre – flutist Ariane Brisson, oboist Marjorie Tremblay, clarinetist Martin Carpentier, bassoonist Matthieu Lussier, hornist Louis-Philippe Marsolais – will pay tribute to the master. On the program: Nocturne for clarinet and piano, Élégie for bassoon and piano, Incantations for oboe and piano, Lied for horn and piano, Aria for flute and piano, the Wind Quintet and Prélude et danse pour piano, among others. Nov. 8, 7:30 p.m., Conservatoire de musique de Montréal. www.pentaedre.com

CONCERT-LECTURE AT THE CHAPELLE DU BON PASTEUR

After offering a first event dedicated to Auguste Descarries's Piano Sonata in Vancouver, pianist Janelle Fung and the musicologist François de Médecis repeat the experiment, mixing musical performances and musicological observations, in Montreal. This concert-lecture entitled "Around Auguste Descarries" will include the Sonata and other solo-piano works by the Quebec composer. In collaboration with the Association pour la diffusion de la musique d'Auguste Descarries (ADMAD). Nov. 13, 7:30 p.m., Chapelle du Bon Pasteur. www.accesculture.com



MUSICA CAMERATA

On the occasion of its 50th anniversary, the Musica Camerata Montréal chamber music ensemble offers its second major event of the season, following the success of its opening concert, which paid tribute to Argentinian composers. On the program of this second event: trios by Beethoven, Chausson and Schumann. Nov. 16, 6 p.m., Chapelle du Bon Pasteur. www.cameratamontreal.com



SATIE'S PIECES, GONNEVILLE'S SONGS

The Ensemble Contemporain de Montréal and its guests will play a new instrumental and vocal work by Quebec composer Michel Gonneville, based on poems by Pierre Morency and inspired by the theme of childhood. Short pieces for piano by Erik Satie will be mixed with Chansons du Bonhomme, sung by Magali Simard-Galdès; Dion Mazerolle, baritone; Louise Bessette, piano; as well as 12 musicians from

the ECM under the direction of Véronique Lacroix. Screenings will alternate Satie's humorous texts and Morency's poems. In collaboration with Arte Musica. Nov. 17, 2:30 p.m., Bourgie Hall of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. www.ecm.qc.ca



AMERICAN STRING QUARTET AT THE LMMC

The year 2019 marks the 45th anniversary of the American String Quartet. Made up of alumni of the prestigious Juilliard School, this ensemble will be joined by Cynthia Phelps, principal viola of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. On the program are Quintets by Mozart, Mendelssohn and Brahms. Nov. 17, 3:30 p.m., Pollack Hall. www.lmmc.ca

CEDARS BENEFIT CONCERT

In November, the Cedars Cancer Foundation hosts a fundraising concert to support its "comfort kit." I Medici di McGill, an orchestra of McGill doctors, under the direction of Gilles Auger, will participate in this special event, accompanied by cellist Stéphane Tétreault who will be soloist in the Cello Concerto in B minor by Antonin Dvořák. Other works include Slavonic Dances by the same composer, Stamitz's String Quartet in C major and Corelli's Concerto Grosso in G minor. Nov. 17, 4 p.m., Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul. www.cedars.ca



BOHEMIA: ENSEMBLE SCHOLASTICA

Ensemble Scholastica presents its opening concert, which is also the first in a new series called Periphéria. The aim is to explore the sacred music traditions of the peripheral regions of medieval Europe, starting with Bohemia, located in the present Czech Republic. For this event, the choir will present a selection of some of the most beautiful works from the region's plainchant and medieval polyphony repertoire: sequences, cantion, tropes and motets, reflecting in particular the growing sense of the nation among Gypsies. Nov. 17, 5 p.m., Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel. www.ensemblescholastica.ca



Nicolas Ellis : orchestre symphonique de l'agora
Le vendredi 15 novembre 2019 à Pointe-Claire à l'église Saint-Joachim

- 19h30. *Pollack*. \$20-30. **Mozart: La Clemenza di Tito**. 514-398-4547.
- 19h30. *Conservatoire Mtl.* \$12-32. Tribute to Jacques Hétu: **Pentaèdre with pianist Philip Chiu**.

09 Saturday

- 16h. *Christ Church*. Freewill Offerings. **Piano recital with Kevin Ahfat at Oasis Musicale**. 438-929-9911.
- 19h30. *Claude-Champagne*. \$12-30. **OSJM: Works by Prokofiev, including the Symphony No. 5**. 514-645-0311.
- 19h30. *Pollack*. \$20 - \$30. **Mozart: La Clemenza di Tito**. 514-398-4547.
- 19h30. *Mn. arts Laval*. \$20-48. **L'Opéra bouffe du Québec presents La Fille du tambour-major by Jacques Offenbach**. 450-667-2040.

10 Sunday

- 09h30. *Conservatoire Mtl.* 40\$. Singing **Brunch in favour of the Société d'art lyrique du Royaume**. 418-545-2787.
- 14h. *Pollack*. \$20-30. **Mozart: La Clemenza di Tito**. 514-398-4547.
- 14h. *Mn. arts Laval*. \$20-48. **L'Opéra bouffe du Québec presents La Fille du tambour-major by Jacques Offenbach**. 450-667-2040.
- 16h. *É. Wilder*. \$21-29. Dance: **Geneviève Duong + Keren Rosenberg**. 514-525-1500.
- 16h. *É. NDG*. Gratuit. **Couperin Recital X: Ordres 24, 25, 26 et 27; Denis Bonenfant, harpsichord**. 514-502-5349.
- 16h30. *Ch. Of St-John Bapt*. **Tocatta & Fugue in D Minor, and Masterworks for Organ Solo**. 438-921-0920.

11 Monday

- 19h30. *Pollack*. \$12-18. **Axel Strauss et Stéphane Lémelin - Fantaisies for violin and piano**. 514-398-4547.

12 Tuesday

- 20h. *M. symph.* **Concert of the TSO at Maison symphonique**.
- 20h. *Centre Cult. NDG*. Gratuit. **Genesis versus Purcell and Dowland; Gentle Giant versus Morley and Gibbons**. 514-872-0777.



Quasar-Chestra II : Amphithéâtre du Gesù Musiciens invités : Stockholms Saxofonkvartett 17 novembre, 16 h

14 Thursday

- 19h30. *É. Wilder*. \$21-29. Dance: **Alejandro Sajgalik + Soraïda Caron**. (514) 525 - 1500.
- 19h30. *Notre-Dame Basilica*. Donation. **Youth orchestras from Canada and the EU unite for the Frenergy Tour**.

15 Friday

- 19h30. *M. de la Cult. Ahuntsic*. Free. **Maracujá Band: music and rhythm from Brazil**. 514-872-8749.
- 19h30. *Mn. arts Laval*. \$20-48. **L'Opéra bouffe du Québec presents La Fille du tambour-major by Jacques Offenbach**. 450-667-2040.

16 Saturday

- 12h. *Wirth Opera Studio*. Free. **Celebration of saxophone through workshops, lectures, etc.**
- 12h. *M. de la Cult. C-Léveillé*. Free. Concert. 514-872-6131.
- 14h. *Mn. arts Laval*. \$20-48. **L'Opéra bouffe du Québec presents La Fille du tambour-major by Jacques Offenbach**. 450-667-2040.
- 18h. *Bon-Pasteur*. \$30-40. **Musica Camerata: Works for trio by Beethoven, Chausson and Schumann**. 514-489-8713.

17 Sunday

- 14h. *Hector-Charland*. \$53. **A Versatile Singer, All Kind of Music Styles, Accompanied by La Sinfonia**. 450-589-9198, #5.
- 14h. *Ég. lut. St-Jean*. Free. **Cantata concert: Telemann and Bach**. 514-844-6297.
- 14h. *Mn. arts Laval*. \$20-48. **L'Opéra bouffe du Québec presents La Fille du tambour-major by Jacques Offenbach**. 450-667-2040.
- 14h30. *Bourgie*. \$17-32. **ECM+: Chansons du Bonhomme de chemin by Michel Gonneville**. 514-524-0173.
- 15h30. *Pollack*. \$20-50. **LMMC Concerts: American String Quartet with Cynthia Phelps, viola**. 514-932-6796.
- 16h. *Le Gesù*. \$18-35. **A great celebration of saxophones in all types of repertoire**.
- 16h. *É. Wilder*. \$21-29. Dance: **Alejandro Sajgalik + Soraïda Caron**. (514) 525 - 1500.

▶ 16h. *É. St-Andrew & St-Paul. Concert for Cedars Foundation: Works by Stamitz, Corelli and Dvorak.*

18 Monday

▶ 19h30. *N-D du Bon-Secours. \$5-20. Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I - Mark Edwards, harpsichord.* 514-802-1729.

19 Tuesday

▶ 09h30. *S. Claude-Léveillé. \$8-12. Children's Chamber Music Concert.* 514-935-3933.

▶ 11h. *S. Claude-Léveillé. \$8-12. Children's Chamber Music Concert.* 514-935-3933.

▶ 14h. *M. de la Cult. Ahuntsic. Free. Chamber music.* 514-872-8749.

▶ 16h30. *S. Claude-Léveillé. \$8-12. Children's Chamber Music Concert.* 514-935-3933.

▶ 20h. *5e Salle, PdA. \$31-44. A contemporary flamenco tale.* 514-842-2112.

21 Thursday

▶ 19h30. *É. Wilder. \$21-29. Dance: Liliane Moussa & Caroline St-Laurent + Tess Martens.* (514) 525-1500.

▶ 19h30. *M. de la Cult. Ahuntsic. Free. Dances and songs.* 514-872-8749.

22 Friday

▶ 19h30. *Bourgie. \$15-27. Quasar celebrates its 25th Anniversary.*

▶ 19h30. *Wil-Pel. (PdA). \$49.44 - \$121. Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince™ in Concert.* (514) 842-2112.

▶ 19h30. *Pollack. \$15-20. McGill: Symphonic works by Berlioz.* 514-398-4547.

▶ 20h. *Petit Campus. \$15-25. É.T.É's new album Les Quatre Roses.*

▶ 32h. *M. de la Cult. C-Léveillé. Free. Concert.* 514-872-6131.

23 Saturday

▶ 16h. *Christ Church. Freewill Offerings. International pianist Poom Prommachart in concert at Oasis Musicale.* 438-929-9911.

▶ 19h30. *Pollack. \$15-20. McGill: Symphonic works by Berlioz.* 514-398-4547.

▶ 19h30. *Claude-Champagne. \$25-100. Gala: Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques.* 438-794-5012.



Quasar a 25 ans:
Concert anniversaire présenté par Arte Musica
22 novembre, 19 h 30
Salle Bourgie

▶ 19h30. *É. Très-St-Nom-de-Jésus. Tribute to Patrick Wedd: from Orlando di Lasso to Durufle and Lauridsen.*

24 Sunday

▶ 15h. *Victoria Hall. \$10-20. Songs and instrumental pieces from the French baroque.* 514-803-6646.

▶ 16h. *É. Wilder. \$21-29. Dance: Liliane Moussa & Caroline St-Laurent + Tess Martens.* 514-525-1500.

27 Wednesday

▶ 19h30. *M. de la Cult. Ahuntsic. Free. Songs from First Nations.* 514-872-8749.

▶ 20h. *S. C-Léveillé. \$53-\$172. Concert by the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal.* 514-842-2112.

28 Thursday

▶ 12h10. *S. C-Léveillé. Concert by Société Pro Musica.*

30 Saturday

▶ 16h. *Christ Church. Freewill Offerings. Ensemble Saxologie presents: Chameleons | oasismusicale.ca.* 438-929-9911.

▶ 19h30. *Marriott. \$144. Opéart: Dinner-concert: Broadway to the Opera.*

▶ 20h. *Jeunesses Mus. \$20. Recital inspired by the music of Schubert and Mozart.*

DECEMBER

01 Sunday

▶ 14h. *College Vanier. \$7-\$10. JS Bach Christmas Oratorio Sight Reading, at Vanier College.*

MONTREAL BACH FESTIVAL

The month of November will be marked by a new edition of the Montreal Bach Festival. Great novelty of 2019: the Bach Off-Festival, which aims to offer a wide range of free events on the sidelines of the official program. This parallel festival will take place in a new space, open every day from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., from Nov. 20 to Dec. 5, at 3487 Saint-Laurent Blvd. From Nov. 22 to Dec. 7, no fewer than 30 concerts will be presented in the Maison symphonique, Bourgie Hall, Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel, St. Joseph's Oratory, the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, St. John the Baptist Church, the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, the churches of St. Leon, St. Viateur and St. Peter the Apostle, and Salle Gilles Lefebvre in Orford. As an opening act, the Berlin Akamus Orchestra will perform the Brandenburg Concertos (Nov. 22) and Bach's Orchestral Suites (Nov. 23) in St. Leon Church. www.festivalbachmontreal.com



QUASAR TURNS 25

Quasar is about to celebrate its 25th anniversary and plans to mark the occasion with a concert under the auspices of Arte Musica. Founded in 1994, the Montreal saxophone quartet is dedicated to contemporary music, whether instrumental or electronic. Recognized for its audacity and the unparalleled quality of his playing, Quatuor Quasar has created more than 150 works and received six Opus Awards. On the program of this anniversary concert, the works that have marked the course of the ensemble, are pieces by Florent Schmitt, Michel Frigon, Iannis Xenakis, Michael Osterle and Ülo Krigul. Nov. 22, 7:30, Bourgie Hall. www.quasar4.com

OSM: ONE FOR ALL, ALL FOR ONE

As part of the 80th edition of the OSM Competition, several former winners will share the stage in an exceptional concert including Bax's Quintet for Strings and Harp, Hersant's Cello and Harp Chorale and Mendelssohn's Octet. Among the performers will be violinists Jean-Sébastien Roy, Éliane Charest-Beauchamp, Marie Lacasse and Isabella D'Éloïze-Perron; violists Neal Gripp and Charles Pilon; cellists Cameron Crozman, Stéphane Tétreault and Johannes Moser; and harpist Valérie Milot. Presented in collaboration with the OSM. Nov. 29, 6:30 p.m., Bourgie Hall. www.osm.ca



ARION AND SMAM PLAY BACH

The Arion Baroque Orchestra and the Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal, under the direction of renowned Italian conductor Andrea Marcon, join forces to perform one of the masterpieces of the repertoire, the Mass in B minor by Johann Sebastian Bach. These two Montreal ensembles will be joined by sopranos Robin Johansen and Hana Blažíková, countertenor Carlos Mena, tenor Richard Resch and baritone José Antonio Lopez. Nov. 29, 7:30 p.m. Saint-Jean-Baptiste Church. www.arionbaroque.com



Grand Concert

NICOLAS ELLIS

ORCHESTRE SYMPHONIQUE DE L'AGORA

NICOLAS ELLIS, CHEF ET DIRECTEUR ARTISTIQUE
CONDUCTOR AND ARTIST DIRECTOR

Église Saint-Joachim, 2 av. Sainte-Anne, Pointe-Claire

Vendredi 15 novembre / Friday, November 15 - 20:00

Billets / Tickets : \$18 & \$10, disponibles au / available at:
Centre culturel Stewart Hall Cultural Centre 514 630-1220

OPÉART

For the last few years, renown tenor and music director Louis Langelier offers the return of a wonderful dinner concert presented in the "Caf'Conc," the Chateau Champlain's famous dinner theatre venue. Acclaimed internationally since 1988, Mr. Langelier along with six extraordinary singers, a pianist and a violinist, will perform works from musicals, popular classical music and opera. Mr. Lambert, director of operations says "I have seen a lot of shows in my life, in New York, Vegas, and many other cities, but this one is magical to listen to; voices without microphones among the audience and a warm atmosphere; they even make us participate." Nov. 30, Dec. 5, 11, 14. www.kubidez.com/broadwayopera

LES VIOLINS DU ROY WELCOME CHRISTINE RICE

The mezzo-soprano Christine Rice joins Les Violons du Roy, under the direction of Jonathan Cohen, to perform various pieces from the baroque repertoire where passionate, forbidden and broken loves mingle. On the program: excerpts from operas by Rameau, Handel and Purcell. In addition, there are several later works for orchestra alone: Pärt's Cantus in memoriam, Elgar's Elegy and Phaedra by Britten, and Bacewicz's Concerto for String Orchestra. Nov. 30, 8 p.m., Bourgie Hall. Note that this concert will also be presented on Nov. 28 at 8 p.m. at Palais Montcalm in Quebec City. www.violonsduroy.com



OSM: BACH'S CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

This year again, as part of the holiday season, the OSM will offer us one of the jewels of Baroque repertoire, the Christmas Oratorio by Johann Sebastian Bach (excerpts). Under the direction of Kent Nagano, the musicians and the OSM choir will share the stage with Marie-Sophie Pollak, soprano, Wiebke Lehmkuhl, mezzo-soprano, and Philippe Sly, baritone. Dec. 3, 8 p.m., Maison symphonique. www.osm.ca

RACHMANINOV TRIOS

At the heart of Russian romanticism! A legendary pianist and composer of genius, Rachmaninov's music constitutes a fascinating corpus, right from his earliest works. His first Trio élégiaque is a perfect illustration of his compositional mastery, while his second trio, marked by the death of Tchaikovsky, reveals the full measure of his talent. Rachmaninov's Vocalise, one of his most memorable melodies, carries us through the exciting world of the last of the great 19th-century Russian masters. Trio Fibonacci, Dec. 3, 7:30 p.m., Salle Bourgie. www.triofibonacci.com



ORCHESTRE DE L'UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL: SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE

Live the dream world of Berlioz and his heirs with the Symphonie fantastique, an evening celebrating the famous work for orchestra. Marking the 150th anniversary of the death of the romantic composer at the origin of the hybrid genre of the drama symphony and author of the Grand Traité d'Instrumentation, the concert

given by the Orchestre de l'Université de Montréal will include the works of two beneficiaries of Berlioz's innovations: Maurice Ravel's Concerto for the Left Hand and two excerpts from John Williams's Suite for Orchestra, composed for Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. Dec 7, 7:30 p.m., Salle Claude-Champagne. www.calendrier.umontreal.ca

HANDEL'S MESSIAH

The Orchestre classique de Montréal under the baton of Boris Brott presents the great seasonal classic with soprano Aline Kutan, mezzo-soprano Annamaria Popescu, tenor Zachary Rioux and baritone Gregory Dahl. The combined voices of Les Chantres musiciens, Les Filles de l'île and the OCM Chorus complete the evening, Dec. 8 at 3 p.m. at St. Joseph's Oratory. www.orchestre.ca

03 Tuesday

► 15h30. *Pollack*. \$30-50. Miro Quartet with Clive Greensmith and Martin Beaver. 514-932-6796.

04 Wednesday

► 20h. *Th. Maisonneuve*. \$30-71. **Dance without borders by choreographer Dana Gingras**. 514-842-2112.

05 Thursday

► 19h30. *M. de la Cult. C-Léveillé*. Free. **Concert**. 514-872-6131.

07 Saturday

► 16h30. Mountainside United Ch. Free. **English Montreal School Board Chorale Annual Holiday Concert**. 514-483-7200.

► 20h. É. St-Joachim. \$20. **Stewart Hall Singers: Haydn's Missa in Tempore Belli' Christmas music**. 514-697-2952.

08 Sunday

► 14h. *Ég. lut. St-Jean*. Gratuit. a **Baroque Christmas**. 514-844-6297.

► 15h. *L'Oratoire St-Joseph*. \$25-60. **OCM: Handel's Messiah**. 514-487-5190.

► 15h30. *Pollack*. \$20-50. **LMC Concerts: Hyeyoon Park - violin, Benjamin Grosvenor - piano**. 514-932-6796.



OTTAWA - GATINEAU

ACT. Arts Court Theatre, 2 Daly Ave, Ottawa.

National Arts Centre. National Arts Centre - Southam Hall, 53 Elgin St, Ottawa.

Dominion-Chalmers. Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre, 355 Cooper Street, Ottawa.

Glebe St. James Ch. Glebe St. James United Church, 650 Lyon Street South, Ottawa.

KPC. Knox Presbyterian Church, 120 Lisgar Street, Ottawa.

MUC. MacKay United Church, 39 Dufferin Rd, Ottawa.

St. Bartholomew's. St. Bartholomew's Church, 125 McKay Street, Ottawa.

St Matthew's. St Matthew's Church, 130 Glebe Avenue, Ottawa.

NOVEMBER

04 20h30. *Dominion-Chalmers*. \$40-60. **4th, 5th and 6th English Suites by Bach, and rarely performed Sonata in D major**. 613-234-6306.

05 19h30. National Arts Centre. Free. **uOttawa at the NAC**. 613-947-7000

07 20h. National Arts Centre. \$31-119. **Boston Ballet at the NAC**. 613-947-7000.

09 19h. *ACT*. \$15-25. **Canadian War Poetry with Trombone & Strings**. 613-884-7188.

09 20h. National Arts Centre. \$31-119. **Boston Ballet at the NAC**. 613-947-7000.

10 19h30. *MUC*. \$15-25. **Canadian War Poetry with Trombone & Strings**. 613-884-7188.

11 20h. National Arts Centre. \$31-119. **Karen Gomyo and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra**. 613-947-7000.

15 20h. National Arts Centre. \$31-119. **NAC Dance - Bangarra Dance Theatre**. 613-947-7000.

16 20h. National Arts Centre. \$31-119. **NAC Dance - Bangarra Dance Theatre**. 613-947-7000.

17 14h30. *Glebe St. James Ch.* \$7-10. **Autumn Notes - Chamber Music Concert - Glebe St. James United Church**. 613-236-0617.

17 15h. National Arts Centre. \$27. **The Fernery Tour: NYO Canada featuring the European Union Youth Orchestra**. 613-947-7000.

20 20h. National Arts Centre. \$31-119. **NAC orchestra - Haydn, Biss & Beethoven**. 613-947-7000.

21 20h. National Arts Centre. \$31-119. **NAC orchestra - Haydn, Biss & Beethoven**. 613-947-7000.

24 21h30. *Dominion-Chalmers*. \$30-52. **Beethoven, Strauss, and the world premiere of Canadian composer Kevin Lau's A Drop of Light**. 613 234-6306.

27 19h. National Arts Centre. \$31-119. **NAC Orchestra - Avner Dorman's Double Concerto**. 613-947-7000.

DECEMBER

01 19h30. *KPC*. \$15-50. **A Bach Christmas, includes festive repertoire for Christmas by Bach**. 613-270-1015.

03 19h30. *Dominion-Chalmers*. \$10-45. **Thirteen Strings presents its annual Christmas Candlelight Concert**. 613-738-7888.

06 19h30. *St. Matthew's*. \$15-25. **A festive season concert of carols**. 613-986-4577.

08 16h. *St. Bartholomew's*. \$15-25. **A festive season concert of carols**. 613-986-4577.



TORONTO

CPC. Calvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave, Toronto.

EUC. Eastminster United Church, 310 Danforth Ave, Toronto.

Grace Ch. Grace Church on-the-Hill, 300 Lonsdale Road, Toronto.

Glenn Gould Studio. Glenn Gould Studio, 250 Front St. W., Toronto.

HH. Hammerson Hall, 4141 Living Arts Dr, Mississauga.

Jane Mallett. Jane Mallett Theatre, 27 Front St. E., Toronto.

JLH. Jeanne Lamon Hall, 427 Bloor Street West, Toronto.

Koerner. Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor

Street West, Toronto.

Meridian Hall. Meridian Hall (formerly the Sony Centre for the Performing Arts), 1 Front St E, Toronto.

MT. MacMillan Theatre, 80 Queens Park, Toronto.

RBA. Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, 145 Queen St W, Toronto.

Roy Thom. Hall. Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe Street, Toronto.

St-Thomas Anglican Ch. St-Thomas Anglican Church, 383 Huron St, Toronto.

NOVEMBER

01 20h. *Koerner.* \$40-90. **Karina Gaurin and the Pacific Baroque Orchestra.** 416-408-2824.

02 20h. *Calvin Presb. Ch.* \$17-28. **Greater Toronto Philharmonic Orchestra.** 416-275-6720.

03 19h. *Koerner.* \$46-120. **Mooredale Concerts: recital of Soprano Hilda Gerzmava.** 416-408-0208.

05 09h45. *FirstOntario.* **Imagine: A Concert for Peace.** 905-525-7664, ext. 16.

05 12h. *RBA.* Free. **Canadian Opera Company.** 416-306-2330.

06 09h45. *FirstOntario.* Phone only. **A Bohemian Rhapsody.** 905-525-7664, ext. 16.

06 12h. *RBA.* Free. **Canadian Opera Company.** 416-306-2330.

07 20h. *Jane Mallett.* \$10-52. **Music Toronto: Quartets by Haydn, Schumann and Bacewicz.** 416-366-7723.

08 20h. *Koerner.* \$35-90. **Ray Chen with Julio Elizalde.** 416-408-0208.

08 20h. *Glenn Gould Studio.* \$15-42. **Premiere by Larysa Kuzmenkos; works by Mozart, Tchaikovsky and Ichnmouratov.**

09 20h. *HH.* \$51-154. **Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** 416-593-7769.

10 14h. *Koerner.* \$49-99. **Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus.** 416-408-0208.

12 12h. *RBA.* Free. **Canadian Opera Company.** 416-306-2330.

12 19h30. *Koerner.* \$23-33. **National Youth Orchestra.** 1-888-532-4470.

13 17h30. *RBA.* Free. **Canadian Opera Company.** 416-306-2330.

13 20h. *HH.* \$41-154. **Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** 416-593-7769.

13 20h. *Meridian Hall.* **Another Brick in the Wall: The Opera.**

14 12h. *RBA.* Free. **Canadian Opera Company.** 416-306-2330.

14 20h. *JLH.* \$20-109. **Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra.** 416-964-6337.

16 20h. *HH.* \$25-55. **Mississauga Symphony Orchestra.** 905-615-4405.

17 15h. *HH.* \$155. **Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** 416-593-7769.

17 15h. *Koerner.* \$45-100. **Zurich Chamber Orchestra.** 416-408-2824.

19 12h. *RBA.* Free. **Canadian Opera Company.** 416-306-2330.

19 19h30. *MT.* \$10-30. **Purcell's King Arthur.** 416-408-0208.

20 00h. *HH.* \$51-154. **Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** 416-593-7769.

20 12h. *RBA.* Free. **Canadian Opera Company.** 416-306-2330.

21 12h. *RBA.* Free. **Canadian Opera Company.** 416-306-2330.

21 19h30. *MT.* \$10-40. **The Marriage of Figaro.** 416-408-0208.

21 20h. *HH.* \$41-154. **Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** 416-593-7769.

22 19h30. *Roy Thom. Hall.* \$41-154. **Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** 416-593-7769.

22 20h. *Koerner.* \$25-90. **Andrei Feher.** 416-408-2824.

23 20h. *Roy Thom. Hall.* \$41-154. **Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** 416-593-7769.

24 15h. *Roy Thom. Hall.* \$31. **Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra.** 416-593-7769.

24 15h. *Koerner.* **Yefim Bronfman.** 416-408-2824.

26 12h. *RBA.* Free. **Canadian Opera Company.** 416-306-2330.

27 12h. *RBA.* Free. **Canadian Opera Company.** 416-306-2330.

27 20h. *Roy Thom. Hall.* \$41-154. **Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** 416-593-7769.

27 20h. *Koerner.* \$45-95. **Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin.** 416-408-2824.

28 12h. *RBA.* Free. **Canadian Opera Company.** 416-306-2330.

28 20h. *Roy Thom. Hall.* \$41-154. **Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** 416-593-7769.

30 10h. *Roy Thom. Hall.* 5\$. **Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** 416-593-7769.

30 15h. *Koerner.* \$27. **Choeur des jeunes de Laval.** 450-978-3666.

30 20h. *Roy Thom. Hall.* \$41-154. **Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** 416-593-7769.

DECEMBER

01 15h. *Roy Thom. Hall.* \$41-154. **Toronto Symphony Orchestra.** 416-593-7769.

01 20h. *Koerner.* \$20-65. **Esprit Orchestra.** 416-408-2824.

03 19h30. *Roy Thom. Hall.* \$20-78. **Toronto Mendelssohn Choir.** 416-598-0422.

04 19h. *JLH.* \$20-89. **Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra with Vesuvius Ensemble.** 416-964-6337.

04 19h30. *Roy Thom. Hall.* \$20-78. **Toronto Mendelssohn Choir.** 416-598-0422.

05 19h30. *MT.* \$10-30. **University of Toronto.** 416-408-0208.

05 20h. *Jane Mallett.* \$10-52. **Music Toronto: Works for trio by Beethoven, Mussorsky and Dvorak.** 416-366-7723.

06 19h30. *Koerner.* \$45-65. **Toronto Choral Society.** 416-408-2824.

06 20h. *Grace Ch.* \$0-25. **Mooredale Concerts: The Upper Canada Choristers.** 416-256-0510.

06 20h. *St-Thomas Anglican Ch.* \$10-30. **Exultate Chamber Singers.** 416-971-9229.

OTTAWA

by ARTHUR KAPTAINIS

TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Under the baton of Sir Andrew Davis, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra visits Southam Hall in the National Arts Centre in Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10, Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 1 (Karen Gomyo, violin) and a new work by Émilie Lebel. Nov. 11. www.nac-cna.ca



OTTAWA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The Ottawa Symphony Orchestra offers Strauss's Death and Transfiguration, Sibelius's Violin Concerto (Nikki Chooi, soloist), Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture in a rare indoor performance and the premiere of a work by Victor Herbert. Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre. Nov. 18. www.ottawasymphony.com

HANDEL'S MESSIAH

Matthew Larkin's Caelis Academy Ensemble delivers Handel's Messiah supported by UPBEAT choir orchestra and soprano Susan Elizabeth Brown, mezzo-soprano Sarah Bissonnette, tenor Jeffrey Boyd and bass David John Pike. Église Saint-François-de-Sales in Gatineau. Nov. 24 www.eventbrite.ca

OCTAGON ENSEMBLE

Chamberfest presents the Octagon Ensemble, an all-star group including violinists Martin Beaver and Mark Fewer, violist Rivka Golani, cellist Rachel Mercer, bassist Joel Quarrington, horn player Ken MacDonald, bassoonist Kathleen McLean and clarinetist James Campbell. Beethoven's Septet Op. 20, a reduction of Strauss's Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, and the world premiere of Canadian composer Kevin Lau's A Drop of Light. Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre. Nov. 24. www.chamberfest.com



MUSIC FOR A SUNDAY AFTERNOON

The NAC presents Music for a Sunday Afternoon at the National Gallery. Members of the orchestra perform a Brahms's Clarinet Trio in its viola version and Fauré's Piano Quartet No. 1. Nov. 24. www.nac-cna.ca

AVNER DORMAN'S DOUBLE CONCERTO

Israeli-born Avner Dorman's Double Concerto for violin and cello will help mark the 70th birthday of Pinchas Zukerman, who plays it with his wife, cellist Amanda Forsyth. Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony completes the program. Pietari Inkinen conducts Southam Hall in the National Arts Centre. Nov. 27. www.nac-cna.ca

CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT CONCERT

Thirteen Strings offers a Christmas Candlelight Concert featuring soprano Hélène Brunet, contralto Viki St. Pierre and the Thirteen Strings Chamber Choir in music by Corelli, Scarlatti, Armstrong and Vivaldi. Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre. Dec. 3. www.thirteenstrings.ca

TALLIS SCHOLARS

Chamberfest presents the world-famous Tallis Scholars in a concert of a cappella vocal music from the Renaissance to 20th-century Paris. Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre. Dec. 9. www.chamberfest.com





ANTONIO LOTTI REVEALED

The Tafelmusik Orchestra and Chamber Choir shine light on an Italian composer known to Bach and Handel but relatively forgotten today. Ivars Taurins conducts Lotti's *Missa Sapientiae*. Jeanne Lamont Hall, Trinity-St. Paul's Centre. Nov. 14, 15, 16, 17. www.tafelmusik.org

VIVALDI: FOUR SEASONS

This might not mark the world premiere of Vivaldi's popular cycle of concertos, but the program gives Toronto Symphony Orchestra concertmaster Jonathan Crow an opportunity to conduct as well as play solo violin. In the first half: Carmen Braden's *Songs of the Invisible Summer Stars* and the 1944 Suite from Copland's ballet *Appalachian Spring* in the original version for 13 instruments. All concerts in Roy Thomson Hall except for Nov. 17 in George Weston Hall in North York. Nov. 16, 17, 20, 21. www.tso.ca

THEREMIN SONATAS

It has been almost a century since Léon Theremin constructed the distinctive electronic instrument that bears his name. Composer Alexander Rapoport is in a mood to celebrate. Pamela Stickney and her fellow Viennese, pianist Thessi Rauba, present the U of T prof's three Theremin Sonatas, two of them in Canadian premieres. Heliconian Hall, 7:30, 35 Hazelton Ave. Nov. 16. alexander.raoport@utoronto.ca.



AN AMERICAN IN PARIS

The vastly experienced Leonard Slatkin visits Roy Thomson Hall to lead a TSO program including Gershwin's exuberant tone poem and Bernstein's irresistible Overture to *Candide*. Jon Kimura Parker does the honours in Samuel Barber's Piano Concerto. Roy Thomson Hall. Nov. 20 and 22. www.tso.ca

TAP:EX AUGMENTED OPERA

An evening of sensory expansion and reality-questioning at Sidewalk Labs, an experimental space at 307 Lakeshore Blvd. E. Want to know more about this presentation of Tapestry Opera? Best to show up! Nov. 20, 21, 22, 23. www.tapestryopera.com

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

U of T Opera presents Mozart's opera in a period production. Stage direction by Michael Albano and conducting by Sandra Horst in the MacMillan Theatre of the Edward Johnson Building. Nov. 21, 22, 23, 24. www.uoftopera.ca



YEFIM BRONFMAN

The Israeli-American pianist gives an all-Beethoven recital comprising the three Sonatas Op. 10 and Op. 57 ("Appassionata"). Koerner Hall. Nov. 24. www.rcmusic.com

ESPRIT ORCHESTRA

The new-music ensemble opens its season with *Sustain* by the acclaimed American composer Andrew Norman. A violin concerto by Adam Scime (Véronique Mathieu, soloist) and José Évangélista's *Accelerando* complete this program led by Alex Pauk. Koerner Hall. Dec. 1. www.rcmusic.com

07 19h30. *EUC*. \$15-30. **VOCA Chorus of Toronto**. 416-947-8487.
07 20h. *Glenn Gould Studio*. \$15-42. **Sinfonia Toronto**. 416-499-0403.



Isabel Bader Centre. Isabel Bader Centre, 390, King Street West, Kingston.

Richmond Hill Centre. Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts – Plaza Suite, 10268 Yonge Street, Richmond Hill.

St. Paul's United Ch. St. Paul's United Church, 104 Church Street, Stirling.

NOVEMBER

02 12h. St. Paul's United Church. **Masterclass by the Quinte Society for Chamber Music**. 613-473-4461.

13 19h30. Isabel Bader Centre. \$23-33. **National Youth Orchestra**. 1-888-532-4470.

21 19h30. Richmond Hill Centre. \$30-55. **Toronto City Choir**. 1-800-838-3006.

DECEMBER

01 14h30. Richmond Hill Centre. \$22-56. **Voicebox: Opera in Concert**. 416-366-7723.

01 15h. Richmond Hill Centre. \$15-32. **York Symphony Orchestra**. 905-787-8811.



CBC Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. cbc.ca. 514-597-6000, 613-724-1200, 866-306-4636. **R2** Radio Two. Ottawa 103.3FM, Montréal 93.5FM, Toronto 99.1 FM **SATO** *Saturday Afternoon at the Opera*

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CIRA Radio Ville-Marie. radiovm.com

com. 514-382-3913. Montréal 91.3FM, Sherbrooke 100.3FM, Trois-Rivières 89.9FM, Victoriaville 89.3FM. Lun-ven 6h-7h *Musique sacrée*; 10h-11h *Couleurs et mélodies*; 20h30-21h *Sur deux notes*; mer. 5h et dim. 21h Voix Orthodoxes; dim. 10h *Chant grégorien*; 12h-12h30 *Sur deux notes*; 13h-13h30 *Dans mon temps*; 15h30-16h *Musique traditionnelle*; 20h30-21h *Sur deux notes* (reprise de 12h); 21h-22h *à pleine voix*; 22h-23h *Jazz*; dim. 6h-7h30 *Chant grégorien*; 17h-18h *Petites musiques pour*; 22h-23h *Chant choral*; 23h-24h *Sans frontière*; et pendant la nuit, reprises des émissions du jour

CJFO station communautaire francophone, Ottawa-Gatineau. Uniquefm.ca. Dim 8h-12h *Chez Gauthier*, musique classique, avec François Gauthier. fgauthier@uniquefm.ca

CJFX Radio Classique. cjfx.ca. 514-871-0995. Montréal 99.5FM. Musique classique 24h/jour, 7 jours/semaine

Classical FM. Toronto 96.3 FM, Cobourg 103.1 FM, Georgian Triangle 102.9 FM.

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SRC Société Radio-Canada. radiocanada.ca. 514-597-6000: **ICI**mu ICI Musique: Montréal 100,7FM; Ottawa 102,5FM; Québec 95,3FM; Mauricie 104,3FM; Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean 100,9FM; Rimouski 101,5FM. Lun-ven 7h-8h30 *La mélodie de bonne heure* (portion classique) avec Marie-Christine Trottier; lun-jeu 20h-22h *Toute une musique* *musique classiques*, avec Marie-Christine Trottier; sam 7h-10h, dim 7h-8h30 *Café, Mozart et compagnie*, dim 8h30-10h *De tout choeur* (musique chorale), avec Isabelle Poulin, dim 10h-12h **Carnet-SAL** *Dans les carnets d'Alain Lefèvre*, avec Alain Lefèvre; dim 12h-15h *Chants Libre à Monique*, avec Monique Giroux; dim 19h-23h **PLOP!** *Place à l'opéra*, avec Sylvia L'Écuyer (webdiffusion sam 13h-17h, en direct pendant la saison du MetOp; rediffusion à la radio dim 19h); **O&Ch** orchestre et choeur

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AITKEN@80

New Music Concerts presents a retrospective of works written for its founding music director, flutist Robert Aitken. George Crumb and Elliott Carter are two of the names in question. St. George by the Grange. Dec. 8. www.newmusicconcerts.com

O COME, SHEPHERDS

Tafelmusik assembles a program of Italian Christmas music (including Corelli's famous concerto) with the help of the Vesuvius Ensemble. Special guest Tommaso Sollazzo plays the zampogna (Italian bagpipes). Jeanne Lamou Hall, Trinity-St. Paul's Centre (Dec. 10 at George Weston Recital Hall). Dec. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10. www.tafelmusik.org



GRYPHON TRIO WITH ROBERT POMAKOV

Music Toronto presents the veteran Toronto bass in Mussorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death* as arranged by Gary Kulesha; on their own, the Gryphons perform Beethoven's *Kakadu Variations* Op. 121 and Dvorak's Piano Trio in F Minor Op. 65. Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre. Dec. 5. www.music-toronto.com

ST. MICHAEL'S SCHOOL CHOIR CHRISTMAS CONCERT

The annual afternoon seasonal concert by the well-regarded school includes John Rutter's *Gloria* with the True North Brass. Dec. 8. Roy Thomson Hall. www.roythomsonhall.com

TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HOLIDAY POPS

Soprano Measha Brueggergosman delivers the holiday cheer under the baton of TSO popsmeister Steven Reinecke. Backup from the Etobicoke School of the Arts Holiday Chorus. Roy Thomson Hall. Dec. 10, 11, 12. www.tso.ca

JANE ARCHIBALD

The Canadian soprano, a regular of the COC stage, gives a mixed Lieder recital for the Toronto Women's Musical Club with Liz Upchurch at the piano. Walter Hall. Dec. 14. www.wmct.on.ca



CHRISTMAS WITH THE SALVATION ARMY

Various styles are guaranteed in a concert including soprano Kira Braun, the Duncan Hopkins Trio, organist Ian Sadler and dramatist Colin Fox. The Salvation Army's Canadian Staff Band, Canadian Staff Songsters and a 250-voice festival chorus are under Major Leonard Ballantine. Roy Thomson Hall. Dec. 14. www.roythomsonhall.com

PRAETORIUS CHRISTMAS VESPERS

The Toronto Consort under David Fallis evokes 17-century Germany by means vocal and instrumental. Jeanne Lamou Hall, Trinity-St. Paul's Centre. Dec. 14, 15, 16. www.torontoconsort.org

HANDEL'S MESSIAH

Alexander Shelley is the Toronto Symphony Orchestra *Messiah*-master this year, with soloists Jane Archibald, Emily D'Angelo, Isaiah Bell and Russell Braun, plus the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir. Roy Thomson Hall. Dec. 17, 18, 20, 21 22. www.tso.ca

JONATHAN PLOWRIGHT

The Yorkshireman plays Brahms's Ballades Op. 10, Schumann's Kinderszenen, Mozart's Variations on "Ah! Vous dirai-je, Maman" and three Humoresques by Paderewski for Music Toronto at the Jane Mallett Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre. Dec. 17. www.music-toronto.com



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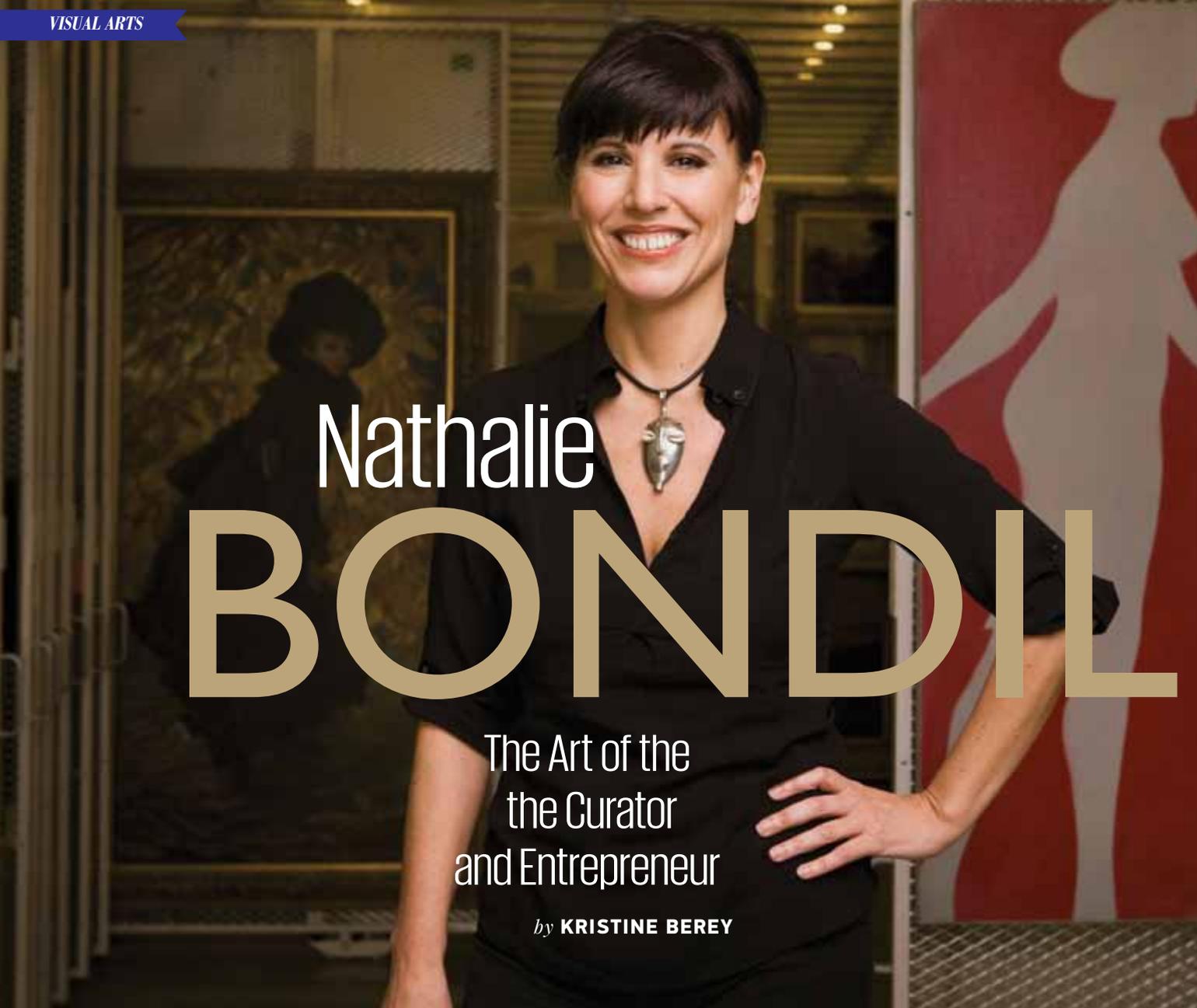
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Nathalie BONDIL

The Art of the the Curator and Entrepreneur

by KRISTINE BEREY

It is unlikely that the executive director and chief curator of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts would look up “art” in the Oxford English Dictionary. But if she ever did, Nathalie Bondil would surely embrace the first definition, “human creative skill or its application,” as firmly as she would reject the last, “supposedly creative subjects as opposed to scientific, technical or vocational subjects.”

It is precisely the coming together of different people, ideas and disciplines that forms the essence of the “central value” as outlined in her *Manifesto for a Humanist Museum*, written in 2016 on the occasion of the opening of the Michal and Renata Hornstein Pavilion for Peace – International Art and Education. Hers is a vision that includes but also goes beyond the Museum’s original mission to “encourage the appreciation of fine arts among the people of the city.”

Bondil has been in her current position since 2007 but has been with the MMFA since 1999. “It’s been a wonderful journey; I would

not have expected to stay for so many years in Canada,” she said in her office, where the walls boast of many exhibitions past, reflecting the Museum’s multidisciplinary programming, including fashion (Yves Saint Laurent, Jean Paul Gaultier), world and popular culture and contemporary art (Peru: Kingdoms of the Sun and the Moon, Imagine, Peter Doig).

On her watch the MMFA has grown into one of the most visited museums in Canada and the eighth-most-visited in North America, welcoming 1.3 million people a year. Its temporary exhibitions have been exported to 35 cities. Through its community outreach programs that include education, art therapy, and now, health and wellbeing – a first for museums in North America – it partners with 450 organizations

What made Bondil transform a temporary stay for professional development into a vocation in Montreal was the contrast she saw between the workplace here and during her previous experiences in New York and Paris.

“Here, I do not work for the state or a public service but work for the public. It is really different, not a top-down bureaucracy, but where I can interact with society. Working as a team gives a very different flavour and sense of mission and value to our daily life. We work with volunteers, business and schools towards the goal of making this institution more relevant.”

She has garnered several awards, including the prestigious Peter Herrndorf Arts Leadership Award offered by Business/Arts for fostering arts in Canada by building partnerships with artists, media, business leaders. She was also named Knight of the Ordre de Montréal for her contribution to this city.

Philanthropist Michael Audain of the Audain Art Museum Foundation has praised her as “an entrepreneurial curator,” a description that she feels is in keeping with her personality. “Being entrepreneurial brings a lot of passion and anxiety but for me it is a question of opportunities. I like the fact that people support you when you want to create a project, to



have a team to make it happen.” Bondil treasures the freedom and the support she has found in Canada: “I think this country gave the best of myself to me.”

She speaks of a horizontal as opposed to vertical administration, where different perspectives on art result in co-creation. She does not like specialists working in silos.

“The curator has one perspective, but there are many ways to understand and be touched by art. I am not a musicologist, I can’t read a score, but I am touched by music. A work of art does not belong to the art historian. It can be understood through different angles: material, style, civilization, bio of the artist, the function.

“For me it is like a game. We have all those works that cannot speak, but they have this universal language that can touch everyone. We have to make them speak.”

Bondil says neuroscience has shown that aesthetic emotion. What we feel when contemplating something or someone beautiful is a physiological need that comes from the part of our brain that we share with animals. “We need to be moved by beauty,” she says. She believes museums have a role to play in therapy and wellbeing.

In November, a pilot project where doctors prescribe museum visits, created in partnership with the Médecins francophones du Canada, will be assessed. It is an initiative Bondil hopes to make available to all doctors in the future.

She sees the flood of images provided by the internet as an opportunity, not as a threat, because it creates awareness and interest in art. Still she warns: “We must promote and value the immersive experience we have when we listen to a musician or look at a painting because it very different. We must distinguish it from the platform that diffuses the art.” Increasingly, she says, museums are seen as a “safe authentic place with real things to discover in a world that is becoming more and more virtual.”

Since 2008, with the creation of the Arte Musica Foundation and the opening of Bourgie Hall in 2011, the museum has had a musical component as well.

Bondil approaches her role as curator with humility. “We are never the owners of beauty, we only receive it temporarily. Each object has different stories and will have more stories after me. [Working with art] is a chance, a privilege, and it is our duty to protect the works for future generations.” She is keenly aware that the existence of the pieces she works with spans hundreds, sometimes thousands of years: “Much longer than our short life.” **LSM**

Find more information on the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Bourgie Hall and the art therapy program at www.mbam.qc.ca





HARRY ROSEN

photos by TOM INOUE

The late Dr. Harry Rosen, a world-renowned dentist and McGill University professor, had a knack for stone. He left numerous works in Montreal and Toronto.

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Artwork Deadline: 2020-05-23

Calendar Deadline: 2020-05-15

LUC COURCHESNE ON THE RISE OF DIGITAL ARTS

A PIONEER RECEIVED THE HIGHEST VISUAL ARTS AWARD

by NATHALIE DE HAN



PAYSAGE NO1, 1997
PHOTO : RICHARD-MAX TREMBLAY

Luc Courchesne has always cultivated an inspired and avant-garde artistic approach. Emeritus professor at the Université de Montréal, member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts and founding member of the renowned Society for Arts and Technology (SAT), where he directed (2004-2014) and co-directed (2014-2017) the Metalab research laboratory, the Montreal creator is the first digital artist to win the Prix Paul-Émile Borduas. This achievement was made possible by a revision of evaluation criteria, which now acknowledge outstanding contributions to the visual arts, crafts or digital arts in Quebec. The use of communication and information technologies, whether computer, electronic, digital, sound, interactive or Web, is now recognized, which makes it possible to submit applications from fields that were not previously qualified.

Courchesne is mainly interested in the field of media and interactive arts. He has assimilated the new knowledge necessary for the invention and realization of his devices, such as spatial theatricalization. He also designed the signage system for Quebec parks, still in use after more than 40 years, as well as the famous Boule bag (1976), whose production (in Quebec) has never stopped. "I have always found a way to pursue my creative process and follow the thread of my curiosity; my approach remains the same: art must touch," begins the Quebec creator. He likes to evoke the spark felt during Expo 67, when he visited the memorable Telephone Pavilion and its cylindrical screen, which recreated the principle of panoramas, very popular at the end of the 19th century. He predicted that it would become common, without suspecting the level of technical difficulty that this realization implied or the importance of the point of view it represented. Courchesne studied at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, where he met the famous Michael Snow. He then moved on to a confidential circle between Halifax and New York, and then to the legendary laboratory of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, dedicated to meeting the arts and technologies. He met the sculptor Christo, the French visual artist Catherine Ikam, and saw new creative possibilities.

A GREAT ARTISTIC CHALLENGE

Courchesne's approach is distinguished by his interest in panoramic and spherical photography. "I have kept the visual arts approach even though the frame has become a window of some form," he says. "Because of the fragmentation of the screens, the great artistic challenge is to convert this frame into a door and make the viewer pass it on with us."

It is much more a question of field experience than representation. "The transition from analogue culture to digital art has given new access to artists, who have been able to invent other creative tools and initiate original reflections in a different way. The difficulty is to find a balance between the serious and slightly dry formal research and the narrative aspect, also called storytelling in the field."

In his films, his longtime friend François Girard controls the viewer's rhythm and attention; what he does not show is often more important than what he shows. "While in immersive art, we create worlds in which the focus of the participant's attention escapes the creator," Courchesne explains. "We become architects, we create worlds and this transition from the second dimension to the third, in real time, is what characterizes digital practices," says the Quebecer, whose fictional work *Portrait No. 1* (1990) is a determined encounter with a character who made a name for himself in university programs around the world after winning the Grand Prize at the first Biennale of the NTT InterCommunication Center in Tokyo (1997) and the Award of distinction in the Interactive Art category of the Ars Electronica Awards (1999) in Linz, Austria (see photo). "Now that technology has become integrated and anecdotal, it's all about art and that is what matters," adds the Montrealer.

The Prix Paul-Émile Borduas surprised Courchesne. "This medium is still stealthy, it has no audience or economy; we are almost all teachers," explains the digital artist, who was the first to conduct his research while establishing his tenure, according to a process equivalent to that established at the Faculty of Science. "I met some extraordinary students and if I left the Université de Montréal in 2013, after teaching design for 27 years, it was to give all the time I have left to my practice."

Courchesne does not want to lose contact with young people. He will continue to give conferences and get involved in projects – they always know more than you do and they keep you up to date, he says. "I am also a grandfather and in addition to the spectrum of my creations, there is now the construction of huts." **LSM**

Curious? Visit the artist's website at www.courchel.net or enjoy *Naked in Paradise*, a dynamic and exportable exhibition that recalls the life and work of Luc Courchesne at the Pierre-François Ouellette Contemporary Art Gallery from Nov. 9-Dec. 21. www.pfoac.com

STÉPHANE MARCEAU

PAINTER AND SCULPTOR

by HASSAN LAGHCHA



PHOTO : CHRISTINE PELLETIER

He takes great care so that his works are “the purest exaltation of life, which is reflected in an organic way and intimately linked to humanity, its precariousness and its future.” To do this, the painter and sculptor Stéphane Marceau continues to explore the

innumerable possibilities of various techniques and media, such as encaustic, microcrystalline, oil, clay, steel and minerals. “For each subject/idea/concept, I have to find the ideal combination of technique, materials and colours for the work – a unique soul suspended like a dream that was waiting between the particles of the material to be used. I use contrasts and transparencies to stir up emotion and to stimulate inner communication and dialogue.”

This poetic and demanding design paid off. In the summer of 2017, his exhibition Fluidité, at the gallery of the birthplace of poet Louis-Honoré Fréchette in Lévis, was an impressive success. His canvases under the theme of “moments of life” around the St. Lawrence River reveal this emerging painter and his potential for artistic expression through the fuzzy figurative and various declensions of abstract art. Also the technique of encaustic, which comes from ancient times and consists of a careful and meticulous blend of natural beeswax, dammar resin and pure pigments.

“My composition is revealed as the elements that merge with each other,” he says. “The purpose of the work takes its place in space-time. Everything I read and observe penetrates me and I give them back in images passed by my filters of personal experiences that emerge from what matter can offer me.”

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And as one success calls for another, Marceau is currently enjoying a big year. He is making a monumental sculpture of 150 tons that will integrate the redevelopment of the outdoor spaces of Louis-Honoré Fréchette’s birthplace to make it a major cultural and tourist destination that, for the first time, takes full advantage of the magnificent site facing the river. There will be outdoor concerts, exhibitions and family, educational and artistic events. Sculptures of historical figures will relate key moments in the history of the city of Lévis. It will be inaugurated, suitably, on the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day. **LSM**

www.marceauartist.com

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